

DRAMATURGY THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Prerequisites: Courses: Script Analysis, Dramaturgy (Classic and Modern); apply for a season Production Dramaturg position during Modern Dramaturgy

Budget: All Production Dramaturgs are afforded a \$50 budget. An additional budget of \$50 is available to those completing a Dramaturgy Thesis, for a total budget of \$100. The budget form at bottom may be used to request these funds from Business Manager Elisa Hibbs, who will confirm which kind of expenses can be reimbursed and how to document expenses for reimbursement.

Proposal Deadline: Proposals must be submitted for review no later than one week before the faculty meeting at which the proposal will be discussed. This should take place as early as possible in the fall semester for fall mainstage productions. Production Dramaturgs for spring shows are strongly encouraged to submit their proposals during the fall semester.

Timetable

- Candidates should initiate projects by **contacting the Director of Graduate Theses** (Prof. Michael Hollinger) to discuss their interest and the scope of their project.
- Following this initial step, Michael will connect the student with the **Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor** (typically Dr. Chelsea Phillips).
- Under the guidance of the advisor, the candidate should develop a **written proposal**, including a preliminary bibliography. Most likely, this proposal will go through three or more revisions before it will be considered by the full faculty.
- The proposal should be submitted to the faculty at least one week before the faculty meeting at which it will be discussed. **Revisions may be requested by the faculty prior to project approval. Proposals are not always approved.**
- Once approved, the candidate will be invited **by the Director of Graduate Theses** to request a committee. In addition to the Thesis Advisor, the committee is composed of two members of the Villanova theatre faculty. The director of the production cannot serve on the committee. **Students should not personally invite faculty members onto their committees.**
- The Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor will work with the candidate to identify an oral defense date as soon as possible following the close of the production. In preparation for this, the student may be asked to provide portfolio materials to the committee members in advance of the defense. **A completed budget form, with receipts, must be submitted to the Business Manager at the time the defense is scheduled.**
- The student will meet with the committee to discuss the work completed and how the Thesis Project has influenced and will impact their growth and development as an artist/scholar. The student will lead off this conversation with a **10-minute presentation on their process.** Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

Length: The proposal and completed dramaturgical files may 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.

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.
 - a. Be sure to address why this project is a suitable thesis project for you, and the ways in which it is an appropriate culmination of your coursework here at Villanova.
 - 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. **(E/R/R)** Echoes, repetitions, and returnings that aid the playwright in the creation of meaning. Can be external or internal to the play.
- g. **(C)** Concretes – i.e., 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.

5. Goals

Articulate the **three most important goals** that you have formulated as key outcomes of this Thesis project. These goals should go *beyond* the basic expectations of the work.

1. Briefly discuss WHY these goals are important to your development.
2. Identify your action steps toward accomplishing these goals.
3. Number these goals.

After the proposal is accepted:

After your proposal receives faculty approval, the Thesis Director will seek your preferences and ask two additional theatre faculty members to serve on your committee, excluding the director of the production. **Students should not personally invite faculty members onto their committees.**

Review the Production Dramaturgy Guidelines handout, the Dramaturgy Thesis Rubric (available from the Dramaturgy Advisor), the master list of deadlines, 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 your Dramaturgy Thesis Advisor.**

When pursuing 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.

Budget/Reimbursement

The Theatre Department maintains a \$50 budget for the reimbursement of Dramaturgy Thesis expenses, in addition to the \$50 budget afforded all Production Dramaturgs, whether or not they use this as their thesis, for a total available budget of \$100. 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. Please submit a completed Thesis Budget form (found at the end of this document) to the Business Manager and Department Chair for approval no later than one month prior to the scheduled thesis defense.

After the production has closed:

Work with your Advisor to identify a date and time (no later than two weeks after the

closing performance) to meet with the Thesis Committee for your oral defense. The following items should be submitted electronically and/or in hard copy no later than a week prior to the scheduled defense. Consult the Thesis Advisor if you are unsure how best to proceed:

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

The student will meet with the committee to discuss the work completed and how the Thesis Project has influenced and will impact their growth and development as an artist. The student will lead off this conversation with a **10-minute presentation on their 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. Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

At the end of the academic year, the full faculty will meet to discuss all thesis passes and determine whether one or more students will be officially designated “Pass With Distinction” on their academic transcripts.

Dramaturgy Thesis Project Budget

Maximum request: \$100 (including the standard \$50 Production Dramaturg budget)

Name:

Date submitted:

Scheduled thesis defense date:

Must be submitted to Elisa Hibbs for approval no later than one month prior to defense.

LINE ITEM	AMOUNT	NOTES
TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED:		

OFFICE USE ONLY:		
Date received:		
Circle one:		
APPROVED	NOT APPROVED	REQUIRES EDITS AND RESUBMISSION

