

DRAMATURGY THESIS

The Thesis in Performance: Dramaturgy is composed of the research and rehearsal process, the final performance, and a Casebook.

1. Production and Rehearsal Processes

The production process begins in December prior to the spring semester in which the Thesis Festival takes place. Directors and dramaturgs have a preliminary meeting with the design team. The production process continues for the first half of the spring semester, centered on a weekly Friday afternoon class—the Production Meeting—in which directors and dramaturgs meet with the design team and their faculty advisers.

The rehearsal process typically begins half-way through the spring semester. Rehearsals proceed for five and half weeks, about 15-20 hours per week. Tech takes place over five days leading up to opening night.

2. Final Performance

Each play in the Thesis Festival performs three times over one weekend, in repertory with the other thesis plays. **Your play may not exceed 50 minutes.**

3. Casebook

The Casebook is a chance to document and analyze the development of the production. The Casebook is composed of three parts, **(a) an essay, (b) a set of dramaturg-developed materials, and (c) a journal documenting your work in the rehearsal process.** The essay is much like the kind of critical paper you have written in theatre studies and performance studies courses; the journal enables you to confront, analyze, and document your work in the rehearsal process. A draft of the Casebook is due mid-semester, a few days before the first rehearsal, and the completed Casebook is due, without exception, the Friday following the final performance, noon.

a. Essay

Write an essay in which you develop a critical claim, advanced through an interpretive argument, about one dimension of the play. This essay might be focused on a single dimension of the playtext or text-in-performance, but it need not; it could, for instance, take a broader, more thematic approach. Here are some questions/approaches you might use as a starting point.

How might features of the text (its rhetoric, the demands of its language, the actions given to actors to perform) be considered in the context of:

Theatre/history: in relation to the moment of the play's initial composition and performance? To the style and rhetoric of the play's contemporary theatre? Other plays with which it is contemporary; to the playwright's body of work?

Theatre/comparative: across the history of stage production? To specific productions nationally or internationally? To contemporary productions in New York or elsewhere?

Theatre/political: specific dimension of the cultural, political, and social context of the play's initial composition and performance, or to the contexts of a significant later production?

Theatre/theoretical: How might categories of event in relation to the play's casting, location, sphere of activity—gender, ability, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, mobility, social status, geopolitical location, technicity, etc.—be addressed through a critical or theoretical analysis?

Length: 10-12 pages, double spaced, 12-point font.

Citation format: MLA or Chicago Manual of Style

Schedule: The complete draft of the essay must be submitted to the Directing Thesis Adviser prior to the first rehearsal. Final revisions can be undertaken during rehearsal and prior to submission.

b. Dramaturgical Materials

- ☐ The edited script
- ☐ Formal play analysis; includes rationale for translation choice if applicable
- ☐ Lexicon of terms, concepts, unusual words, dates, cultural references, and foreign-language items used in the play
- ☐ The frame of social, cultural, historical, and artistic reference used in the play; a time-line of important historical and cultural events surrounding the play or its setting might be useful; analysis of how this frame relates to the setting of the performance, the *mise-en-scène*.
- ☐ The play's relation to the playwright and his/her work; its place among the writer's other work and in relation to biography
- ☐ Important themes and problems raised by the secondary literature; bibliography for the use of the cast
- ☐ Dramaturgical and directorial concept; includes rationale for aesthetic choices
- ☐ Selection of production history: world premiere, US premiere, previous significant stagings and their reception
- ☐ Summary of important adaptations; book, movies, musicals, etc.
- ☐ Circumstances of this production; audience and theatre analysis, role in the season
- ☐ Press release, poster, postcard
- ☐ Program (includes Dramaturg's Note)

☐ Preparation for post-show

c. Process Documentation and Analysis

Rehearsal is a process of planning, experimentation, collaboration, and disintegration. The Process Documentation and Analysis journal provides the opportunity to question and to document the dramaturg's approach to the material, the means used to engage with the ongoing process of building the event, and to explore some of the consequences of this approach.

As part of the Casebook, submit a typed journal documenting and assessing your preparation for the rehearsal process, the critical issues that arose on a week to week basis, and the way you worked with the director, designers, and cast to clarify those issues. This activity should be undertaken in weekly units: the first entry should be written prior to the first rehearsal, and then you should write weekly entries on the work of that week's rehearsal process; you should write a final entry after the final performance, so that there will be 7 or 8 entries in total, depending on length of rehearsal. Since the dramaturg's work begins well in advance of rehearsal, this schedule may be adapted in consultation with the Dramaturgy Thesis Adviser.

You are encouraged to include other forms of research documenting your work; for instance, you could link to or embed a sound file or include (or link to) visual research (images, a video file) that is part of your conceptualization of an element of the production and comment on it as part of a week's entry; you might link to a video (either of some form of training, or something more inspirational) as a way of conceptualizing and representing your thinking. Research done on historical, social, political, cultural context that's not part of the essay, or that is engaged differently in the rehearsal process, could be taken up here as well. The Process Documentation and Analysis section of the Casebook enables you to think through your training, the specific demands of your work as dramaturg in the production. Although the journal is informal, it is a public record of your thinking; the style can be casual, but the journal should be written with the understanding that it addresses an audience.

Length: One entry per week of rehearsal, plus one entry prior to rehearsal and one after rehearsal. Text for each entry should amount to 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font. **Evaluation:** Process Documentation and Analysis will be evaluated in relation to a number of factors having to do with the specific nature of the production, and in terms of the depth, detail, and complexity of thinking that went into documenting and assessing the challenges of confronting and developing the dramaturg's work. Does the journal interrogate not only the overall process of the production, but also the dramaturg's consequential contribution to it? Is the work with the Dramaturgy Adviser and with the Director engaged reflectively? How is previous training conceptualized and related to the performance? Are other methods or skills sought out?

Deadline

The completed Casebook is due, without exception, by noon, on the Friday following the final performance.

Evaluation

Your Senior Thesis in Performance: Dramaturgy will be evaluated by the Dramaturgy Thesis Adviser and a second reader/viewer, who will consult on a final grade. The essay will be evaluated on the basis of a clearly conceptualized thesis, a well-developed and clearly-structured argument, and the sophisticated and original analysis and interpretation of evidence. The overall grade is given holistically, taking into account the artistic and critical goals of the production, the evolution of those goals, and how your collaboration and design process contributed to their development and achievement. While the final performance is weighted more heavily in deciding the grade, the paths to performance and the Casebook, which included both the essay and the Process Documentation and Analysis journal, are given significant weight in the final grade as well.

Process Documentation and Analysis will be evaluated in relation to a number of factors having to do with the specific nature of the production, and in terms of the depth, detail, and complexity of thinking that went into documenting and assessing the challenges of confronting and developing the dramaturg's work. Does the journal interrogate not only the overall process of the production, but also the dramaturg's consequential contribution to it? Is the work with the Dramaturgy Adviser and with the Director engaged reflectively? How is previous training conceptualized and related to the performance? Are other methods or skills sought out?