THEATER STUDIES

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As a branch of the humanities and as a complex cultural practice, theater claims a rich history and literature and an equally rich repertoire of embodied knowledge and theory. Theater Studies emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between practice and scholarly study. The major combines practical training with theory and history, while stressing creative critical thinking. Students are encouraged to engage intellectual and physical approaches to explore diverse cultural forms, historical traditions, and contemporary life. As the study of theater is interdisciplinary in scope and global in perspective, students are expected to take courses in cognate disciplines such as history, philosophy, anthropology, political science, film, art, literature, and foreign languages. Faculty members are affiliated with a range of departments; their diverse expertise lends breadth and depth to course offerings and enables students to devise a course of study reflective of their developing interests.

Special features of the program are the production seminars, guided independent study projects, and senior project. Each production seminar concentrates on study, through practice, of one aspect of work in the theater; examples are approaches to acting, directing, writing, dance, design or digital media in performance. Each seminar involves numerous projects that grow out of the term’s work. For example, the project may be production of a play or several plays, adaptation or translation of existing works, or creation of original plays, performance pieces, or set design. Independent study projects give the student freedom to pursue individual and group-generated projects under the guidance of a Theater Studies faculty member. All production seminars require permission of the instructor (by application or audition). Independent study project courses are open only to majors.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The major consists of ten term courses beyond the introductory prerequisites (THST 110, 111), one of which must be THST 210, Introduction to Performance Concepts. Students are encouraged to enroll in a balanced combination of courses involving studio work and courses with literature, history, and theory content. Of the ten required term courses, four must focus on dramatic literature or theater history. At least one of the four courses should include dramatic literature originating in a language other than English. Students are urged to read plays in the original languages whenever possible. Students should choose additional courses to develop the perspectives achieved in the production and literature courses.

Credit/D/Fail Courses taken Credit/D/Fail may not be counted toward the requirements of the major in Theater Studies.

SENIOR REQUIREMENTS

Majors satisfy the senior project requirement in one of two ways. They may undertake a one-term senior project (THST 491) or, with the approval of the director of undergraduate studies, they may take one of the dramatic literature or theater history courses, or a production seminar, as a senior seminar. Senior projects may take the form of directing, designing, or writing a play or musical, performing a role, choreographing a dance piece, or writing a critical essay. Performance-oriented projects are in addition to a senior essay, which is an integral requirement of THST 491. Students interested in mounting a production as part of their senior project are encouraged to develop collaborative proposals among actors, writers, directors, designers, dancers, or dramaturgs. Students proposing a collaborative production project have priority for rehearsal time and production slots in the Whitney Theater Space, 53 Wall Street. Proposals for senior project productions will normally be approved only for students who have previously served as producers of other students’ senior projects.

Students wishing to undertake a senior project must submit a proposal before the deadline announced by the director of undergraduate studies. This deadline typically falls before spring break of the junior year; students in the junior year will be provided with information and guidance towards the preparation of this rigorous proposal in the months leading up to the deadline. Each proposal is submitted to a faculty committee for approval.

ADVISING

Courses in the School of Drama Majors in Theater Studies are encouraged to consider taking selected courses in design, dramaturgy, and theater management, with permission of the instructor, the director of undergraduate studies, and the registrar of the School of Drama. Undergraduates may not, however, enroll in acting or directing courses offered by the School of Drama. Students enrolling in School of Drama courses should note that a maximum of four term courses from the professional schools may be offered toward the bachelor’s degree. Students also should note that the academic calendars of the School of Drama and of Yale College differ. The School of Drama calendar should be consulted for scheduling.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites THST 110, 111
Number of courses 10 term courses beyond prereqs (incl senior req)
Specific course required THST 210
Distribution of courses 4 courses in dramatic lit or theater hist, 1 with reading in lit other than English
Senior requirement Senior seminar or senior project (THST 491)
Students attend screenings and live professional performances of plays, music concerts, and dance events. The blogosphere. The idea of the audience explored in relation to both a live act or screening and a piece of writing about such an event. 

