

Senior Thesis Directing

The Thesis in Performance: Directing is comprised of the research, design, 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.

3. Casebook

The Casebook is a chance to document and analyze the development of the production. 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 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. 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 director'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 work as a director in the pre-rehearsal and rehearsal process, your analytical, physical, and textual work, as well as your collaboration with the entire production team. This activity should be undertaken in regular units spanning the entire process of the director's work: the first entry should be written at the beginning of the process, and the final entry after the final performance. There should be seven or eight entries in total.

Each entry should reflect on the specificity of your directing methods, and on their uses, limitations, and consequences. You might consider, among other questions, what analytical, conceptual, and leadership demands are being made on you by this production and how you will address them. Are there specific areas of your work as a director you are able to develop as part of the production? How does your work on the production dramatize the consequences of your approach to directing? What does your work on the production say about directing 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 a piece of aural research; you could include (or link to) visual research (images, a video file) that is part of your conceptualization 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, and cultural context that's not part of the Essay, or that is engaged differently in the directing 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 the production, and how you both conceptualize them and engage with them in the room with actors. You may wish to

document your work in rehearsal 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 the rehearsal period and one following the rehearsal period. Text for each entry should amount to 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font.

Deadline

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

Evaluation

Your Senior Thesis in Performance: Directing will be evaluated by the Directing 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.