DRAMATURGY THESIS GUIDELINES

Prerequisites: Courses: Script Analysis, Dramaturgy (Classic and Modern)
Apply for a season dramaturgy position during Modern Dramaturgy

Deadline: The written proposal is due to the Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor no later than one week prior to the first faculty meeting of the semester in which the production is scheduled. However, Spring semester candidates are strongly encouraged to submit their proposals during the fall semester.

Length: The proposal and completed dramaturgical files will vary considerably in length, depending on the play. The dramaturg is responsible for discussing the scope and content of their D-File with the director and thesis advisor as needed.

Dramaturgs are encouraged to create a website as part of their work to enable production team and cast members to access material outside of the rehearsal room. Be aware that some material, such as the production history and critical article components, may function better as hard copy material.

Budget: The Theatre Department maintains a $50 budget for the reimbursement of Dramaturgy Thesis production costs. Students whose projects have been approved should contact the Business Manager to ascertain which kind of expenses can be reimbursed and how to document expenses for reimbursement.

WRITTEN PROPOSAL

The Dramaturgy Thesis Proposal includes a 1) title page 2) short statement on the project, 3) in-depth Initial Response form, and 4) preliminary list of resources. These should be submitted in the following order, with a title page:

1. TITLE PAGE
   a. Your Name
   b. The play title
   c. The playwright
   d. Audition and performance dates
   e. The director
   f. The designers
   g. The marketing/public relations director

2. SUMMARY
   a. Instead of concluding your Initial Response with an overall summary, please begin your Thesis proposal with one. In doing so, consider the following:
      i. Your most important first reaction to the playscript
      ii. Your connection to the play
      iii. Any uncertainties or concerns you may have
      iv. Your sense of its potential impact on an audience
      v. Your desire to be a part of this project
   b. Conclude by addressing the dramaturgical question “Why this play for this audience at this time?” Within this question, you might offer potential avenues of audience engagement (lobby displays or program notes, for example) that you have discussed with your director.
3. INITIAL RESPONSE

a. (+) Elements in the play, its characters, and ideas to which you respond positively or at least strongly (mentally, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically, physiologically, spiritually, or any combination thereof).

b. (-) Elements in the play to which you respond negatively or what seem problematic or confusing; textual or structural problems (language, structure, representation of gender/race/class, etc.) or moments in the play that will be particularly difficult to stage.

c. (?) Areas of the script that leave you with a question of one sort or another: about characters, the action of the play, the world(s) of the play, the performance conventions presumed or required by the script, etc.

d. (*) Way(s) into the play; the play’s controlling ideas; the energies it released in its own era; its relevant contemporary themes. Be sure to include your effortless, powerful points of entry, speaking for and as yourself rather than simply projecting audience reactions.

e. (A/V) Strong appeals to the senses; in particular, sounds that are embedded or implied in the text and freeze frame visual moments.

f. (C) Specific objects or activities crucial to the play or its actions, characters, and world. A concrete is more than a simple prop; it holds significant storytelling power.

4. PRELIMINARY LIST OF RESOURCES

a. Present a preliminary list of resources you have found that speak to the Dramaturgical File’s essential categories: the playwright and his/her world (including relevant biographies), the world of the play, production history, and relevant critical insights. Order your list of resources by category/topic, and alphabetize entries within these.

   i. Try to maximize your use of each of these resource categories. For example, books and periodicals provide depth; the internet offers tremendous breadth in visuals, reviews, and summaries.

   NOTE: beware of an over-reliance on the internet, particularly non-professional sources.

b. To guide your exploration, use Falvey’s research librarians (especially Sarah Wingo) and databases, the Course Guide for Dramaturgy (available on through the Falvey catalogue), and members of the faculty.

c. Do not limit yourself to the above categories of resources. Think creatively about other possibilities: specialists, museums, films and videos, music, field trips that may benefit your process, or that may provide immersive opportunities for engaging the cast or production team in your research.

AFTER THE PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

Review the Production Dramaturgy Guidelines handout, and your list of PR/Marketing deadlines. Using those as a guide, continue to maintain your collaborations with the director, designers, cast members, the public relations director, and, once the show opens, the audience.
During the semester in which the play is produced, you are required to check in on a weekly basis with the Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor or, for productions for which Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor is also the director, the designated faculty member.

If you are preparing your Thesis in production dramaturgy, you are required to attend all production meetings. In addition, you should plan on attending auditions, design meetings (when appropriate), and a substantial number of rehearsals as negotiated with the director, including run-throughs and previews.

**AFTER THE PRODUCTION HAS CLOSED**

Submit the following items to your Thesis Committee electronically or in hard copy. Consult the Thesis Advisor if you are unsure how best to proceed:

Table of Contents

1. A working copy of the script with cuts and margin notes
2. Your Dramaturgy Thesis proposal (including your Initial Response)
3. Materials you have supplied to the director, with highlighting and margin notes
4. Materials you have provided to the cast
5. Visual/verbal images gathered for the director, actors, and production team
6. A description of the lobby display—with images, ideally
7. Music or sound files generated for the production (if applicable)
8. Descriptions of special events you organized or coordinated (if applicable)
9. A study guide (if applicable)
10. Material on dramaturgy that you’ve found helpful (if applicable)
11. A bibliography and resource guide

The committee will also receive statements from the director and the dramaturgy advisor about observations of your work in rehearsals and throughout the process.

**THE DRAMATURGY THESIS PROJECT DEFENSE**

Arrange a date with the Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor for your Thesis Project Defense no later than two weeks after the closing performance.

Prepare a brief post-production evaluation of your work on and contribution to the production. You should include, but are not limited to, the following questions:

1. What was your participation in the overall process?
2. What was, for you, the most important dramaturgical contribution with respect to the play in performance?
3. What might you do differently if you were able to do this project again?
4. How do you hope your production dramaturgy experience will inform your future theatre work?

Be prepared to answer questions from the committee that will arise in response to this evaluation, the dramaturgical work, and the file presented.

The Committee votes Pass or Fail at the end of the Thesis Project Defense, but may choose to wait a week before issuing the decision in order for one or more Committee members to write a response to be issued along with it. A response may also be written even if a Pass or Fail is issued at the conclusion of the Thesis Project Defense.

When a student produces truly exceptional work, the committee may award them the designation “with Distinction” in recognition.