

## Senior Thesis Acting

The Thesis in Performance: Acting is comprised of the audition and rehearsal process, the final performance, and a Casebook.

### 1. Production and Rehearsal Processes

For the Senior Thesis in Acting, the production process begins in the spring semester of the junior year, when the Acting thesis students audition for and are cast by the following year's directors. Thesis actors are expected to use the time between casting and the beginning of rehearsals to begin research and familiarize themselves with the play.

Rehearsals for faculty-directed productions typically begin the second week of the fall semester, around the middle of October, and the second week of the spring semester. Thesis students should consult with the director of their production in advance to see whether they will be required to attend auditions and/or callbacks during the first week of the 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

Faculty directed productions perform four times over one weekend, usually in mid-October (Fall Show #1), just before or just after the Thanksgiving break (Fall #2), and in early March (Spring #1). The actor's public performance will be evaluated on its overall quality and execution, as well as its integration into the production and work with the ensemble.

### 3. Casebook

The Casebook is a chance to document and analyze the development of your role and to engage critically with the text and context of your work. The Casebook is comprised of two parts, **(a) an essay** and **(b) 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. Essay

Write an essay in which you develop a critical claim, advanced through an interpretive argument, about one dimension of *embodiment* in the play. This essay might approach the question of embodiment from any one of a number of perspectives. The essay might be focused on a single role—the role in which you have been cast—but it need not be; it could, for instance, treat several roles, or 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 related to notions of embodiment and:

**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? To the performance of an individual actor?

**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 "the body"—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:** For actors cast in the Fall #2 and Spring shows, complete draft of the essay must be submitted to the Acting Thesis Adviser *prior* to the first rehearsal. Final revisions can be undertaken during rehearsal and prior to submission. For actors cast in the Fall #1 show, a complete draft of the essay must be submitted to the Acting Thesis Adviser by the *third* week of rehearsal.

#### **b. Process Documentation and Analysis: The Role**

Rehearsal is a process of embodiment, and productions approach bodies in performance differently. The Process Documentation and Analysis journal provides the opportunity to question and to document the actor's approach to the material, the means used to engage with the ongoing process of performance, and to explore some of the consequences of this approach.

A "role" is a process, a series of things to do. Engaging a role means drawing on preparation, often recognizing the limitations of preparation, and addressing the consequences of approaching the role in this way. As part of the Casebook, submit a typed journal documenting and assessing your preparation for the role, your vocal, physical, psychological, and textual work. 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.

Each entry should reflect on the specificity of your training, and on its uses, limitations, and consequences. You might consider, among other questions, what performing/performance demands are being made on you by this production and how you will address them. Are there specific areas of your work as a performer you are able to develop as part of the production? How does your work on the production dramatize the consequences of your approach to acting? What does your work on the production say about acting as labor, as a creative practice? How does your work funnel (or not) into the final performance?

You are encouraged to include other forms of research documenting your work; for instance, you could link to or embed a sound file of an accent lesson (and a file of your own work with it, if you wish); you could include (or link to) visual research (images, a video file) that is part of your conceptualization of the role, 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 acting 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 role in the production, and how you both conceptualize them and engage with them physically. You may wish to document your own work via video as well (link). In all cases, though, this work must be discussed, presented, and analyzed as part of that week's journal entry. 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 pt. font.

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### **Deadline**

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

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### **Evaluation**

Your Senior Thesis in Performance: Acting will be evaluated by the Acting Thesis Adviser and a second reader/viewer, who will consult on a final grade. 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 work throughout the rehearsal process contributed to their development and achievement. While the final performance is weighted heavily in deciding the grade, the paths to performance and the Casebook, which includes both the essay and process documentation and analysis, are given significant weight in the final grade as well.