PERFORMANCE THESSES: Acting
WRITTEN ESSAY AND DOCUMENTARY CASEBOOK

Although the grade for the Senior Thesis in Performance is heavily weighted toward the final performance, the thesis also provides a unique opportunity to engage in, develop, use, and record your work as part of an artistic process. We have developed the following guidelines for each of the Performance Theses and for Dramaturgy, with the goal of defining the nature and scope of the thesis overall, as well as to provide a way for you to gather and document the many components of the process, including the formal essay.

Each Performance Thesis has a Casebook—a three-ring looseleaf binder—that includes material documenting your work, which also includes a formal essay. We require that a full draft of the Casebook be submitted early in the process for feedback. This feedback is typically provided by both readers of the thesis. Failure to submit the draft of the Casebook when required simply means that you will not have the benefit of this commentary, with whatever consequences may ensue: the Casebook "draft" cannot be submitted later in the process. That is, the Thesis readers will understand that you had the opportunity to receive feedback in a timely fashion when considering the final grade of the Thesis. In the course of the production process, you will of course add material and commentary to the Casebook, as well as revise the essay; you will also be able to add a short coda of reflections on your role in the process, how you felt your work both contributed to the production, and met with your own goals.

You are very strongly encouraged to work closely with your thesis adviser in preparing the Casebook draft, and indeed in assembling other materials that go into it during the process of the production.

The Thesis Casebook is submitted shortly after the production closes: please keep this in mind. You must submit one copy as a draft as outlined below. You submit the final Thesis Casebook as follows: ONE hard copy is submitted to the Theatre Department office, and a pdf version is sent to your Thesis adviser, the Theatre Administrator, and to the Chair of the Theatre Department on or before the dates outlined below.
Please note that we assume that in many cases much of this work will be substantially completed prior to the first rehearsal, so that additions to and revisions of the Casebook will take place during the production process.

RESEARCH
In the course of the thesis you will be involved in developing the artistic and critical conception of the performance; whether for the essay or for your work as actor, director, designer, or dramaturg in the show, we think you should consider the following set of questions as part of your preparation.

Some of these questions will be more relevant to your specific project, some less, and perhaps some not at all: but you are expected to use them as a point of departure to make a substantial critical engagement with the work of production, which will be expressed both in the work onstage and in the critical writing submitted in the Casebook:

a. How are other works by this author relevant to my concerns with this play? Are there similar plot, character, thematic structures that might prove illuminating? What other works by this author are most like/unlike this one?

b. Is there a critical history surrounding this play? What are some of the dominant issues reflected there? Why are they dominant? If the play is recent, is there a critical history surrounding the work of this author? Are there issues raised by the play's temporal setting, its social location, or its framework of values that might be relevant to developing the role?

c. What was the social, financial, material structure of the theatre for which this play was first produced; as well, what were its architectural, artistic, and performance conventions? How did/does the theatre's architecture affect acting possibilities?

d. What was the philosophy of acting at that time, what was expected of the actor as a performer, how were plays rehearsed and performed? How were these implicated in the world of the play created for its audiences?

e. What do we want to be able to say with this play in production today? How might that be framed in relation to a, b, c, d above?

f. What are the specific demands of this role conceptually and technically? How are those demands related to one another? How does this role signify in relation to the
production as a whole? Has a particular performance, performance style, or production made a significant impact on how the play is seen and understood today? How does this collective social memory relate to your performance?
g. What kind of visual imagery relates to, magnifies, distorts, clarifies, orients the production?
h. What is the relevant bibliography with regard to this play and author one should use to become well-informed as a starting point for creative work?
i. What are—in consultation with the director, designers, dramaturg—the conceptual, stylistic, political, artistic goals of this production? How does the role or design embody or advance them?

**Acting**

**DRAFT DEADLINE:**
First Fall Production: Draft of Casebook due 1 October.
First Spring Production (Thesis Festival): Draft of Casebook due by first rehearsal.
Second Fall Production and Second Spring Production: Draft of Casebook Due at first rehearsal.

1. **Text and Character Analysis:** In this section of the Casebook, you can gather, and discuss/reflect on, the materials you use both to consider the text, your character, and the challenges of the role. You should draw on the experiences you've had in acting classes and other productions, and should plan to discuss this and all sections with your adviser (usually the director of the production).
2. **Research images and notes**—material used to conceptualize and physicalize the role; reflections on the acting style and or acting techniques used and/or actor training brought to bear on the performance
3. **Essay:** The essay section of the Casebook is where questions of research are developed. This is not merely a listing of information, but instead an effort to interpret, analyze, consider relevant parts of the social and cultural background that might prove important for the project. The research section should pose a series of questions stemming from your interests and interpretive angle on the role, and explore several of the following issues. It can be framed as a series of engagements, but should develop a coherent analytical discourse. 10-12 pp. The essay should be drafted
in reference to your engaged response to relevant questions above, integrated as a claim or thesis, and be fully annotated/documented.

4. Coda: post-show reflections on the project. 2-3pp

DUE: Completed and Revised Casebook: ONE hard copy is submitted to the Theatre Department office, and a pdf version is sent to your Thesis adviser, the Theatre Administrator, and to the Chair of the Theatre Department on or before FRIDAY AFTER THE FINAL PERFORMANCE, NOON.