THEATER, DANCE, AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES (THST)

* THST 080a, Worlds in Performance  Alexandra Vazquez
In this first-year seminar, students learn a variety of approaches to analyzing performance across the media (music, theater, dance, and visual arts). Every performance holds a multitude of people, places, and histories, and this course trains students to bring their creative and critical skills more thoughtfully to any artistic experience. To study the worlds inside performance requires movement through literature (including poetry and novels), aesthetic criticism (scholarly and journalistic), historical texts, and attendance at live events. As every performance holds a legacy of many others, students learn to sense the dynamic traditions enacted inside them. The skill set developed in this seminar is portable across the humanities for its solid introductions to archival research, the field of Performance Studies, descriptive writing, historical inquiry, and critical analysis. This course puts the skills of the seminar into actual practice as we take in a musical performance, a play, a dance performance, and a museum visit together. Enrollment limited to first-year students.  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.  HU

THST 110a, Collaboration  Hal Brooks and Renee Robinson
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 1029b / ENGL 129a / 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 and Sohina Sidhu
A studio introduction to the essential elements of performance. Grounded in the work of major twentieth- and twenty-first-century practitioners and theorists, this course guides students in exercises designed to cultivate physical expression, awareness of time and space, ensemble building, character development, storytelling, vocal production, embodied analysis, and textual interpretation. It 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 majors and in all years of study, with the permission of the instructor. RP

* THST 215a / 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

* THST 224a / MUSI 228a, Musical Theater Performance I  Annette Jolles and Dan Egan
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 226b / MUSI 229b, Musical Theater Performance II  Andrea Burns
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 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 239a / AFAM 342a / ENGL 239a, African American Drama through 1959
Shane Vogel
This course surveys the formal development and major themes of African American drama from the antebellum period through 1959. We examine how dramatists and performers reimagined the various meanings of Blackness in the U.S. public sphere, as well as individual and collective acts of self-fashioning on and off the stage. Special attention is given to aesthetic experimentation and its relationship to political theater; transformations of genre and form; Black dramatic theory; historical drama; diasporic connections and disconnections; the relationship between music, dance, spectacle, and drama; anti-lynching drama and folk drama; representations of class, gender, and sexuality; inter- and intra-racial conflict; Black radical theatre in the New Deal; and institutional histories of key Black theatre companies.

Staff
Survey of Classical Hollywood films. Topics include history of the studio system; origin and development of genres; the film classics of the Classical Hollywood period, and the producers, screenwriters, directors, and cinematographers who created them.

* THST 255a, Queer Theory/Queer Theater
Ethan Philbrick
Theory and theater share a linguistic origin in Greek – theoria, meaning to look at, to contemplate – and this class takes this etymological overlap both seriously and playfully, pairing key essays from the last forty years of queer theory with a wide range of plays written by queer theater artists. Over the course of the semester, students look to these essays and plays to gain new conceptual tools for critically and creatively investigating the politics of sex, race, class, ability, and nationality. The class studies essays by theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Cathy J. Cohen, Leo Bersani, Esther Newton, José Esteban Muñoz, Jasbir Puar, Sa’ed Atshan, Mel Y. Chen, Avgi Saketopoulou, Amber Jamilla Musser, Kay Gabriel, and Jules Gil Peterson; as well as encounter plays and performances by artists such as María Irene Fornés, Ron Vawter, Peggy Shaw, Cherríe Moraga, Eli Clare, Casey Llewelyn, Jeremy O. Harris, Agnes Borinsky, James Ijames, Jesus I. Valles, Cecilia Gentili, and Fargo Nissim Tbakhi. Assignments for the course are both critical and creative, including short essay writing and theater making, although no previous experience in playwriting or performance is required to take the class.

* THST 293a / GMAN 290a / HUMS 171a, Politics of Performance
Sophie Schweiger
The stage is, and always has been, a political space. Ever since its beginnings, theatre has offered ways to rethink and criticize political systems, with the stage serving as a “moral institution” (Schiller) but also as a laboratory for models of representation. The stage also delineates the limits of representation for democratic societies (Rousseau), as it offers the space for experimentation and new modes of being together, being ensemble. The stage also raises the question of its own condition of possibility and the networks it depends on (Jackson). This course revisits the history of German and German speaking theatre since the Enlightenment, and discusses the stage in its relationship to war, the nation state, the social question, femicide and gender politics, the Holocaust, globalization, and 21st century migration. Readings include works by G.E. Lessing, Friedrich Schiller, Hugo v. Hofmannstahl, Georg Büchner, Peter Weiss,
Ida Fink, Dea Lohar, Elfriede Jelinek, Christoph Schlingensief, Heiner Müller, and Elsa Bernstein. HU TR

