

JUMBO

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The Best Drama Course a Freshman Could Ask For

By Charlotte Gilliland '16

Jumping into an upper level course during your first semester at college sounds a little daunting... right?

Well, have no fear, because the Department of Drama and Dance recently started offering an introductory class for only first-year students. This past semester the course was made up of ten freshmen. Together they explored each role of production in the theater: from lighting and sound to costume design and acting.

Professor and Chair of Drama and Dance Heather Nathans, a former Jumbo herself, taught the introductory course. She was joined by two co-teachers, Danielle Rosvally and Ibbly Cizmar, who

are both on their way to receiving PhDs in drama from Tufts. That makes the student to faculty ratio in this course about 3 to 1.

The course, Danielle explained, concentrated on practical skills. "We focused on something [students] could immediately turn around and use," she explained. "[We provided] a lot of hands-on mentorship... it was a very safe place to try new things."

The class culminated in not one, but two performances: *The Battle of Bull Run Always Makes Me Cry* and *The League of Semi-Superheroes*. For each production, one half of the students worked on the technical side of production, while the other half performed. For the second performance, the cast and crew switched roles, allowing each member to experience both sides of the craft.

For many of these students, this course didn't just introduce them to the drama department; it offered an on-stage opportunity outside of the many time-consuming extracurricular drama troupes that

can often feel daunting for freshmen trying to get their feet wet. "The course is great because we understand that you're new here," said Danielle. "It's a good way to get involved but also to enter into the university without feeling awkward about asking questions."

Throughout the semester, first-year students were partnered with older mentors in one of Tufts' many performance groups. More importantly, though, they found a close knit group of friends who shared their passion (whether newfound or not) for theater.

"One of the [students'] journals we read said... 'I met my best friend in this class,'" Danielle recalled. "They didn't want to leave the theater on the last night." Seems like a successful introduction to the drama department to me!