5 December 2007

TO: Norm Jones, Chair of General Education Committee
FROM: Ann Austin, Joyce Kinkead, Bruce Saperston
SUBJECT: Review of Breadth Creative Arts Syllabi

Thank you for requesting that we serve on a committee to review syllabi that carry the distinction of being Breadth Creative Arts courses in the University Studies curriculum. We fondly remembered serving on the original working group that created the foundational criteria for these courses in the mid 1990s. We are pleased to see some years later how those goals have been carried out and how these courses enhance the education of our students. As you will recall, at the time of that general education reform, there was no single requirement for a course in the Fine and Performing Arts; rather, the Arts were lumped with the Humanities and, in effect, got short shrift. That oversight has been remedied with the BCA requirement.

You will find our results divided into two categories: overall recommendations and reports on each syllabus. We reviewed a total of 16 syllabi, which are enumerated below and listed in Appendix B. Syllabi that were not received by the Office of the Provost for us to review include the following: John Ellsworth’s LAEP 1030 and Nancy Hills’ USU 1330. The syllabi received included courses taught on the main campus as well as regional campuses; in addition, some versions are taught on-line and are so noted. Our methodology included developing a grid based on the BCA criteria (Appendix C) and applying that to each syllabus. We did our analysis individually and then met to confer.

Overall Recommendations:
The criteria for BCA courses apply really only to the USU 1330 integrated classes and do not fit as well with the non-1330 classes. Should there be an alternative set of criteria for the Intro to X type of classes? We believe that to be the case, and we offer suggestions to do so. (Please see Appendix A.) The “content” section of the BCA description requires examples and illustrations from a variety of media (e.g., theatre, music, literature, dance). For those classes that are department-specific such as Introduction to Music, this is not enforceable or practical. On the other hand, we want to
reinforce our belief that required attendance at events outside of class is essential as it gives students not only the experience of the arts but also educates them in appropriate etiquette standards.

We recommend that every syllabus include the objectives for BCA in print, and furthermore, that each objective is explained in the context of the course. For some syllabi, it was not possible for us to tell if or how these objectives were actually being met. Course schedules that simply include textbook reading assignments or events do not illuminate the goals of the course—either for a committee such as ours or for the students. In a list of events, for instance, where and how will the instructor address historical and social context or contrast art forms in different societies or time periods?

Some of the objectives that are stated in the BCA criteria are rarely being met, particularly the injunction to provide collaborative activities. (We recognize that this may be a difficult objective to achieve for classes taught online.) Likewise, it is rarely clear if students are being introduced to information literacy skills. We do not believe that simply using Blackboard meets this objective. In some cases, it is not clear if discussion among class members is valued or encouraged. We want to note here that online classes do offer the opportunity for discussion among class participants in the threaded “Discussions” function of Blackboard. We further note that some of the online versions of USU 1330 were stellar in their clarity of objectives, goals, and assignments. In short, we were more than satisfied that these online classes have every possibility of providing a quality experience.

Nuts & bolts issues: Syllabi should include basic information such as faculty member’s name, campus, contact information. There are policy statements (e.g., Disability Resources, textbooks, drop dates, integrity/ethics) that should be included in every syllabus. The USU website that includes the Criteria for BCA courses is rife with typographical errors; we urge the committee to have those corrected forthwith. (See http://www.usu.edu/provost/academic_initiatives/breadth.cfm#1330.) We further recommend that syllabi posted as examples come from the ones we note below as stellar.

We strongly urge and recommend an accessible way for those teachers of these courses to share their syllabi, particularly the USU 1330, as there are marvelous examples from which others could draw inspiration. Attribution to others’ ideas should be acknowledged.

Comments on Individual Syllabi:

USU 1330 course

Peterson:
Exemplary. Has objectives and follows through on them. Concert etiquette included. The syllabus is lavishly illustrated and designed beautifully. (All syllabi should follow this lead.) This is the founding syllabus upon which all 1330 courses are based in some
part. It is not apparent from the syllabus how this course considers art "in its historical and social contexts" or "in different societies or time periods." We are also unsure of "collaborative activities." It's not clear if students are developing "information literacy skills."

Heers:
It would be helpful to see how the objectives are actually enacted within the academic calendar as "topics." The syllabus is organized by event rather than by theme. How might the objectives be addressed in the context of this schedule? The title of the day's lecture/discussion such as "what is art" would be helpful. We are uncertain if collaborative activities are required and if students have "development of information literacy." Can it be shown how the "relationships" among arts will be addressed? A section on discussion and how it "counts" could be added.

Smigel:
This is an amazing syllabus. Our only question is if students are attending events? We're rather surprised that students are not attending live concerts, given the emphasis on music. Might we suggest inclusion that students would choose a couple of live concerts; this would also introduce them to concert etiquette. The work with the Museum is wonderful. We like the listening, viewing, and reading organization of the syllabus. What energy!