Introduction to journalistic reporting on performances as current events, with attention to writing in newspapers, magazines, and the blogosphere. The idea of the audience explored in relation to both a live act or screening and a piece of writing about such an event. Students attend screenings and live professional performances of plays, music concerts, and dance events.

Core Curriculum in Theater Studies

* THST 110a and THST 111b, Survey of Theater and Drama Elise Morrison
An introduction to theater history, plays, aesthetic theories, and performance techniques. From antiquity to the Restoration period in the fall and continuing through to the present in the spring. HU

* THST 210a, Introduction to Performance Concepts Staff
A studio introduction to the basic techniques of acting, including the actor’s vocabulary and performance tools. Improvisation, performance exercises, and scene work based on Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov, Michael Chekhov, Strasberg, Adler, Meisner, and Hagen. Admission by audition. Open to Theater Studies majors only. Required for Theater Studies majors in the year immediately following THST 110, 111. RP

Drama and Dance: History, Theory, Literature

* THST 096a / AFAM 055a / AMST 026a, Protest Music in America and the Black Freedom Struggle Daphne Brooks
Exploration of the history, politics, and cultures of protest music across three centuries, including the multiple genres, aesthetics, and performance strategies innovated as forms of black liberation. Topics include uniquely subversive vocal strategies, lyrical tropes, and instrumental disturbances, as well as African American literature that interrogates the radical dimensions of black music in the context of captivity, the post-Reconstruction era, the Jim Crow era, the long Civil Rights, and Black Power movements. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. HU RP

* THST 097b, Anatomy in Motion Bronwen MacArthur
The connection between advances in human anatomy and kinesiology—the science of human movement—and dance practices from the early 1900s to the present. Study of seminal texts and practical exercises that drove the research of Frederick M. Alexander, Mabel Elsworth Todd, Barbara Clark, and Lulu Sweigard and the application of their ideas in contemporary movement practices today. Topics include the synthesis of dance and science; the reeducation of alignment, posture and balance; the use of imagery; and the unification of mind and body. No prior dance experience required. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. HU

* THST 099a / FILM 045a, Dance on Film Emily Coates
An examination of dance on film from c. 1920 to the present, including early Hollywood pictures, the rise of Bollywood, avant-garde films of the postwar period, translations of stage choreography to screen, music videos, and dance film festivals. The impact of industry, circulation and audience, aesthetic lineages, and craft in the union of the two mediums. Students develop an original short film for a final class project. No prior dance or filmmaking experience necessary. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. WR, HU

* THST 115a / HUMS 455a / PHYS 115a, The Physics of Dance Sarah Demers Konezny and Emily Coates
Critical investigation of introductory concepts in physics through the lens of dance. Topics in physics include the normal force, friction, Newton’s laws, projectile motion, potential and kinetic energy, and conservation of energy. Topics in dance include aspects of dance history, contemporary artists who engage with science, and the development of movement studies. Class meetings include movement exercises. Prerequisite: basic trigonometry and algebra. Prior dance experience is not required. QB, HU, SC

* THST 228b / ENGL 244b / FILM 397b, Writing about the Performing Arts Margaret Spillane
Introduction to journalistic reporting on performances as current events, with attention to writing in newspapers, magazines, and the blogosphere. The idea of the audience explored in relation to both a live act or screening and a piece of writing about such an event. Students attend screenings and live professional performances of plays, music concerts, and dance events. WR, HU
THST 256a / MUSI 246a, American Musical Theater History
Daniel 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. WR, HU, RP

THST 291a / ENGL 288a, Eloquence: Classical Rhetoric for Modern Media
Joseph Roach
Classical rhetoric, from Demosthenes to the digital age: the theory and practice of persuasive public speaking and speech writing. Open to junior and senior Theater Studies majors, and to nonmajors with permission of the instructor. HU

