

New York City College of Technology Interdisciplinary Committee

Criteria for an Interdisciplinary Course

I. Interdisciplinary Studies Definition

Interdisciplinary studies involve two or more academic disciplines or fields of study organized around synthesizing distinct perspectives, knowledge, and skills. Interdisciplinary study focuses on questions, problems, and topics too complex or too broad for a single discipline or field to encompass adequately; such studies thrive on drawing connections between seemingly exclusive domains. Usually theme-based, interdisciplinary courses intentionally address issues that require meaningful engagement of multiple academic disciplines. Pedagogical strategies focus on, but are not limited to, inquiry or problem-based learning.

Although many academic disciplines, such as African American Studies and Engineering, are inherently interdisciplinary, to be considered an interdisciplinary course at City Tech the course must be team-taught¹ by more than one faculty member from two or more departments² in the College. An interdisciplinary course, by definition, has an interdisciplinary theme as its nucleus. In its essence, such a course brings the analytic methods of two or more academic disciplines to bear on a specific problem or question. Thus, a course in Music History is not likely to be considered interdisciplinary, but a course in Music History from an economist's perspective might very well lead to such a course. The application of different methods and concepts is the key to assessing whether a course is or is not interdisciplinary. The term interdisciplinary is occasionally used to identify individual projects or assignments, but these, though possibly commendable, fall short in the necessary scope for learning experiences that demand in-depth exposure to the methodologies of distinct intellectual disciplines, and the creative application of these methodologies to specific problems.

Studies show that interdisciplinary courses improve student learning (Elrod & Roth, 2012; Klein, 2010; Lattuca, 2001; Lattuca, Voigt, & Fath, 2004; Project Kaleidoscope, 2011). To foster interdisciplinary learning, the Interdisciplinary Committee has identified goals and outcomes that students taking interdisciplinary courses should be able to achieve.

Learning Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Courses

Students will be able to:

- Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems
- Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries
- Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems
- Apply integrative thinking to problem-solving in ethically and socially responsible ways
- Recognize varied perspectives
- Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty
- Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively
- Become flexible thinkers

¹ See "Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation" question 9b for team-teaching options.

² Exceptions are made for Departments that provide a home for multiple disciplines, such as Humanities and Social Science.

**New York City College of Technology
Interdisciplinary Committee**

Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation

Date 08.27.2015

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Department(s) Humanities and Architectural Technology

II. Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course

1. Identify the course type and title:

☒ An existing course THE2280: History of Theater: Technology and Stages

☐ A new course _____

☐ A course under development _____

2. Provide a course description. This course examines contemporary and historical theater structures using research methods and knowledge bases from both theater and architecture technology and history. This course satisfies the interdisciplinary college option. The survey of approximately 12 historical performance spaces and buildings will be contextualized in terms of prevailing aesthetic, technological, and performative movements.

3. How many credits will the course comprise? 3 How many hours? 2.5

4. What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course? Co-requisite(s)?

CUNY Certification in Reading and Writing

5. Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course. The course will examine the history of theater in relation to both performance practices and theater architecture. In the current non-interdisciplinary iteration of History of Theatre, a chronological narrative of Western technologies and scenic practices is taught. In the new interdisciplinary section of the course, the focus of every two-week module will be on specific cultural practice (devotion, democracy, postmodernism, etc.) within which 2-3 case studies from around the globe will be studied. This thematic arrangement will more effectively detail cross-cultural spatial practices while providing students with a conceptual toolbox for understanding performance architecture in history and today. Humanities and Architectural Technology instructors will present discipline-specific methods of analyzing theater architecture and spaces, which will facilitate comparative conversations on the values and intersections of each approach. Theater buildings will be examined in their artistic, cultural and historic contexts and through the lenses of performance history, scenic design, and architecture.
6. What is the proposed theme of the course? What complex central problem or question will it address? What disciplinary methods will be evoked and applied?

The course will survey selected theater buildings and set designs from world history, applying concepts from performance studies and architecture and examining these case studies in their artistic, aesthetic, and historic contexts. The course will study how spatial architectonics and performance practices developed in response to each one another and to prevailing cultural forces. Specifically, students will be introduced to theories and practices of space from Architecture Technology and Performance Studies and will be required to analyze NYC performances spaces in light of these complementary theories. The course aims to define theatrical space in expansive ways, showing, for

instance, how the concept of “performativity” from theatre studies has developed into an influential way of thinking about building design. Likewise, terminology from architectural history (such as amphitheater, audience, purpose-built and converted buildings) will inform discussions on performance practices in Europe, China, Japan, India, and the United States.

