

Senior Thesis Design

The Thesis in Performance: Design is comprised of the research, design, production, and rehearsal process, the final design, and a Casebook.

1. Production and Rehearsal Processes

Designers are assigned in the junior year either to a faculty show, which can take place during either semester of the senior year, or to a Senior Thesis in Performance: Directing production, scheduled during the Senior Thesis Festival in the spring semester.

Design schedules vary according to the production and the design area, but thesis designers should be prepared to attend meetings and generate design materials several weeks before the first rehearsal. Thesis designers assigned to a faculty show will meet with their teams as determined by the production schedule. Designers assigned to the first fall show should be prepared to begin the design process over the summer. Thesis designers assigned to the Senior Thesis Festival will attend weekly design meetings on Friday afternoons in the spring semester. Once rehearsals begin on the assigned production—fall or spring—designers will attend weekly production meetings, typically scheduled for Friday afternoon. Designers are required to attend rehearsal (schedules vary by design field) and all designers attend tech and dress rehearsals.

Thesis designers meet weekly with the Design Thesis Adviser to discuss the developing design and Casebook.

2. Final Design

The final design will be evaluated on its overall quality and execution, as well as its integration with and contribution to the overall production.

3. Casebook

The Casebook is a chance to document and analyze the development of your work, and to engage critically with the text and context of your design. The Casebook is comprised of two parts, **(a) an essay** and **(b) the documents and materials generated** during the design process. The essay is much like the kind of critical paper you have written in theatre studies and performance studies courses. The design materials should be accompanied by commentary/context to situate the process for readers who has not been involved in the process.

a. Essay

Write an essay in which you develop a critical claim, advanced through an interpretive argument, about one dimension of the play. Your claim may originate in this production or design, and/or may examine other productions or designs.

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), the production, or the design 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? To the technical capabilities and production practices of the originating theatre?

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

Theatre/political: as a 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: in dialogue with the terms—spatial, economic, aesthetic, social—of a specific form of critical or theoretical analysis?

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

Citation format: MLA or Chicago Manual of Style

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

b. Design Materials

Provide Design Materials (according to your design area; see below), that document the design process, ideas pursued, and the evolution of ideas. The Design Materials provide the opportunity to question and to document the designer's approach to the production, the means used to engage with the ongoing process of developing the design, and to explore some of the consequences of this approach. This section of the Casebook documents and reflects on your process, sharing the materials generated during design. Please include the materials detailed below, and be sure to develop analytic commentary on this material.

SCENIC Design

1. Visual research
2. Rough sketches and photos of early model work
3. Finished color model (and storyboards if applicable)
4. Paint elevations, prop research, materials specs, swatches, etc.
5. Drafting: Plan, Section, and Elevations
6. Additional paperwork as necessary (e.g., shift plots, etc.)
7. Production photos

COSTUME Design

1. Visual research
2. Early sketches
3. Color sketches (and swatches where applicable)
4. Scene breakdown, costume plot, and all related paperwork

5. Fitting photos and notes where applicable
6. Production photos

LIGHTING Design

1. Visual research
2. Preliminary paperwork
3. Light plot
4. Paperwork: magic sheet, cue sheets, instrument schedule, hookup, script with cues, etc.
5. Production photos

SOUND Design

1. Sound research, and visual research if applicable
2. Sound plot (timeline)
3. Cue list
4. Links to final cues and production photos (for reference)
5. Script with cues marked
6. Ground plan of the theatre with the set, showing placement of speakers
7. Signal flow showing how the sound system is connected
8. Production photos

PROJECTION Design

1. Visual/video research
2. Breakdown or other materials used to develop the design
3. Cue list
4. Links to final cues
5. Script with cues marked
6. Ground plan of the theatre with the set, showing placement of projectors/monitors/etc.
7. Production photos

Deadline

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

Evaluation

Your Senior Thesis in Performance: Design will be evaluated by the Design 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

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 Design Materials, are given significant weight in the final grade as well.