Ballam:
Although the opening objectives suggest that a variety of media will be used, it is almost entirely focused on music with the odd film thrown in. As such, it is hard to see the relationships among art forms. There are serious typographical errors (e.g., mnemonic/mnemonic). There is also some concern about the currency of the theory used. We are not seeing collaborative or information literacy skills. It is not clear that discussion is valued.

Salix
This is a creative approach with really interesting assignments. We did have to extract the assignments from the calendar as opposed to having a list of assignments in one place. We admire the hands-on activities. (Might we suggest spell check on the syllabus?) The listing of and explaining of assignments would help clarify how objectives are being met. Might more performances be possible?

Allen
It is unclear how a variety of media is being used. We cannot tell from the syllabus. Likewise, it is not clear how the inter-relationships among art forms is made. The textbook seems to be a "humanities" text rather than fine arts. In short, we simply cannot tell what is included from this document. We'd recommend that any guidelines about essay writing be incorporated into the syllabus. It should be a document that stands on its own so requirements are clear from day one. There is no evidence that collaborative activities or information literacy skills are being used.
Fox (online)
What an exemplary approach! This class covers all the bases. The only criterion we could not find evidence of is “collaborative” activity, but this is not expected usually in an online class. We admire so much about this syllabus: the statement about the nature of art and its potential to offend, enlighten, and so on. The specificity of the assignments is laudatory! We really enjoyed reading this syllabus; it is amazingly informative.

Batzell
Unfortunately, it is very hard to tell if this syllabus meets the goals of Creative Arts or not as it is very short and un-illuminating. We can say that writing assignments are required and that there are opportunities to discuss. There seems to be collaborative activities. For instance, what constitutes a "lab"?

Art 1010
Allen
This class does focus on ART in the human experience, historical and social contexts, different societies or time periods. This syllabus could benefit from a list of assignments. Is there any relationship of various art forms discussed? We cannot tell if there are any writing assignments, collaborative activities, information literacy skills, or opportunities to discuss.

Banerjee (online)
Broadly based readings, viewings, and assignments with regard with art. Although this does not show necessarily relationships among the arts, it does a fine job exploring art. This syllabus is quite well done. It demonstrates energy and thoughtfulness.

ID 1790
Tibbitts
Written assignments are required, there are opportunities to discuss, and there is an assessment plan. We would encourage collaborative activities. It is hard to figure out if design is addressed in terms of human experience, historical & social contexts, or in different societies or time periods. The basic elements of design as defined in objective one could be effective as a way to organize the course.

LAEP 1030
Anderson
We have to extract how the objectives are being met by looking at the schedule. Are there collaborative activities, attention to information literacy? Any opportunities to discuss? We don't know what the writing assignment might encompass. Can any relationships among art forms be included? We admire the historical, social, and multicultural aspects. There is a nice introduction to LAEP faculty through guest lectures. Unlike other courses in BCA, this seems like one designed for majors only.

Salmore
We admired the learning objectives. The syllabus is well done on writing/design assignment and is one of the few that stresses information literacy. We admire the tone
and energy of the syllabus. This is a very fulsome syllabus that includes policies and practices helpful to students. We are unsure about the inter-relationships of LA with other forms of art and if other cultures are included; likewise, we were unsure if historical/social are included.

Music 1010
Burton (online)
We “think” that this course includes inter-relationships with other arts, but we cannot be sure from the syllabus. This course has a long history at Utah State. Given the facilities of Blackboard, might we suggest that “discussions” facility could be used. We would hope that students would attend live concerts if all possible. We applaud the “concert report example.”
Bravo!

Music 1100
Dewey We do not believe that this course meets BCA goals whatsoever. This is a “fundamentals” course for music minors, perhaps a few majors. It is a technical class that includes ear training, drills, scales. We recommend removal of the BCA designation. Having this second class from Music also is contrary to the approval process for BCA which states “Unless a department can provide strong justification, not more than one course from a department will be placed on the approved list.”

Theatre 1010
Sidwell (online)
There are events outside of the class to view, plays, that are accompanied by written assignments. We applaud the theatre service project as an assignment although we wondered if options would fit any student although a breadth of options is included. It is difficult for us to tell if theatre is discussed in relationship to “what it is and what function it serves in the human experience.” The examples of plays given do meet the goal of historical contexts in a variety of international locales.
Appendix A

Criteria for Approved Breadth Courses: Creative Arts

USU 1330 CIVILIZATION: CREATIVE ARTS

Objectives:

To expose students to the significance of the creative arts.

To develop students' aesthetic judgments.

To expose student to the creative arts as a means of personal and social expression.

To promote an understanding of the nature, history, and methods of the arts.

Credits: 3 credits

Prerequisites: None

Content: The course will utilize examples and illustrations from a variety of media, for instance, theater, music, literature, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, attire, and interior design. Issues to be addressed include: "What is art?" and "What functions do the arts serve?" The course will also consider the arts in their historical and social context and provide a cross cultural perspective by illustrating how art forms vary between and among different societies.

