

PLAYWRITING THESIS

The Thesis in Performance: Playwriting is composed of the writing process, the final public reading, and a Casebook.

1. The Public Reading

In the course of the spring semester, you will work with the Playwriting Thesis Adviser, and members of the faculty and staff to assemble a director and cast for the public reading of your thesis play. The reading will be scheduled during the second weekend of the Senior Thesis Festival, typically the weekend before the final class day; the reading itself may not exceed 60 minutes.

2. Casebook

The Casebook is a chance to document and analyze the development of your play, and to engage critically with it, over the course of the semester. The Casebook is composed of two parts, **(a) the script** and **(b) a journal documenting your work in writing and rehearsing for the public reading**.

a. Play Script

Submit a clean copy of the final script and final public reading script if different. **Your play, as performed, must not exceed 50 minutes.**

b. Process Documentation and Analysis

As part of the Casebook, submit a typed journal documenting and assessing your work in the thesis semester. This activity should be undertaken in weekly units: the first entry should be written within the first two weeks of the beginning of the semester, with weekly entries thereafter through the public reading. Your final entry should be after the public reading, so that there will be 12 or 13 entries in total.

One aspect of this section of the Casebook has to do with developing your sense of the field of contemporary playwriting; by the second week of the term you should have a list of 10-12 plays you plan to read and consider this semester—the list can change, but it could be the subject of your first entry: what you know about the plays, why they seem attractive to you. Rather than considering each entry in the journal as a “report” on the play, you should periodically review the playreading you have been doing: what is instructive for you and for your work as a writer about this material? Are there formal, stylistic, subject-matter, dialogue issues that arise, seem suggestive as alternatives, or that are merely suggestive? In other words, responses to your play reading might involve a slightly longer response in alternate weeks of the journal process, totaling 6 or so throughout the semester.

Of course, the playwriting process itself involves an ongoing process of revision, and so keeping to the writing process itself is crucial. In the alternative entries (5 or 6) in which you are not discussing the plays you are reading, it might be useful to reflect on the development of your play: what kinds of suggestions have you received from your Thesis Adviser? What kinds of suggestions have you received from the other playwriting thesis students? Can you use the process of the journal to think through your response to some of these suggestions? The final entry should address what you have gained or learned from the process of writing and the final public reading.

In other words, this section of the Casebook would comprise 12 or 13 entries; roughly half of which would consider plays you are reading, and roughly half of which would consider your working process, and help you to keep focused on the writing and revision process. If it is interesting or important for you to embed sound, video or image links in the Casebook as part of your discussion, that's fine; any research done on historical, social, political, or cultural context could be taken up here as well. 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 beginning the second week of the semester; final entry after the public reading. Text for each entry should amount to at least 2-3 pages, perhaps a bit more if you are discussing a few plays, double-spaced, 12 pt. font.

Deadline

The completed Casebook is due, without exception, by noon, on the Tuesday following the public reading.

Evaluation

Your Senior Thesis in Performance: Playwriting will be evaluated by the Playwriting Thesis Adviser and a second reader/viewer, who will consult on the final grade. The grade is given holistically, taking into account the staged reading, the specific quality of the play, and the depth, detail, and complexity of thinking that went into documenting and assessing the challenges of confronting and developing the writing process. Does the journal consider the reading of plays effectively? Is the work with the Playwriting Adviser and with the Director engaged reflectively? How is previous training conceptualized and related to the performance? Are other methods or skills sought out?