PERFORMANCE THESSES: Dramaturgy
WRITTEN ESSAY AND DOCUMENTARY CASEBOOK

Although the grade for the Senior Thesis in Performance is 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?

Dramaturgy
Please note that the dramaturg typically begins working with the director about two months prior to the production's first rehearsal; thesis dramaturges are required to be available for the entire rehearsal period of their thesis production.

DRAFT DEADLINE: A substantially complete draft of the Casebook is submitted prior to the first rehearsal. Commentary on the production process can be added before final submission.

Representative questions to consider for the essay; some of these questions will be more relevant to your specific project and role, some less, but you are expected to use them to make a substantial critical engagement:
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 explore?
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 potential dramaturgy?
d. 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 above?

e. What is the relevant bibliography with regard to this play and author one should use to become well-informed as a starting point for dramaturgical work?

f. What are—in consultation with the director, designers, etc.—the conceptual, stylistic, political, artistic goals of this production?

1. **Essay:** The opening section of the Casebook is an essay where questions of research are developed. This essay is not merely a listing of information, but follows the practice of a research essay with a clear and developed argument: it is an effort to interpret, analyze, consider relevant parts of the historical, social, cultural and aesthetic background significant for the development of the project. The research section should pose a series of related questions stemming from your interests and interpretive angle on the project, and explore several of the following issues as appropriate. It can be framed as a series of engagements, but should develop a coherent analytical discourse. 15-20pp.

2. **The edited script**
3. **Formal play analysis;** includes rationale for translation choice if applicable
4. **Lexicon of terms, concepts, unusual words, dates, cultural references, and foreign-language items used in the play**
5. **The frame of social, cultural, historical, and artistic reference used in the play;** a time-line of important historical and cultural events surrounding the play or its setting might be useful
6. **The play's relation to the playwright and his/her work;** its place among the writer's other work and in relation to biography
7. **Important themes and problems raised by the secondary literature;** bibliography for the use of the cast
8. **Dramaturgical concept;** includes thematic, conceptual, and stylistic concerns in terms of the legacy of the piece
9. **Dramaturgical and directorial concept;** includes rationale for aesthetic choices
10. **Selection of production history:** world premiere, US premiere, previous significant stagings and their reception
11. **Summary of important adaptations:** book, movies, musicals, etc.
12. Circumstances of this production; audience and theatre analysis, role in the season
13. Press release, poster, postcard
14. Program (includes Dramaturg's Note)
15. Preparation for post-show

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.