Pedagogy:

Students will be required to complete writing assignments.

Students will be required to participate in collaborative activities.

Students will develop their information literacy skills, including an understanding of the nature,
organization, and methods of access and evaluation of both electronic and traditional resources in the subject area.

Opportunities will be provided for discussion.

The course proposal will include ways to access achievement of the objectives for this course.

Approval Process:

Departments desiring to offer sections of integrated courses will submit course syllabito the Director of University Studies. The initial evaluation will be made by the faculty Creative Arts Committee. The General Education Subcommittee and the Educational Policies Committee will make the final decision.

CRITERIA FOR APPROVED BREADTH COURSE: CREATIVE ARTS

Courses must provide a broad and balanced perspective of a major discipline. Except for courses or examinations, which are part of the University Studies Competency Requirements, breadth courses must have no prerequisites. Courses should be offered at least once every school year.

Specific Criteria: Creative Arts

In evaluating courses for the Creative Arts approved list, the factors listed below will be considered. Not all of these criteria must be met for course approval, but together they suggest what a "strong" course proposal should include.

The course should promote the following student learning goals:

Capacity for informed and well-reasoned aesthetic judgments

Educated appreciation for artistic performances

Understanding of an art discipline's nature, history, and methods
The course should address the issues of what is art and what functions art serves.

The course should explore the effects of art on the human experience.

The course should consider art in its historical and social contexts.

The course should compare art forms in different societies or time periods.

The course should consider relationships between and among different art forms.

The course should require students to attend events outside of class, e.g., lectures, performances, and exhibitions.

The course should help students to understand and evaluate original sources, e.g., original writings and/or other creative works.

The course should require students to:

Complete writing assignments.

Participate in collaborative activities.

The course should further the development of information literacy skills, including an understanding of the nature, organization, and methods of access and evaluation of both electronic and traditional resources in the subject area.

The course should provide opportunities for discussion.

The course proposal should include ways to assess achievement of the specific criteria listed above for this breadth area.
Approval Process:

Departments will be asked to recommend courses by submitting course syllabi. The initial evaluation of courses will be made by the faculty Creative Arts Committee. The final decision will be made by the General Education Subcommittee and Educational Policies Committee. Unless a department can provide strong justification, not more than one course from a department will be placed on the approved list.

Recommended addition to the Criteria for department-specific courses:

Content: The course will utilize examples and illustrations from a variety of media, for instance, theater, music, literature, dance, painting, sculpture, architecture, attire, and interior design. Issues to be addressed include: "What is art?" and "What functions do the arts serve?" The course will also consider the arts specific fine or performing art in its historical and social context and provide a cross-cultural perspective by illustrating how art forms vary between and among different societies.

The course should promote the following student learning goals:

- Capacity for informed and well-reasoned aesthetic judgments
- Educated appreciation for artistic performances
- Understanding of an art discipline's nature, history, and methods
- The course should address the issues of what is art and what functions art serves.
- The course should explore the effects of art on the human experience.
- The course should consider art in its historical and social contexts.
The course should compare art forms in different societies or time periods.

The course should consider relationships between and among different art forms whenever possible, perhaps with the help of guest lectures.

The course should require students to attend events outside of class appropriate to the discipline, e.g., lectures, performances, and exhibitions.

The course should help students to understand and evaluate original sources, e.g., original writings and/or other creative works.
## Appendix B

### List of BCA Courses Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>received?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCA &amp; USU 1330 Course Syllabi</td>
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<tr>
<td>42034 HONR 1330 1</td>
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<td>43278 HONR 1330 3</td>
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<td>40297 ID 1790 1</td>
<td>Interior Design Theory (BCA)</td>
<td>Tibbits, Susan</td>
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<td>Ellsworth, John</td>
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<td>42912 THEA 1013 1</td>
<td>Understand Theatre (BCA)</td>
<td>Hills, Nancy</td>
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<td>40001 USU 1330 1</td>
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<td>THEA 1010</td>
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**Appendix C**

**Evaluation Grid for Reviewing BCA Courses**

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<th>Course</th>
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<th>Meets</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Cannot tell</th>
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**Learning Objectives:**
- Examples and illustrations from a variety of media (e.g., theatre, music, literature, dance)
- Course addresses the issues of "what is art" and what functions art serves
- Explores the effects of art on the human experience
- Considers art in its historical and social contexts
- Compares art forms in different societies or time periods
- Considers relationships among different art forms
- Requires students to attend events (e.g., lectures, performances) outside class
- Helps students understand and evaluate original and creative sources

**Pedagogical Objectives:**
- Writing assignments required
- Collaborative activities required
- Development of information literacy skills (e.g., electronic & traditional sources)
- Opportunities to discuss
- Assessment plan