

Performing Arts and Expressive Therapies

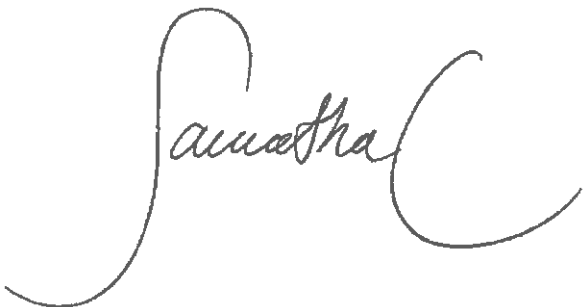
Johnston Center for Integrative Studies

Graduation Narrative

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Advisor: Julie Townsend

Graduation: April 18, 2015

A large, elegant handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha C". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S' and a distinct 'C' at the end.A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Townsend". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J' and a distinct 'T' at the end.

Throughout my time in the Johnston Center for Integrative Studies I embraced the unknown and in return will leave with an educational and life path of my own creation. My experience cannot be evaluated by pure academic growth, rooted in cerebral comprehension and articulation, but rather by a growth marked by the awareness and incorporation of the body in its entirety in the process of learning and creating. The education and gift of living in the Johnston community have been foundational in my mentality towards learning. Focuses along the way included various explorations of psychotherapy, creative expression, culture, and language.

The proverb "you can't go anywhere standing still, laying down, or on your knees," is reflective of much of the philosophy I hold today. Movement is an often forgotten process on the road to growth and discovery. How is one expected to get from A to B without motion?

This awareness of the body as a whole was the byproduct of a childhood and adolescence grounded in the creative arts, particularly theatre and dance. With movement I could bend and morph into the multifaceted characters that can handle the gravitas of the Greek tragedies and the unfettered silliness of the Shakespeare comedies. This physical technique afforded me the opportunity to open my body to every human potential and condition, not just to some. This manifested in not just the physical body but in the mental and emotional body as well.

I learned from a young age that the creative process required complete acknowledgement and understanding of one's body. This upbringing conditioned me to sync my mind and body, something I knew was valuable outside of the context of performance; but I hadn't recognized its ability to effect positive change psychosomatically in my life and the lives of others.

Coming into college my path was unclear, but regardless of the direction I knew an education void of performance would be unfulfilling. Though focused on performance, I saw immense value in psychology. An understanding of human nature is central to a career in the theatre arts - a career that asks you to portray the human condition. In using the basic concepts and theories of psychology, actors can develop more concrete, logical approaches to characters.

I chose the Johnston Center for Integrative Studies not only for its interdisciplinary focus, one that would allow me to incorporate both the arts and psychology into my degree, but also because there was an element of risk in committing to the program. Most American universities fit the criteria I was looking for - but Johnston was unique in that it lacked a definition. Here was an education founded on creative and collaborative principles, the degree I would receive would not be earned, but created.

Interwoven throughout the past four years has been a drive to learn about the human experience, social masks, and underlying personal realities and stories. Pulled by this drive I dove into social and interpersonal worlds. My experience in Psychodrama with the late Dr. Donell Miller during my first year exposed me to the power interpersonal relationships have in shaping our internal emotional lives. Trained directly by Psychodrama pioneers Jacob and Zerka Moreno, I was honored to work closely with the retired Johnston professor.

Psychodrama allowed for healing in the the re-experiencing past events through expression and role rehearsal. Rather than an individual perspective and dialogue, this approach asks its participants to share experiences both emotionally and somatically. I saw a natural process of enhanced acceptance of self and others as we together learned to relate more honestly and directly with others in the group. I continued to see this pattern in similar therapeutic group settings throughout my time in college, which reaffirmed the importance of collaboration and interpersonal relationships in my education.

Beyond Psychodrama, my involvement in theatre influenced the course my education would take. Performing various roles from the musical "Cabaret," the absurdist play "The American Dream," theatre for social change's "Nicked and Dimed," and many others, though all different in style and intention, altered my perspective of my role as an artist and performer. Performing was once purely personal; dance and theatre were activities in which I could showcase my talent and express myself effectively. In productions and courses such as "Acting for the Camera," "Advanced Acting," and "Acting in London," I quickly learned the personal reward was greater when I was learning and performing collaboratively. When I knew what I was looking for I knew what I was getting, but when I was open to possibility, I invited the possibility of experiencing something unexpected.

