

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE ENHANCEMENT GRANT COMPETITION

1. **Principal Investigator Name(s) and Academic Title(s):** Dr. Lindsay Cummings, Assistant Professor of Dramatic Arts and Associate Department Head of Courses and Curriculum
2. **Email Address(es)** Lindsay.cummings@uconn.edu
3. **Is this a new course or a currently existing course?** This is an existing course. The extent of revision, however, may result in the creation of a new course. This will be determined in the course approval process.
4. **List the course title and course number of the proposed/enhanced course and name of the sponsoring department or program.** DRAM 3130: Women in Theatre
5. **Describe your project and the work that will be done during the grant period on course content, course design, and/or teaching approach. Provide a clear statement of the objectives of the project in terms of student learning.**

In its current incarnation, *Women in Theatre* primarily addresses gender representation, including the themes of women playwrights, how women are depicted on stage, and how many women are represented throughout the industry. The catalog copy is out of date, indicating that material covered ends with the 20th century.

During the grant period, the syllabus, assignments, and course description will be revised, as well as, possibly, the title of the course; a Course Approval Request will also be written and submitted. In addition to bringing the course into the 21st century, the proposed revisions will enhance the course in three key ways:

1. Expand course curriculum to include questions of gender identity, gender expression, and sexuality.
2. Expand curriculum to include discussion of different branches of feminist thought. The last two decades has witnessed a flurry of feminist activity, from post-feminism to the so-called “third” and “forth” waves. Students enrolling in the course today will have come of age during these movements.
3. Develop connections between the content of this course and content students may encounter in other general education courses, including but not limited to the following subject areas: American Studies, Anthropology, English, Human Development and Family Studies, Sociology, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Overall, these objectives are designed to ask questions that go beyond the issue of representation and to broaden the teaching approach from one consisting primarily of historical and literary analysis to one that includes cultural studies, gender and sexuality studies, and more. These objectives are intended to have the following outcomes on student learning:

- To challenge students to interrogate the notion of “woman” itself, considering how cultural productions like theatre can operate both to expand and police gender norms.
- To prepare students to analyze women’s theatrical creations within larger cultural, social, historical, and theoretical contexts, encouraging them to make connections to what they are learning in other courses and to events in their own lives.
- To explore how different disciplines approach an object of study.

6. **How do you intend to evaluate project objectives once the course, as proposed, is offered? Please identify intended learning outcomes and assessment tools.**

The learning objectives for this course address both lower- and higher-order learning outcomes. In the lower-order, students will be able to identify and define some of the key figures and artistic movements in women’s theatre from the 20th and 21st centuries. They will describe important differences in the feminist movements that have emerged during these time periods and summarize how these movements are reflected in the work of theatre artists.

Assessment: These skills be assessed through in-class discussion, as well as through a series of 3-4 quizzes (definitions, multiple choice, and short answer) given over the course of the semester.

Higher-order outcomes include the following: Students will be able to analyze an artist's social and historical context, as well as her positionality vis-à-vis gender, ethnicity, race, class and more. They will compare and contrast the goals and ideologies of various branches of feminist thought and evaluate how those branches are reflected in the work of theatre artists. They will pursue theoretical questions about theatre's role in expressing and creating gender identity and interpret theatre texts and performances through multiple disciplinary and/or theoretical lenses. Putting these analytical skills into creative practice, they write a dramatic monologue of their own. Finally, they will articulate their positions in writing and engage their peers in respectful dialogue.

Assessment: I utilize a range of assessment tools, from informal to formal. Informally, students submit "two-minute takeaways" after most class meetings. These takeaways are ungraded, but provide me with a sense of the level at which the students are engaging the material. Short Responses on plays and performances offer slightly more formal assessment. These one-page written assignments, in response to a prompt, require students to interpret plays and performances and integrate their interpretations with course readings and/or discussion. I assign six Short Responses in the course of a semester. Finally, formal assessments will include one argumentative essay, developed through several stages, a creative assignment (the monologue), and one presentation that requires students to conduct research on a historical or cultural event, performance, or artist.