THST 309a / MUSI 352a, Women on Stage, From Baroque to Beyoncé
Gundula Kreuzer and Annelies Andries
Investigation of women's representation and involvement in musical performances over last 400 years. Opera and popular music in dialogue with gender studies, performance studies, and recently burgeoning field of voice studies. Topics include: rise of women virtuose in seventeenth-century Italy; various gender stereotypes in opera and society; role of technology in twentieth-century female artistry; gender-bending in performance art; marketing of the female body; and musical construction of feminism and racial identity. Prerequisite: reading knowledge of music and several years of musical experience. WR, HU, TR

THST 338b, Current Trends in Musical Theater
Daniel Egan
Exploration of musical theater created in the last ten years, with consideration of works conceived as commercial vs. those produced in non-commercial venues or developmental readings. Texts include librettos, scripts, recordings, videotapes, published essays, and analyses. These multiple approaches to understanding scores incorporate questions of how best to access multi-genre work. Attendance at selected performances in and around New York City. Music reading ability is assumed. Permission of instructor required. HU, RP

THST 355a / AMST 366a / ENGL 367a, Modernism and American Theater
Marc Robinson
Examination of modernist principles as they are adapted to, and tested in, American theater. Playwrights include Eugene O'Neill, Gertrude Stein, e. e. cummings, Djuna Barnes, Mae West, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Jane Bowles, and Frank O'Hara.

THST 365b / AMST 370b / ENGL 274b, American Drama, 1960–2000
Marc Robinson
Intensive study of a turning point in American theater. Following the example of the post-war European avant-garde, playwrights after 1960 undid fixed ideas of realism, expanded the lyric range of dramatic speech, and multiplied definitions of character and narrative. Many sought to reflect the era's eruptive politics; others offered a newly ambiguous vision of psychology. Readings include works by Edward Albee, Adrienne Kennedy, Maria Irene Fornes, Sam Shepard, David Mamet, Amiri Baraka, August Wilson, Tony Kushner, Wallace Shawn, and Susan-Lori Parks. WR, HU

THST 370b / PLSH 248b, Polish Theater and Its Traditions
Krystyna Illakowicz
Exploration of the rebellious, defiant, and explosive nature of Polish theater, including ways in which theater has challenged, ridiculed, dissected, and disabled oppressive political power. Polish experimental and absurdist traditions that resulted from a merger of the artistic and the political; environmental and community traditions of the Reduta Theatre; Polish-American theater connections. Includes attendance at live theater events as well as meetings with Polish theater groups and actors. HU, TR

THST 380b / AMST 370b, The History of Dance
Brian Seibert
An examination of major movements in the history of concert and social dance from the late nineteenth century to the present, including ballet, tap, jazz, modern, musical theater, and different cultural forms. Topics include tradition versus innovation, the influence of the African diaspora, and interculturalism. Exercises are used to illuminate analysis of the body in motion. WR, HU

THST 388a / HUMS 178a, Revenge Tragedy and Moral Ambiguity
Toni Dorfman
A study of plays and films variously construed as revenge tragedy that raise aesthetic and ethical issues, including genre, retribution, "just wars," public vs. private justice, and the possibility of resolution. How questions of crime, punishment, and justice have been posed in drama, from classical Greece through the twentieth century. HU

THST 406a / AFAM 428a, Dance and Black Popular Culture
Brian Seibert
Examination of dance in black popular culture and of black dance in American popular culture, more generally, from 19th-century slave dances and blackface minstrelsy through MTV and Beyoncé's Lemonade. Course materials include primary source documents from the white and black press, theoretical and historical fiction, and film. WR, HU

THST 417a / AFAM 425a / AMST 453a / ENGL 425a, Literature and Performance in New Orleans
Joseph Roach
Through perspectives and approaches of English literature, American studies, African-American studies, comparative literature, and theater and performance studies, students explore the sources of creative inspiration that writers and performers find in NOLA, including its cultural mystique, its colonial history, its troubled assimilation into Anglo-North America, its tortured racial politics, its natural and built environment, its spirit-world practices, its raucous festive life, its eccentric characters, its food, its music, its predisposition to catastrophe, and its capacity for re-invention and survival. WR, HU

