

## **RESEARCH THESIS**

The Thesis in Research is composed of a research and writing process, culminating in an original research essay. The essay is much like the kind of critical paper you have written in theatre studies and performance studies courses, but the thesis process enables you to deepen the research, expand and document the critical reach of the project, and learn through a process of revision. Many research theses begin with an essay written in a class, others begin with a new project. In all cases, the thesis is imagined along the lines of a professional research article: in the range of 25-30 pages, undertaking an original, critical study of a problem in the history, theory, and/or practice of theatre, performance, and drama. As a piece of professional writing, the thesis is expected to engage responsively with the critical literature in its subject, to make a space for its inquiry, in other words, in dialogue with relevant scholarship.

Students undertaking a research thesis identify a potential subject and research faculty member with whom to work in the year prior to the thesis; the adviser should be approached prior to the thesis application. It is useful for the student and faculty member to meet during the junior year to discuss plans, so that the summer can be used for reading, gathering material, etc. In the semester prior to the thesis semester, students work with the Thesis Adviser to begin the research process, developing a research proposal, a working bibliography of sources with which to begin the project (this will of course develop as the research proceeds), and a timeline. An initial bibliography usually contains between 10 and 25 items. Students typically meet with the thesis advisor biweekly during the thesis semester, and undertake several revisions of the project. Although the Senior Thesis in Research course—THTRUN3998—is typically taken in the spring semester and supports additional research and the writing of the thesis itself, the course may be taken in the fall term by students who plan to graduate after the fall semester, or who would prefer to do the thesis in the fall.

The thesis may take in any area of scholarship, and many of the research questions listed below for the Performance Theses may surely be applicable. Students are expected to be familiar with, and have some degree of mastery over, contemporary scholarship and published writing on the subject or related topics. Where relevant, primary archival research is encouraged, using the extensive resources of Barnard, Columbia, and other libraries in New York such as the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.

The Senior Thesis in Research is undertaken in two parts.

### **1. The Essay**

A critical, theoretical, and/or historical essay as outlined above.

**Length:** 25-30 pages, double spaced, 12-point font

**Citation format:** MLA or Chicago Manual of Style

**Schedule:** The essay is due to the Thesis Adviser by noon on the Monday one week prior to the final Monday of classes.

## **2. Public Presentation**

The Department will schedule a public Research Thesis Panel, usually during the Thesis Festival II weekend, several days after the written thesis is due. The presentation will be a 15-20 minute discussion of the aims, research, and conclusions of the Research Thesis, and will be delivered as part of a panel (the duration will be decided once the number of Research Thesis students presenting is clear). The presentation may be read or delivered from notes, but must not exceed the allotted time. Presenters are encouraged, if their subject permits, to present some of the audio or visual materials collected during their research via PowerPoint or other instruments; this element of the presentation may include photos, videos, interviews, archival materials, documents, anything that might help to clarify the significance of your research to a general audience.

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### **Research Thesis Timeline**

- a. Spring Junior Year: Meet with Adviser and discuss the project; if there is already a course paper, discuss how it might develop into a longer and richer project.
  - b. Fall Senior Year (or spring Junior year if planning to graduate in the fall): Develop a research proposal, how you think the project will be shaped by the research. What you want to consider, what specific objects (texts, performances, etc.) you plan to analyze, what has already been done in the secondary literature of the field and how you position yourself in relation to it, what difference your research will make: these are questions a proposal is expected to address. Preparing an outline as part of the proposal will help you to start your first draft. Length: 1 page, double spaced.
  - c. Develop a working bibliography of source materials. This bibliography should include both books and articles, and provide a sense of previous work in the area of your research. If you are doing archival research, you should also have a working list of materials to be consulted and where they are; it might be useful as well to have a sense of what secondary literature would be helpful to developing the thesis. Some advisers like to see a formal written encounter with these materials, a "review of the literature" that focuses the questions of your thesis in relation to the field.
  - d. Proposal and bibliography: Meet with Thesis Adviser on or before October 15 to discuss.
  - e. Thesis semester: Meet with Thesis Adviser at the beginning of the semester to determine a writing calendar; Thesis Advisers have different ways of working with students, and students have different ways of working with Advisers. It is your responsibility to establish a schedule of meetings at this time; the number and kind of meetings are to be discussed with the Adviser.
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**Deadline**

The completed thesis is due, without exception, the Monday one week prior to the final class day (a Monday), noon.

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**Evaluation**

Your Senior Thesis in Research will be evaluated by the Research Thesis Adviser and a second reader, who will consult on a final grade. The grade is given holistically, taking into account your responsive engagement with the critical commentary received from the Thesis Adviser (the process of revision), the critical claims of the research project, the nature and success of the research, and the interpretive clarity and theoretical rigor developed in the written argument. While the final essay is weighted more heavily in deciding the grade, the public presentation is an important dimension of the Thesis in Research, and is given weight in the final grade as well.