* THST 300a, The Director and the Text I  Dexter Singleton
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 301a, Making The Postdramatic Theatre: Radical Adaptations  David Chambers
This practicum course (theory and practice) will focus on the contemporary Postdramatic Theatre, and in particular the radical adaptation of works from many fields: fiction, poetry, theatre, and film. Each week a new case study will be examined through readings, videos, presentations, discussion, and students in class making their own pieces “in the manner of” the artist(s) under consideration. From the global literary canon we will look at radical theatrical adaptations of Dante, Shakespeare, Anton Chekhov, Thornton Wilder, Dion Boucicault and others, as well as investigate postdramatic devising companies such as Complicité (UK), and Gob Squad (Germany). We will also delve into the “Live Cinema” pieces of Katie Mitchell (UK/Germany) and the powerful opera stagings of Robert Wilson (US). In each case, we will be investigating the “scream” of the production—the artistic intention behind the making of the piece and physically exploring the rehearsal processes through which it was made. The throughline supposition here is that the material chosen by the artist(s) becomes a pre-text for performance games, radical interpretations, artistic innovation, and cultural disruption. Permission of instructor is required. HU RP

* THST 314a / LITR 210a / RSEE 313a / RUSS 313a / SLAV 313a, Art and Resistance in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine  Andrei Kureichyk
This interdisciplinary seminar is devoted to the study of protest art as part of the struggle of society against authoritarianism and totalitarianism. It focuses on the example of the Soviet and post-Soviet transformation of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine. The period under discussion begins after the death of Stalin in 1953 and ends with the art of protest against the modern post-Soviet dictatorships of Alexander Lukashenka in Belarus and Vladimir Putin in Russia, the protest art of the Ukrainian Maidan and the anti-war movement of artists against the Russian-Ukrainian war. The course begins by looking at the influence of the “Khrushchev Thaw” on literature and cinema, which opened the way for protest art to a wide Soviet audience. We explore different approaches to protest art in conditions of political unfreedom: "nonconformism," "dissidence," "mimicry," "rebellion." The course investigates the existential conflict of artistic freedom and the political machine of authoritarianism. These themes are explored at different levels through specific examples from the works and biographies of artists. Students immerse themselves in works of different genres: films, songs, performances, plays and literary works. HU

* THST 315a / ENGL 211a, Acting Shakespeare  James Bundy
This practical studio class aims to build the actor’s comprehension and confidence in Shakespeare’s language, while developing each artist’s emotional, intellectual, and
imaginative responsiveness to the demands and joys of acting Shakespeare. At the same time, we will explore how, as theater artists, we each bring our own history and psyche to Shakespeare’s stories and characters, so they may still speak to us and to our audiences today. The course will include work on sonnets, monologues, and scenes. Admission by audition. Preference to seniors and juniors; open to nonmajors. See Canvas for application. HU RP

* THST 318b / MUSI 340b, Analyzing, Directing, and Performing Early Opera
Grant Herreid and Toni Dorfman
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, instrumentalists, and directors. Admission by audition only. May be repeated for credit. For audition information e-mail grant.herreid@yale.edu. HU RP

* 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. Limited Enrollment. See Canvas for application. 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 321a / ENGL 477a, Production Seminar: Playwriting
Deborah Margolin
A seminar and workshop in playwriting with an emphasis on exploring language and image as a vehicle for “theatricality.” Together we will use assigned readings, our own creative work, and group discussions to interrogate concepts such as “liveness,” what is “dramatic” versus “undramatic,” representation, and the uses and abuses of discomfort.

* THST 322a / ENGL 481a, Advanced Playwriting
Branden Jacobs-Jenkins
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 324a, 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.  

* THST 335a / AFST 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 during the first class meeting.  

* THST 340a, Ballet Now  
Emily Coates and 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 these 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.  

* THST 357a, History and Theory of Performer Training  
Katherine Profeta  
This seminar offers a look at selected ways theater and dance performers have been trained and rehearsed within the Euro-American tradition over the past century-and-a-half. Behind every hour of live public performance are hidden hours and hours spent in schools and rehearsal rooms, establishing well-worn patterns of use for body/mind, and determining highly variable standards for what will be considered desirable, undesirable, and exceptional in performance. In this seminar we historicize different modes of performer training, seeking to understand where they come from and what assumptions they are built on. We read contemporary theorizations of performer training (or, where they don’t exist, devise them ourselves). The immediate practical result should be a better understanding of the working methods of our collaborators as performing artists; the larger results should include a more complete historical understanding of performer training and a philosophical appreciation of what exactly it means to perform. The seminar is designed for Juniors and Seniors with performance experience (curricular or extracurricular), and, by special permission, first-year, sophomore and/or graduate students with the same.  

* THST 358a, Introduction to Lighting Design  
Jiyoun Chang and Hal Brooks  
Exploration of the aesthetics and techniques of professional stage lighting. Priority to Theater Studies majors.  