THST 441a / WGSS 432a, Feminist Theater and Performance
Elise Morrison
Introduction to a range of works by feminist scholars, activists, playwrights, and performers who have used theatrical performance as a means by which to critique and reimagine cultural representations of gender and sexuality. Mapping out of significant theories, debates, and performance strategies that emerged out of the feminist movement(s) of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Students research, perform, and critically engage with historical and contemporary examples of feminist performance work. HU
* THST 444a / WGSS 444a, Theories of Embodiment  Gillian Lipton
Examination of theories about the body and its motion. The inscription of identity on and through the body; ways in which the body resists and rewrites identity through movement. The body as a physical, social, and phenomenological entity; institutional, normative, aesthetic, and virtual bodies. Practical workshops and exercises include movement experiences. Open to junior and senior Theater Studies majors, and to nonmajors with permission of the instructor. Students must preregister during the reading period of the preceding term.  
HU

Playwriting, Production, and Performance

* 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 freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  

* THST 100b, Introduction to Theatrical Violence  Michael Rossmy
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 210b, Introduction to Dramaturgy  Lynda Paul
Introduction to the discipline of dramaturgy. Study of dramatic literature from the ancient world to the contemporary, developing the core skills of a dramaturg. Students analyze plays for structure and logic; work with a director on production of a classical text; work with a playwright on a new play; and work with an ensemble on a devised piece.  WR, HU  

* THST 211b, Intermediate Acting  Joan MacIntosh
Continued study of acting as an art, building on performance concepts introduced in THST 210. Various approaches to the actor’s task, requiring deeper understanding of conceptual issues and increasing freedom and individuality in building a character. Exercises, monologues, and scene work. Admission by audition. Prerequisite: THST 210.  HU RP  

* THST 224a / MUSI 228a, Musical Theater Performance I  Annette Jolles
The structure and meaning 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. For singers, pianists, and directors. Prerequisites: MUSI 211 and 219, or with permission of instructor. Admission by audition only. May be repeated for credit. For audition information e-mail dan.egan@yale.edu.  HU RP  

* THST 226b / MUSI 229b, Musical Theater Performance II  Andrew Gerle
The collaborative process and its effect on musical theater performance. Choreography, music direction, and origination of new works. Analysis of texts, scripts, and taped or filmed performances; applications in students’ own performance. May be repeated for credit. For audition information e-mail dan.egan@yale.edu.  RP  

* THST 231b, Chekhov in Performance  Gregory Wallace
A studio-based exploration of the world of Anton Chekhov, focusing on acting technique through scene work as well as character analysis and development. Admission by audition only.  HU  

* THST 300a, The Director and the Text  Toni Dorfman
Basic exercises in approaching dramatic or other literary texts from the director’s perspective. Particular attention to the many roles and functions of the director in production. Rehearsal and production of workshop scenes. Open to junior and senior Theater Studies majors, and to nonmajors with permission of the instructor. Prerequisite: THST 210.  HU RP  

* THST 310b / RUSS 310b, Analysis through Action  David Chambers
Study of “Analysis Through Action,” the Russian method of converting written word into onstage action. Rooted in the last experiments of Konstantin Stanislavski, this methodology remains alive today in Russian avant-garde theater. With Anton Chekhov’s, The Cherry Orchard as the master text, students examine and deploy two interdependent components: in-depth text analysis and focused physical/vocal improvisations. Some basic acting, directing, and/or dramaturgy assumed.  HU TR  

* THST 311a / WGSS 289a, The Actor and the Text: Macbeth  Deborah Margolin
The history and interpretive dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s Macbeth, as well as challenges faced by the actors in past productions and in a present interpretation of the work. Historical forces that influenced the author in his time; the immediacy and relevance of the play’s themes and dramatic tropes. The course culminates in a full production of the play. Admission by audition; open to nonmajors.  HU RP  