As a central theme and ongoing research question, students will be asked to articulate ways in which the design of performance spaces – both scenic and architectural – helped shape audience expectations and experiences of performance events themselves. Students will read about the cultural dynamics at work in performance space and produce original conclusions about cultural practices based on the evidence presented.

7. Which general learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course does this course address? Please explain how the course will fulfill the bolded mandatory learning outcome below. In addition, select and explain at least three additional outcomes.

X Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems

Students will visit Broadway and/or Off-Broadway theater and attend one or two plays. They will work in teams to evaluate scenic and architectural spaces and present their research and observations in classroom presentations.

X Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries

Each professor will prepare readings and lectures on the same case studies from the perspective of their respective disciplines that will be shared with each other and the students. Instructors will also create assignments collaboratively in order to facilitate cross-disciplinary conversations and comparative analyses. Students will be asked to demonstrate how prevailing historical technologies and design aesthetics influenced performance practices and how changing notions of performance have influenced the design and definition of a theater space.

☐ Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems

☐ Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways

X Recognize varied perspectives

Students will learn discipline-specific methods of analysis from architecture technology and performance studies, using both to examine single case studies.

☐ Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

X Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

Students will work in teams to attend a play, document their observations in drawing and writing, and make in-class presentations.

X Become flexible thinkers

Students will be asked to question traditional notions of performance and performance spaces. Students will be asked to draw conclusions about designed spaces using different disciplinary criteria.

☐ Other

COURSE INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS:

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Methods
Describe the physical features and technologies of theatre architecture and design.	Students will write a report and make a classroom presentation on a theatre building in NYC.
Identify particular theatrical venues, artistic trends, and specific production designs.	Quizzes on weekly reading are given. The final exam requires students to reiterate material learned in lectures and readings.
Explain how different styles relate to artistic and historical contexts.	Students respond to prompts given on OpenLab in the form of short writing assignments and blog entries.

Explain the contribution of major theorists and designers	Students are required to participate in class discussions and online forums that are designed to integrate theoretical and historical information.
Identify performance spaces, theatrical aesthetics, production concepts and techniques outside of purpose-built theaters and traditional notions of performance.	Students are required to produce sketches of theatrical spaces.
Articulate relationships between performance requirements, audience attitudes, and theatrical design.	The major oral and written presentation of the semester requires that students make these connections.

General Education Learning Goals for City Tech Students

- **Knowledge:** Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and hone the ability to deepen and continue learning.
- **Skills:** Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, creativity, analysis, and productive work.
- **Integration:** Work productively within and across disciplines.
- **Values, Ethics, and Relationships:** Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse perspectives in personal, professional, civic, and cultural/global domains.

1. KNOWLEDGE: To develop an understanding of the key concepts that relate to theater spaces, structures, and designs, as well as major, important architectural and performance studies theories about performance space and architecture.

2. SKILLS: Develop oral and writing skills in the process of answering critical questions of the interdisciplinary.

3. INTEGRATION: In presentations, writing, and classroom discussions, draw connections among the various competing and common needs of designers, engineers, audiences, and performing artists.

4. VALUES, ETHICS, AND RELATIONSHIPS: With place-based and evidenced-based examination of buildings and performances spaces, develop an understanding of diverse cultural practices from around the globe. Develop a respect for the differences in cultural practices and norms as well as commonalities and continuums across time and geography.

8. How does this course address the general education learning goals for City Tech students?
In addition to required cross-disciplinary lectures and readings, covering case studies from around the world, the course will engage place-based learning by having students visit a theater and attend a show. They must research the history of the performance and theater and document, prepare a written paper and present their observations in class.

9. Which department would house this course³? Humanities
Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? ☒ No

a) Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? ☒ Yes
Explain.

b) How will the course be team-taught⁴? ☒ Co-taught

If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution? 1.5 credits each
☒ Shared credits

c) If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? ☒ Minimum 20%⁵ ☒ other:
___%

Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.⁶

d) What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students' ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?

Students will read and respond to articles written by architects that have designed theater spaces. Students will read the work of theater scholars that have discussed performance spaces and material theatre. Students will tour a theater building in NYC (Manhattan Theatre Club, The Public Theatre, etc.), paying particular attention to the physical building. Floor plans and elevations of the building will be discussed and analyzed in class. Students will look at images of performance structures, both historical and contemporary, and be asked to articulate ways in which the uses and structures of space facilitated particular performance styles.

10. Would the course be designated as:

³ An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts.

⁴ Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments.

⁵ While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline.

⁶ In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching.

X a College Option requirement⁷? ✗ an elective? ✗ a Capstone course⁸? ✗ other? Explain.

⁷ To qualify for the College Option, such a course must also meet the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course. <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/liberalarts.htm>

⁸ A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee.