THEATER AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES (THST)

* THST 085a, Anatomy and Movement Renée Robinson
This course traces connections between the study of human anatomy and dance practices of the late 20th century to the present. Over the past century, a group of pioneering practitioners sought to combine advances in human anatomical and neuromuscular science with the felt, practically applied knowledge of dance artists. Their research has spawned an array of new methods for training dance and theater artists, including ideokinesis, somatics, and body-mind centering. Immersing students in a studio-based, practical exploration, this course introduces students to key ideas and thinkers in the field of dance science. Major topics include the study of functional and kinesthetic anatomy; the neuromuscular reeducation of alignment, posture and balance; the use of imagery as a motivator of movement; and the cultivation of enhanced mind-body awareness through physical practice. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. No prior experience in dance or theater necessary. This course is open to students of all physical abilities and backgrounds. The instructor will work with students with special needs or specific physical disabilities to adapt the movement exercises to meet their capabilities. HU

* THST 093a / AMST 093a / ER&M 093a / SAST 061a, South Asian American Theater and Performance Shilarna Stokes
South Asian Americans have appeared on U.S. stages since the late nineteenth century, yet only in the last quarter century have plays and performances by South Asian Americans begun to dismantle dominant cultural representations of South Asian and South Asian American communities and to imagine new ways of belonging. This seminar introduces you to contemporary works of performance (plays, stand-up sets, multimedia events, and more) written and created by U.S.-based artists of South Asian descent as well as artists of the South Asian diaspora whose works have had an impact on U.S. audiences. With awareness that the South Asian American diaspora comprises multiple, contested, and contingent identities, we investigate how artists have worked to manifest complex representations of South Asian Americans onstage, challenge institutional and professional norms, and navigate the perils and pleasures of becoming visible. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

* THST 098a, Composing and Performing the One Person Play Hal Brooks
First-year actors, playwrights, directors, and even students who have never considered taking a theater class, create their own work through a combination of reading, analysis, writing, and on-your-feet exercises. Students read texts and view performances that are generated by one actor in an attempt to discover the methodology that works best for their own creations. The course culminates with a midterm and final presentation created and performed by the student. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

THST 110a, Collaboration Elise Morrison and Emily Coates
This foundational course introduces collaborative techniques at the core of topics, domains, and practices integral to the major in Theater and Performance Studies. We explore the seeds of performance from its basic essence as human expression, to movement, text, and storytelling, gradually evolving into collectively created works of performance. Techniques and readings may be drawn from improvisation, dance, music, design and spoken word contexts, and will encourage cohort building, critical reflection, and the join of individual and collective artistic expression. Guests from within and outside performance disciplines enhance the potential to investigate crossover between different media. HU RP

* THST 129a or b / ENGL 129a or b / HUMS 127a or b / LITR 168a or b, Tragedy in the European Literary Tradition Staff
The genre of tragedy from its origins in ancient Greece and Rome through the European Renaissance to the present day. Themes of justice, religion, free will, family, gender, race, and dramaturgy. Works might include Aristotle’s Poetics or Homer’s Iliad and plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca, Hrotsvitha, Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Calderon, Racine, Büchner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Wedekind, Synge, Lorca, Brecht, Beckett, Soyinka, Tarell Alvin McCraney, and Lynn Nottage. Focus on textual analysis and on developing the craft of persuasive argument through writing. WR, HU

* THST 200a, Introduction to Theatrical Violence Michael Rossmy and Kelsey Rainwater
Engagement in a theoretical and practical exploration of depicting violence in theater. Actors learn to execute the illusions of violence on stage both safely and effectively, and the skills of collaboration, partner awareness, concentration, and impulse response. Preference given to Theater Studies majors.

* THST 210a, Performance Concepts Hal Brooks
A studio introduction to the essential elements of acting. Coursework includes improvisation, performance exercises, scene study, and analysis grounded in the work of practitioners and theorists from Stanislavski to the present. This course is a prerequisite for several upper-level courses in Theater and Performance Studies including THST 211 and THST 300. It is open to students in all years of study, with the permission of the instructor. RP

* THST 214a / ENGL 434a, Writing Dance Brian Seibert
The esteemed choreographer Merce Cunningham once compared writing about dance to trying to nail Jello–O to the wall. This seminar and workshop takes on the challenge. Taught by a dance critic for the New York Times, the course uses a close reading of exemplary dance writing to introduce approaches that students then try themselves, in response to filmed dance and live performances in New York City, in the widest possible variety of genres. No previous knowledge of dance is required. WR, HU

Theater and Performance Studies (THST)

Elise Morrison and Emily Coates

RP

Hal Brooks

HU

Renee Robinson

WR, HU

Michael Rossmy and Kelsey Rainwater

WR, HU

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WR, HU

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WR, HU
* THST 216a / ART 216a, The Body as Stage: Experiments in Performance Art  Shilarna Stokes
Your (Body + Space + Time + Labor + Inquire + Experience) = Performance Art? Working through experiences of oppression, isolation, illness, and individual/collective trauma, how do artists use their immediate material conditions to investigate and document their own survival as well as to imagine new forms of resistance and collective flourishing? Alternating between seminar discussions (remote) and performance-based experiments (in-person) this course explores the theory and practice of performance art. Beginning with an examination of the ground-breaking bodies of work created by Antonin Artaud and Marina Abramovic, we go on to consider works by more than a dozen twentieth- and twenty-first century artists including Carolee Schneeman, Dread Scott, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Ana Mendieta, Stelarc, Yoko Ono, Aliza Shvarts, and others. We investigate topics including ritual, gesture, duration, suffering, dwelling, prosthesis, citation, relationality, protest, intermediacy, and interaction, and we interrogate performance art's accessibility, efficacy, and marketing. Students create several small studies over the course of the semester, sharing them in safe, informal settings and are guided in the development of a culminating work of performance-based research. All physical capabilities are welcome, no prior experience in theater, visual art, or performance is required, and all assignments will be adaptable to the remote environment.  HU RP

* THST 224a / MUSI 228a, Musical Theater Performance I  Dan Egan and Maria-Christina Olivaras
The structure, meaning, and performance of traditional and contemporary musical theater repertoire. Focus on ways to "read" a work, decipher compositional cues for character and action, facilitate internalization of material, and elicit lucid interpretations. This semester's course also embraces the online format to address performing and recording virtually as a vital tool in the current field of musical theater. The course combines weekly synchronous learning and private coaching sessions. For singers, music directors, and directors. Admission by audition and application only. Auditions/interviews will be scheduled during the first two weeks of August. May be repeated for credit. For audition information contact dan.egan@yale.edu.  HU RP

THST 225a / FREN 244a / LITR 383a, The French Stage: History and Performance of French Theater from Molière to Césaire  Staff
From Molière to Marie Ndiaye, via Augustin de Beaumarchais, Olympe de Gouges, George Sand and Wouadj Mouhawad, theater is at the center of French artistic and political culture. This course covers four centuries of theater history, from the age of Versailles to the beginning of the twenty-first century. We discover the plays, their relationship to current events, their political and aesthetic dimensions, the history of their staging, and the material aspects of their productions.  HU o Course cr

* THST 227a, Queer Caribbean Performance  Emily Coates
With its lush and fantastic landscape, fabulous carnivalesque aesthetics, and rich African Diaspora Religious traditions, the Caribbean has long been a setting where New World black artists have staged competing visions of racial and sexual utopia and dystopia. However, these foreigner-authored fantasies have often overshadowed the lived experience and life storytelling of Caribbean subjects. This course explores the intersecting performance cultures, politics, and sensual/sexual practices that have constituted queer life in the Caribbean region and its diaspora. Placing Caribbean queer of color critique alongside key moments in twentieth and twenty-first century performance history at home and abroad, we ask how have histories of the plantation, discourses of race and nation, migration, and revolution led to the formation of regionally specific queer identifications. What about the idea of the “tropics” has made it such fertile ground for queer performance making, and how have artists from the region identified or dis-identified with these aesthetic formations? This class begins with an exploration of theories of queer diaspora and queer of color critique’s roots in black feminisms. We cover themes of exile, religious rites, and organizing as sites of queer political formation and creative community in the Caribbean.  HU

* THST 234a, Politics and Protest in Dance History  Emily Coates
In the wake of COVID-19, the future of Dance Studies seems more unclear and destabilized than ever, as the very act of gathering to dance or watch live performance carries new political meanings and risks. Does dance even matter in our current moment in United States history? To rephrase the question, can the tools of dance history and performance studies—with its attention not only to how individual bodies move but how we form relationships and solidarities by moving together—inform how we respond to the politics of today? This class introduces students to the intersections between dance and politics in 20th/21st century United States and its migratory spheres. Students watch filmed performance and attend live shows to understand how dancers use embodiment to make arguments, enact cultural diplomacy, and shift the grounds of activism. We analyze how our society has made meaning out of dancing bodies that move across stages, dance clubs, and film screens. We use movement analysis and choreography as a lens to understand strategies of organizing and protest. Focusing mainly on new trends in Dance Studies, we center queer theory, performance theory, critical race theory, and transnational history methodologies. By the end of the semester, students are equipped to identify key moments in American concert dance and social dance history, as well as their relation to broader political moments and social movements for class equality and racial/gender/sexual liberation, develop the descriptive and analytical tools to write about movement-based performance, design and create their own work of dance ethnography.  HU

* THST 236a / MUSI 185a, American Musical Theater History  Dan Egan
Critical examination of relevance and context in the history of the American musical theater. Historical survey, including nonmusical trends, combined with text and musical analysis. Limited enrollment. Interested students should contact dan.egan@yale.edu for application requirements.  WR, HU

* THST 300a, The Director and the Text I  Toni Dorfman
Practicing fundamentals of the art of directing: close reading and deep text analysis in search of physical action; rehearsal preparation; mixing the elements of composition (scenography, light, sound & music, projections, movement, language); and most crucially—the work with the actor. Weekly assignments (some labor intensive), discussion of same, and regular on-the-floor experiments. While
concentrating on basic practices, the course is designed for students to seek out an initial understanding of individual, even idiosyncratic, artistic directorial voice. Prerequisite: THST 210. HU

* THST 305a, Production Seminar: The Actor and the Text  
  Toni Dorfman
Critical and theatrical exploration of the relationships among biography, history, and drama, culminating in a public performance. †Admission by audition, with priority to Theater Studies majors seeking a senior project. HU

* THST 307a, Improvisation, Études, and Devising  
  David Chambers
This course, intended for actors, directors, playwrights, and others interested, moves through three related cycles of improvisational performance. While there are readings and viewings of extant materials, this class should be considered as performance research; it mostly takes place experientially, “on the floor.” The goal is to immerse students in role models and practical techniques of improvisation, études, and devising, ideas that are already popular in campus theatrical works and benefit from an applied course to underpin, challenge, and expand their efforts.

* THST 317a / ENGL 224a / LITR 349a, Tragedy and Drama of Reconciliation  
  Jan Hagens
Close reading of dramas of reconciliation from the Western canon that have traditionally been categorized as tragedies. Ways in which the recategorization of such plays lends additional complexity and meaning to their endings and allows for new interpretations of the texts, their authors, and the history of drama. HU

* THST 319a / AFAM 313a, Embodying Story  
  Renee Robinson
The intersection of storytelling and movement as seen through historical case studies, cross-disciplinary inquiry, and studio practice. Drawing on eclectic source materials from different artistic disciplines, ranging from the repertory of Alvin Ailey to journalism, architectural studies, cartoon animation, and creative processes, students develop the critical, creative, and technical skills through which to tell their own stories in movement. No prior dance experience necessary. HU

* THST 320a / ENGL 453a, Playwriting  
  Donald Margulies
A seminar and workshop on reading for craft and writing for the stage. In addition to weekly prompts and exercises, readings include modern American and British plays by Pinter, Mamet, Churchill, Kushner, Nottage, Williams, Hansberry, Hwang, Vogel, and Wilder. Emphasis on play structure, character, and conflict. RP

* THST 322a / ENGL 481a, Advanced Playwriting  
  Deborah Margolin
A seminar and workshop in advanced playwriting that furthers the development of an individual voice. Study of contemporary and classical plays to understand new and traditional forms. Students write two drafts of an original one-act play or adaptation for critique in workshop sessions. Familiarity with basic playwriting tools is assumed. Open to juniors and seniors, nonmajors as well as majors, on the basis of their work; priority to Theater Studies majors. Writing samples should be submitted to the instructor before the first class meeting. Prerequisite: THST 320 or 321, or a college seminar in playwriting, or equivalent experience. RP

* THST 335a / AFAM 435a, West African Dance: Traditional to Contemporary  
  Lacina Coulibaly
A practical and theoretical study of the traditional dances of Africa, focusing on those of Burkina Faso and their contemporary manifestations. Emphasis on rhythm, kinesthetic form, and gestural expression. The fusion of modern European dance and traditional African dance. Admission by audition after the first class meeting. HU RP

* THST 340a, Ballet Now  
  Daniel Ulbricht
A practical investigation of seminal ballets in the repertory of New York City Ballet. Tracing a sweeping history of artistic innovation from the early twentieth century to the present, this course covers the technique and aesthetic details that constitute New York City Ballet's style and follow the ways that those stylistic strengths are applied and transformed in the contemporary ballets of the 21st century. Repertory excerpts move through foundational works by George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins to ballets created in the past fifteen years by some of the most prominent ballet choreographers working today. Prior dance training required. Admission is by audition during the first class meeting. HU

* THST 342a, Public Speaking  
  Elise Morrison
Development of skills in public speaking and in critical analysis of public discourse. Key aspects of rhetoric and cultural communication; techniques for formulating and organizing persuasive arguments, engaging with an audience, and using the voice and body effectively.

* THST 401a, Conceptual Sound Design for Theater  
  Nathan Roberts
Theoretical and practical considerations for conceptual sound design, the creation of aural content and imagery in support of dramatic action. The use of sound to communicate meaning and intention effectively in a theatrical setting. Auditory culture and the phenomenology of hearing; the role of technology in sound design; development of critical listening skills and of a foundational vocabulary for the medium. Projects focus on the generation of content and ideas in support of a text. HU

* THST 413a, Structures of Comic Performance  
  Deborah Margolin
Relations between the theory and practice of comic performance. A historical dramaturgical investigation of what makes something funny; practical, performative experiments in comedy. Prerequisites: THST 210 and 211. HU

* THST 414a, Lyric Writing for Musical Theater  
  Michael Korie
The craft of lyric writing in musical theater, opera, and crossover works. Both historical models and new composition used as objects of study. Analysis of song form and placement, and of lyric for character, tone, and diction. Creation of lyrics in context. Noted composers and lyricists of produced musical theater works join the class periodically to comment on the work created. Students also have the
opportunity to conceive an original work of musical theater, a crossover work, or an opera libretto, and create portions of the score with original lyrics and music by student composers, with whom the writers will collaborate. Limited enrollment. Interested students should write to dan.egan@yale.edu for application requirements. May not be repeated for credit. HU RP

* THST 452a, Acting: Constructing a Character  
Gregory Wallace
A practical exploration of the internal and external preparation an actor must undergo to effectively render the moment-to-moment life of a given character. Focusing on monologues, scenes, and group explorations of text the class engages in a rigorous investigation of how the actor uses the self as the foundation for transformation. Course consists of close readings, research presentations, rehearsals and in-class scene presentations. Preference to senior and juniors. Open to non-majors. Limited enrollment. Admission by audition. See Syllabus page on Canvas for audition information and requirements. HU

* THST 457a / AMST 463a / EVST 463a / FILM 455a, Documentary Film Workshop  
Charles Musser
A yearlong workshop designed primarily for majors in Film and Media Studies or American Studies who are making documentaries as senior projects. Seniors in other majors admitted as space permits. HU

* THST 471a, Directed Independent Study  
Shilarna Stokes
An independent study should generally conform to the standards and procedures of the senior project, THST 491, even when not undertaken by a senior. If the independent study is a performance or directing project, the adviser visits rehearsals and performances at the mutual convenience of adviser and student. The project must be accompanied by an essay of about fifteen pages, worth about half the final grade. Although the paper’s requirements vary with the project and its adviser, it must be more than a rehearsal log. The paper typically engages interpretative and performance issues as revealed in other productions of the work (if they exist). The writing should be comcomitant with rehearsal, to enable each to inform the other, and a draft must be presented to, and commented on by, the adviser at least a week before—not after—the final performance. The final version of the paper, incorporating adjustments and reflections, should be turned in to the adviser no later than ten days after the performance closes, and no later than the first day of the final examination period. An essay project entails substantial reading, at least four meetings with the adviser, and a paper or papers totaling at least twenty pages. A playwriting project normally requires twenty new script pages every two weeks of the term and regular meetings with the adviser. A final draft of the entire script is the culmination of the term’s work. Application forms are available from the director of undergraduate studies. Juniors may use one term of these courses to prepare for their senior projects. Open to juniors and seniors. Prerequisites: THST 210 and one seminar. RP

* THST 491a, Senior Project in Theater Studies  
Nathan Roberts and Dan Egan
Students must submit proposals for senior projects to the Theater Studies office by the deadline announced by the director of undergraduate studies. Attendance at weekly section meetings is required for all students undertaking production projects. Application forms are available in the Theater Studies office, 220 York St.