Theatre is an arena in which we can mentally play, acting out our fears and fantasies experimentally. It excites new ideas and perspectives and ultimately rehearses us for life. Role-playing puts one into the head of each character in turn, allowing us to see things from their viewpoint. By observing characters deal with their problems, sometimes adaptively, sometimes self-destructively, we learn lessons in how to choose among our own options.

My experiences abroad at Goldsmiths at the University of London, studying French in Montpellier, and backpacking through Peru supported my desire to navigate, communicate, negotiate, and eventually relate outside my own environment.

Speaking a different language one can most clearly see this transformation. After studying French my first and second years I chose to live in Montpellier, France for ultimate immersion and education in language and culture. In this context I found myself not only experiencing a language different than my own, but experiencing a difference in my thought processes, associations, and ways of interpreting the world.

If the goal of learning a language is to be able to communicate, then language goes beyond vocabulary. A careful examination and execution of tone, body language, semantics, and pragmatics are required. For me, learning a language is an attempt at trying to understand and acknowledge a system and structure other than my own, a process I find valuable for an aspiring psychologist.

Living in London, though English speaking, I elaborated on what I had cultivated while traveling France. Much like language, culture exceeds its geography. Fascinated and motivated by the understanding and adoption of a way of life unfamiliar to me I enrolled in "Culture & Performance" and "Acting in London" to further acquaint myself with the diverse community I was surrounded by.

Using London as a point of exploration I wandered into surrounding countries. One day I would find myself climbing a fortress in Montenegro, the next somberly navigating the grounds of a former concentration camp in Poland, and so on. Every day was a seemingly new adventure, and through the surrender of expectation and with the intention of gaining new knowledge and skills I had hoped that a personal immersion into another culture would be a natural outcome.

A semester abroad, though situated in a city regarded by many as the cultural capital of the world, was not my ticket into another culture. I came to acknowledge that being multicultural does not make one a citizen of the world. What was initially disappointment turned out to be the learning and understanding of a skill whose value would overstep this perceived failure.

My course in "Cultural & Human Behavior" further clarified my understanding of the purpose of my studies in France; I was an observer having an experience in a different culture, not an individual becoming a true part of that culture. I was not gaining an entirely new identity in this culture - what I was gaining instead was the ability to see from an entirely new perspective. My willingness to unearth and accept a new viewpoint, something I gained while navigating through different experiences abroad, is what I believe will strengthen my relationships with the unfamiliar and unique individuals and environments I encounter.

After my six months abroad analyzing and examining culture, communication, and space I returned to Johnston ready to embrace community and experiment with facilitation. Upon returning I entered a four-week intensive lab in "The Psychology of Interpersonal Relationships" provided a platform in which to grow in a group context. The importance of community hadn't been clearer than in this context. Developing an awareness of the self through receiving honest feedback, I recognized that intrapersonal work comes full circle when applied interpersonally. Though a shocking, distressing, and confounding process, as a group we found beauty and empowerment in a space built on confrontation and complete and utter honesty. The constant disclosure of the many internal worlds presented in lab brought to my awareness the role courage plays in a therapeutic setting. Fearlessness is

infectious. The courage one displays in sitting with the workings, emotions, and drives of the self, translates into a better recognition of those traits in others.

The principles of this course set the tone for my final year at the University of Redlands, one rooted in interpersonal growth and practice in the role of a facilitator. Hired as the Johnston Community Intern I dove into a position responsible for gaging the needs of community and providing programing reflective of those needs. Deeper than the rewarding outcomes of the immense amount of work I put into programming was the practice of facilitating others' contributions to community. The best way for me to give back to the community wasn't by presenting a product to be consumed; I found that support is greater when participants are given the tools to create. Help has its limits, whereas opportunity is boundless.

Perhaps this philosophy was best executed through my work on the Johnston internal transfer process. I was tasked by a committee made up of current faculty, administration, and students to teach a course for incoming transfers from the greater university into the Johnston program. By providing a platform for transfers to clearly understand educational and community policies while simultaneously assimilating them into the living-learning component of Johnston I hoped that by semester's end participants would have a greater understanding of their potential as students.

I used principles from my "Counseling" course periodically, as I found that teaching and personal growth often parallel one another. Like a potential therapist, my task was to create a climate in which individuals were likely to try out new ways of being and behaving within the Johnston program. This was process that not only aided the internal transfers in recognizing the scope their individualized education, but contributed to the long term structure and health of the institution. When all parties acknowledge the resources and potential they hold within an organization, the organization as a whole runs more optimally.