* THST 361a / EDST 361a, Production Seminar: Theater in Education  
Nathan Roberts and Deborah Margolin  
Centering on the creation of a new production of Aurand Harris's Arkansaw Bear, this studio course will explore foundational Theatre in Education (TIE) theories and methods to bring performance and enrichment materials to New Haven area school children. Open to all majors, with opportunities for students to engage as performers (actors, acrobats, musicians) and designers, and to explore dramaturgy and production logistics through a small-scale educational tour, in conversation with regional leaders in the field.
* THST 387a, Choreography in Practice and Theory  Lacina Coulibaly
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 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 402a / ART 386a, Experimental Writing and Performance  Emily Coates
An exploration of formal experimentation at the nexus of writing and performance. We cover a broad range of written forms, such as testimonials, screeds, memoir, auto-ethnography, and personal and communal histories, and methods that artists in dance, theater, performance art, and visual art have used to disrupt those forms. This is not a course on playwriting or directing, though some of the concerns overlap. Rather, this is an inquiry into the ways that performance rips open language, rendering words at once more capacious and more ambiguous. Grounded in movement exercises and creative prompts, we pursue writing at its most embodied and performative. Students develop original work over the course of the semester. Admission is by application, with a brief writing sample included (for more information, please see the expanded course description). WR, HU

* THST 411a, Special Topics in Performance Studies  Elise Morrison
This course accompanies the themed speaker series for the Performance Studies Working Group, a weekly meeting convened by faculty in Theater and Performance Studies and the Drama School’s Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism program. For Fall 2024, the theme is "Eco Somatics." This concept invites inquiry into embodied relationships and somatic registers of communication with environments around us. Pairing the work of Bessel Van der Kolk and other pioneers of somatic therapy with ecological activism and science, the course will trace shifts in contemporary discourse and practice towards the “soma” (the Greek concept that distinguishes the body from the mind) and consider how they indicates a growing need to include somatic engagements with environmental and interspecies partnerships in our cultural decisions and performance making. With a range of invited speakers sharing recent work on this theme – including partners of Arakawa and Gins "Reversible Destiny" architecture; disability and performance scholar Petra Kuppers on "Eco Soma," and ornithologist Richard Prum on performativity in biological natural selection – we will consider how embodied processes of evolution, healing, and creativity partner with the earth itself as the largest body we as a species interact with on a daily basis. Students enrolled for credit complete weekly readings based on that week’s scholarship. They write weekly written responses and a final paper, which they present at the final PSWG meetings. HU RP

* THST 414a, Lyric Writing for Musical Theater  Michael Korie and Dan Egan
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.

* THST 416a / ENGL 384a / FILM 461a / LITR 364a, British Cinema  Katie Trumpener
Survey of the British film tradition, emphasizing overlap with literature, drama, and art; visual modernism; documentary's role in defining national identity; "heritage" filmmaking and alternative approaches to tradition; and auteur and actors' cinema.

* THST 438a, Theater and Therapy in the Aftermath of War  Elise Morrison
From the burgeoning field of Drama Therapy to the psychological basis of much actor training to the prevalence of theater productions being made with, for, and about people that have experienced wartime trauma, the practices of theater and therapy have long borrowed terminology, methodology, and conceptual frameworks from one another. This course traces the shared rhetoric and dramaturgical similarities between theater and psychotherapy, paying particular attention to how each/both are being applied to the global epidemic of post-traumatic stress in the aftermath of war. Students engage with contemporary practitioners of drama therapy, study recent theater productions created with and/or for combat veterans and refugees, and create their own research projects that explore the intersections of theater and therapy.

* 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.

* THST 457a and THST 458b / AMST 463a and AMST 464b / EVST 463a and EVST 464b / FILM 455a and FILM 456b, Documentary Film Workshop  Staff
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.

* THST 461b / MUSI 459b, 19th-Century Opera and Representation  Gundula Kreuzer
Throughout the long nineteenth century, opera was the most expensive, lavish, and politically implicated multimedia spectacle, with both its production and the act of opera-going offering prime opportunities to negotiate personal and collective identities. By looking at all of opera’s complex media—libretti, music, voice types, design, stage technology, architecture, etc.—this seminar addresses various forms and techniques
of representation related to such issues as gender, sexuality, class, race, nationalism, (dis)ability, the rise of the masses as a political agent, and the operatic genre itself as a vehicle of colonialism. Each week focuses on one topic and opera (or scenes), including works by Rossini, Weber, Meyerbeer, Verdi, Wagner, Puccini, Smyth, and Gershwin, as well as their representation on today’s stages. A visit to the Metropolitan Opera is anticipated (if possible). Familiarity with Western musical notation is suggested.

* THST 471a, Directed Independent Study  Hal Brooks
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, Senior Project in Theater, Dance, and Performance 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.

* THST 492a, Senior Seminar in Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies  Shilarna Stokes
This seminar/workshop supports senior majors in Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies who are pursuing thesis projects in three broad areas: 1) Literature, History, Theory, and Criticism; 2) Writing for Performance-based Art and Media; 3) Performance Research, Analysis, and Design. Seniors in this course present work-in-progress, receive peer and instructor feedback, and engage in discussions concerning a range of relevant topics.