

Proposal	To teach in the Drama Department at the University of Prishtina during the 2011-2012 academic year.
Current Status	<p>E-mail communication established with Dr. Haqif Mulliqi, Vice Dean and Head of the Drama Department, and Elmaze Nura, Coordinator for Academic Development, Art Faculty.</p> <p>Letter of invitation issued August 1, 2010.</p> <p>Dr. Mulliqi and Ms. Nura specifically have requested that I teach criticism and directing, offer presentations on American theatre, and work with acting students on a performance.</p>
Timeframe	My university's administration fully endorses my application and will support developmental leave if I am awarded the grant. They prefer an appointment that would absent me during either our fall or spring semester but are willing to negotiate a full-year leave. Since my summers are flexible, I suggest a second term (spring) appointment that might be extended into the summer if needed.
Mission	My strength as a teacher is to help students think creatively and critically and then to apply that thinking in ways that are personal, practical, and immediate. Thought-provoking without threatening or offending, I help students understand the fact that there are many ways of seeing and appreciating our personal and collective differences.
Courses	<p>The courses requested will be organized topically and taught using materials that I already have or will develop in the near future: PowerPoint presentations, DVDs, readings and scripts made available through hard-copy handouts or online (.pdf format) through SHSU's BlackBoard and library subscription, as well as other online websites, blogs and my personal website.</p> <p><i>Theory and Criticism.</i> A lecture-discussion course on <i>dramatic theory</i> (why theatre is the way it is—its conventions of writing and production) and <i>criticism</i> (how we perceive, understand, and judge theatre). Depending on the needs and interests of the University of Prishtina, the course may focus exclusively on theatre (live stage performance) <u>or</u> be expanded to include both theatre and film. It is also possible for me to begin with American performance media and then have the students pursue practical application to Kosovar media.</p>

Directing for the Stage. A workshop approach combining lecture/demonstration with practical application. If offered as a beginning course, we would focus on the *craft* of stage direction (script analysis; the collaborative process; issues of time, space, and funding; composition and blocking, etc.) with practical application to short realistic scenes. In an intermediate course, we would expand our scope to include original (individually created) scenarios and scripts, whose content and form might be realistic or non-realistic. In an advanced course, we would explore more dramaturgically challenging materials (period pieces including Shakespeare) and processes (“unstable” texts, company-developed works). Each level also would include the study of key issues, moments, and people in the history of directing.

American Theatre. This could be a regular, lecture-based course or a series of presentations on the development and current status of American theatre focusing on chronologically arranged but relatively self-contained topics such as the Independent Theatre Movement, the Federal Theatre Project, 1960s agit-prop theatre, African-American theatre, Actors’ Equity and unionization, women’s issues and feminist theatre, musical theatre, Broadway and New York City, etc.

Musical Theatre. Also possible would be a more specialized course or series of presentations on musical theatre including British and American musicals. I have access to many musicals on DVD that would provide an primarily visual introduction to the genre and an effective springboard for discussion.

Methodology

My teaching style is based primarily on differentiated instruction, a pedagogical approach that I learned during my certification process in the Texas public school system. Derived largely from Harold Bloom (Bloom's Taxonomy) and Howard Gardner (Multiple Intelligences), differentiated instruction asserts that we all learn in different ways; therefore, as teachers, we must employ a variety of teaching strategies and methods if we hope to reach all of our students and accommodate their diverse learning styles. This is particularly true when our students are not native-speakers of English: visual and experiential learning usually prove far more effective than word-based, auditory learning so typical of traditional college lectures.

In content-based courses (such as theatre history), my emphasis is less on students’ acquisition and retention of knowledge than on their practical understanding and application of that knowledge to their own

lives. Differentiation makes the learning personal and accessible; application makes the learning immediate and practical. This “user-friendly” approach is particularly appropriate for non-native speakers of English, who might forget the terminology but nevertheless still be able use the knowledge drawn from our class experiences.

Production

As a stage director, my primary interest is creating original, company developed performance that addresses a particular need or interest. Included on my “Selected Works” DVD are two pieces which I, along with a small company of students and staff from different disciplines, developed: *LOST* (about the effects of war on women) and *I of the Beholder* (about mental illness, perception, and creativity).

Regarding Dr. Mulliqi and Ms. Nura’s request for working with actors on a performance, there are two ready options. The first is to create an original, company-developed production based on immediate concerns or issues identified by the company that would benefit from a community gathering and performance. (Qendra Multimedia Theatre in Prishtina has identified many of these issues: youth migration, cultural heritage, domestic violence, the environment.) To maintain some essential emotional distance (akin to Brecht’s *verfremdung*), we would employ highly theatrical means perhaps unfamiliar to Kosovar performers, e.g., the “performed interview” technique used by Anna Deavere Smith in her *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles*. Drawing from my recent experience at the National Puppetry Conference, I also am interested in the role that puppets might play in social issues-based performance.

The second option is to produce a simple musical, either an original one that we create as a company or a pre-existing musical that we adapt according to our interests and abilities. (Fortunately, I have a strong musical background: I play piano, read music, sing, and, of course, have directed musicals.)

Why?

Before they married, both of my parents worked for many years in Europe. I grew up hearing about their experiences abroad and always hoped that one day I might have a similar opportunity. When I was 12, I was sent by myself to spend the summer with a German family and became the first in a series of children “swaps.” Of the many invaluable things I learned from that experience, perhaps the most important was to welcome and embrace difference.

I have spent most of my life in America's "Bible Belt" where difference too often is misunderstood and perceived as "wrong" –something to be avoided, even feared. This is particularly evident with our current perceptions about Islam and the faulty generalizations we have made.

I want to dispel some of our fear and ignorance by experiencing first hand Kosovo's people and culture and then sharing that experience with my American family, friends, and students via an online blog filled with pictures and written accounts. Upon returning to the U.S., I would like to develop a performance (perhaps a puppet play) about cultural difference for our annual children's theatre production, which we perform on campus each spring and tour to the local elementary school and community theatre.

Why Kosovo?

While developing and directing *LOST*, I learned about Kosovo, its people and recent war. I was moved by the accounts I read as well as by the performance we created. The experience was emotional and powerful but also "indirect." When I read that there was a specific drama/film grant for the University of Prishtina, I realized this afforded a direct opportunity to affect positive change by sharing my expertise, experience, material resources, and passion.

Additional

Currently, I am heading our department's self-study and application for national accreditation (NAST). I also serve on our university's undergraduate curriculum committee and would be glad to work with the University of Prishtina on matters involving curriculum and program assessment.

I am certified in Texas to teach theatre from early childhood (kindergarten) through 12th grade. In Prishtina, I could help teachers and aspiring teachers better understand current American teaching methods and resources.

Specific skills and resources: Alexander Technique (training but not certification); software/freeware (Google Sketchup for 3-D design, Wix web authoring, Blogger blogging); access to BlackBoard and Sam Houston State's online subscriptions and instructional technology.

I am single and have no dependents. I am enthusiastic, even charismatic, in the classroom but am quiet and discreet in my personal life. I can eat almost anything but do not drink or smoke. I am spiritual but not religious.