Through Johnston, I was given the tools to pursue and develop my ideas and rehearse them in a curative way, letting one inspiration lead to the next, allowing me to dig deep into certain subjects while also being able to explore new territories. With both theoretical and experiential understanding of the power of the therapeutic relationship, the power of the creative arts to express oneself, and the power a community has to promote positive mental states and increased awareness, the eternal wanderer had found a solid path.

Depth

Psychology

PSYC-100 04 Intro to Psychology
JNST-000Z 01 Intro to Art Therapy
JNST-074 31 IS: Psychodrama
PSYC-250 02 Statistical Methods
SPRO-300 01 Approach of Psychotherapy & Counselling
PSYC-252 01 Culture & Human Behavior
JNST-000H 01 Psychology of Interpersonal Relationships
PSYC-335 01 Developmental Psychology
PSYC-349 01 Social Psychology
PSYC-344 01 Abnormal Psychology
PSYC-440 01 Counseling

Theatre and Dance

JNST-000C 01 Shakespeare Performance & Text
THA-105 03 Production Credit
THA-340 01 Advanced Acting
THA-260 03 Dance Theatre Workshop
THA-105 01 Production Credit-Directing
THA-105 04 Production Credit
THA-105 05 Production Credit
THA-105 01 Production Credit
THA-240 01 Acting Techniques

THA-260 01 Modern Dance
SPRO-302 01 Acting in London
SPRO-303 01 Culture & Performance
THA-260 02 Acting for the Camera
THA-305 01A Production Credit: Acting
JNST-083 32 IS: Dance Technique, Expression, and Conditioning

Breadth

FREN-101 02 1st Year French
FS-100 39 Next Stop: the Twilight Zone

FREN-102 02 1st Year French
 FREN-201 02 2nd Year French
 JNST-000I 01 Movement Lab
 REL-120 01 Religion & Ethics
 FREN-202 02 2nd Year French
 SPRO-301 01 Body, Gender, Culture
 JNST-000E 01 Salon
 JNST-000R 01 Page to Stage: Writing for Performance
 JNST-000A 01 Senior Workshop
 JNST-000D 01 Movement in Practice
 JNST-000C 01 Integrated Semester

Course Listing by Chronology

Total Credits Earned: 138

Term	Course Listing	Credits Earned
Fall 2011	FREN-101 02 1st Year French	4
	FS-100 39 Next Stop: the Twilight Zone	4
	JNST-000C 01 Shakespeare Performance & Text	4
	PSYC-100 04 Intro to Psychology	4
Spring 2012	FREN-102 02 1st Year French	4
	JNST-000Z 01 Intro to Art Therapy	4
	JNST-074 31 IS: Psychodrama	3
	THA-105 03 Production Credit	1
	THA-340 01 Advanced Acting	4
May 2012	THA-260 03 Dance Theatre Workshop	3
Fall 2012	FREN-201 02 2nd Year French	4
	JNST-000I 01 Movement Lab	3
	REL-120 01 Religion & Ethics	4
	THA-105 01 Production Credit-Directing	1
	THA-105 04 Production Credit	1
	THA-105 05 Production Credit	1
	Spring 2013	FREN-202 02 2nd Year French
PSYC-250 02 Statistical Methods	4	
THA-105 01 Production Credit	2	
THA-240 01 Acting Techniques	4	
THA-260 01 Modern Dance	4	

Fall 2013	SPRO-300 01 Apprch of Psychotherapy & Coun	4
	SPRO-301 01 Body, Gender, Culture	4
	SPRO-302 01 Acting in London	4
	SPRO-303 01 Culture & Performance	4
Spring 2014	JNST-000E 01 Salon	4
	JNST-000R 01 Page to Stage: Writing for Perf	4
	PSYC-252 01 Culture & Human Behavior	4
	THA-260 02 Acting for the Camera	5
May 2014	JNST-000H 01 Psych of Interpersonal Relation	3
Fall 2014	JNST-000A 01 Senior Workshop	1
	JNST-000D 01 Movement in Practice	4
	PSYC-335 01 Developmental Psychology	4
	PSYC-349 01 Social Psychology	4
	THA-305 01A Production Credit: Acting	3
Spring 2015	JNST-000C 01 Integrated Semester	8
	JNST-083 32 IS: Dance Technique, Express	2
	PSYC-344 01 Abnormal Psychology	4
	PSYC-440 01 Counseling	4