* THST 312b, Acting Shakespeare  James Bundy
A practicum in acting verse drama, focusing on tools to mine the printed text for given circumstances, character, objective, and action; noting the opportunities and limitations that the printed play script presents; and promoting both the expressive freedom and responsibility of the actor as an interpretive and collaborative artist in rehearsal. The course will include work on sonnets, monologues, and scenes. Admission by audition. Preference to seniors and juniors; open to nonmajors.  HU RP
* THST 318b / MUSI 322b, Analyzing, Directing, and Performing Early Opera  
Grant Herreid
Study of a seventeenth-century Venetian opera, with attention to structural analysis of text and music. Exploration of period performance practice, including rhetorical expression, musical style, gesture, dance, Italian elocution, and visual design. Production of the opera in conjunction with the Yale Baroque Opera Project. Open to all students, but designed especially for singers and directors. Prerequisites: MUSI 211 and 219. Admission by audition only. May be repeated for credit. For audition information e-mail grant.herreid@yale.edu.  
HU RP

* THST 319a / AFAM 312a, 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 324b, Playwright-Director Laboratory  
Toni Dorfman
An exploration of the collaboration between the director and the playwright in the creation of new work. Particular attention to the shaping of dramatic action, structure, and characters. Short scenes are written, staged, critiqued, and revised. Prerequisites: THST 210; for directors: THST 300; for playwrights: THST 320, 321; or with permission of instructor.  
RP

* THST 335b / AFST 435b, 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 during the first class meeting.  
HU RP

* THST 343b, 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 376b, Digital Media in Performance  
Nathan Roberts
Practical and theoretical innovations in contemporary theater and performance brought about by new technologies and forms of information exchange in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Exploration of how the live body on stage is reconfigured and reimagined through technological intervention. Priority to majors in Theater Studies, in Art, and in Computing and the Arts. Students must preregister during the reading period of the preceding term.  

* THST 387b, Choreography in Practice and Theory  
Irene Hultman Monti
A seminar and workshop in dance-theater composition. Focus on the history of dance composition, tools for generating and interpreting movement, basic choreographic devices, and dance in dialogue with media, music, and other art forms. Choreographic projects developed over the course of the term are presented in a final performance. Admission by application. May be repeated for credit.  
HU RP

* THST 400b / ART 385b / FILM 348b, Performance and the Moving Image  
Emily Coates, Joan MacIntosh, and Johannes DeYoung
The boundaries between live and mediated performance explored through the creation of an original work that draws on methods in experimental theater, dance, and video art. Questions concerning live versus mediated bodies, the multiplication of time, space, and perspective through technology, and the development of moving images. The final production includes both a live performance and an art video. Application deadline January 5, 2018. Contact the instructors for more information. Open to students of all levels and majors.  
WR, HU

* THST 412b, Libretto Writing for Musical Theater  
Marsha Norman
Practical instruction in book writing for musical theater combined with close reading of historical and contemporary examples of the genre. Weekly exercises focus on issues of craft, creativity, and collaboration.  
RP

* THST 428b, Projection Design and Technology  
Erich Bolton
An introduction to projection design and technology. Media as a storytelling tool; emerging trends in projection design technology. Engagement with and analysis of projection designs in current productions. Students create original storyboards and media based on reading and analysis of both classic and contemporary texts.  

* THST 437a / ENGL 479 / ER&M 437, Playwriting Workshop behind Bars: Sacred Texts and Social Justice  
Ronald Jenkins
Through the study of theatrical works that have been adapted from sacred texts, the course introduces students to playwriting techniques helpful for writing their own scripts based on a socially conscious reading of sacred texts. Possible collaboration with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals in adapting Dante’s Divine Comedy for the stage.  
HU

* THST 438b / HUMS 181b, Production Seminar: War Play  
Toni Dorfman
A study of plays and films, epic and otherwise, about war, culminating in the production of Bertolt Brecht’s, Mother Courage. Admission by audition in August. Prerequisite: THST 210, and/or permission of the instructor.  
HU
Special Projects

* THST 471a and THST 472b, Directed Independent Study  Nathan Roberts
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 concomitant 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.

* THST 491a or b, Senior Project in Theater Studies  Nathan Roberts and Daniel 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.