7. **Describe how the course will fit into UConn's General Education curriculum. (The General Education guidelines can be found at: <http://geoc.uconn.edu/geoc-guidelines/>) How will the course serve the broad goals of UConn's General Education program (flexibility in thinking, foundations for learning at UConn and later in life, critical analytical skills, etc.)?**

This course addresses the General Education goal that students develop their consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience. Not only does the course address the experiences and perspectives of women, it also explores the impact of intersectionality, addressing how women's various identities—racial, sexual, ethnic, etc.—impact their art, their perspective, and experiences.

By asking students to connect course topics to current debates about gender expression, transgender rights, feminism, and more, the course will increase students' awareness of their era and society. Some plays and performances will speak directly to the events of today, while others will necessitate students to compare and contrast the events of hundred years ago to society today. The course will also integrate discussions of the feminist movement, how it has evolved, and where it stands today, further increasing their critical awareness of the society in which they live.

The course will help students develop critical judgement in several ways. The course will highlight multiple disciplinary perspectives, requiring students to evaluate the relationship between one's mode of inquiry and one's conclusions or interpretations. Students will consider how cultural and historical context impact theatre, as well as how a playwright and/or performer's identity and positionality impact her work. By exploring the nuances of difference, students will think critically about their own life experiences, positionality, and inherent biases. Finally, as a course on theatre, it will engage students in the critical work of assessing texts for their literary and performance merits, considering the relationship between generic and stylistic form and content, evaluating the effect of artistic choices, and analyzing theatre's role in social and cultural discourse.

8. **For which content areas (CA1-4) and/or competencies (W, Q) will the course be proposed and how will it address the specific criteria for courses in these content areas and/or competencies?**

DRAM 3130: *Women in Theatre* is currently a CA4 course. The revision will seek to add a CA1 designation. The course meets the criteria in the following ways:

CA1: *Women in Theatre* uses the medium of theatre to explore the human experience from the perspective of

women. It investigates the particular representational modes that women have used to express themselves in theatre. Finally, it develops students' comprehension and appreciation of theatre as both a written and performed medium.

CA4: By investigating not only women's perspectives, but also the *diversity* of women's experiences and positionalities, *Women in Theatre* emphasizes the wide range of human experiences and perspectives. *Women in Theatre* also explores the ways in which gender norms and systemic oppression have impacted women over time, both in the theatre and beyond, thereby developing students' awareness of power dynamics.

9. How will the course add to and/or enhance existing course offerings? Which of the areas targeted by this year's competition does it address? Does it fill other important gaps? How does it compare to current offerings or pedagogy? What will be distinctive about the course?

This project enhances the current *Women in Theatre* course by redesigning the curriculum with particular attention to connections across disciplines. Theatre is inherently interdisciplinary because the subject matter of plays is so far-ranging. For example, *Venus*, by Suzan-Lori Parks, tells the story of Sara Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman who was taken from her native South Africa to England in the 19th century and put on display as a human oddity for the size of her buttocks. Studying this play engages students in topics ranging from the history of human display for entertainment, to Africa under colonialism, to Social Darwinism, to contemporary questions about the objectification of women. My goal in revising the course is to make these connections more formal. The revised course will include readings from multiple disciplinary backgrounds. In their Short Responses and essays, students will be asked to consider how different disciplinary perspectives guide us to ask different questions and reach different interpretations of this and other plays, and how bringing multiple disciplinary perspectives together helps enrich our understanding.

10. How will your course serve as a model to assist others in their efforts to improve the general education curriculum?

This course serves as a model of how a discipline-specific course might be designed with inherently interdisciplinary guiding questions and modes of inquiry. It also demonstrates how general education courses can help students develop a more nuanced understanding of the impact of methodology. In non-academic parlance, we see what we're trained to see and we ask what we are trained to ask. In this course, students will question, investigate, and observe through multiple lenses.

11. Is your proposal linked to any others being submitted in this competition? If so, explain the added benefits that will accrue to students from taking the courses as a group. No

12. Has this course even been submitted for this grant in the past? Unsure

13. Has this course been FUNDED by this grant in the past? No

14. If you answered "Yes" to question 13, please explain why the additional changes and funding are needed to further enhance this course. NA

15. Complete the budget form (found at <http://geoc.uconn.edu/course-development-grant-competition/>), explaining how the funds will be used to support the course development activities. Attached.

16. Arrange for your program director/department head to email a statement of support. Sent separately.