

ACTING THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Prerequisites

- Script Analysis
- Cast in a thesis-approved role in a mainstage production
- Principles of Acting is not required, but is strongly encouraged

Budget: The Acting Thesis is not eligible for a budget.

Proposal Deadline: Acting Thesis proposals should be submitted for review no later than one week before the first faculty meeting after casting is announced.

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 their **Acting Thesis Advisor** in order to further discuss the project and outline their Acting Thesis Proposal. (While Prof. James Ijames usually serves as Acting Thesis Advisor, other faculty members may fulfill this function as needed, e.g., when James himself is directing the production.)
- Under the guidance of the Advisor, the candidate should develop a **written proposal**, including a preliminary bibliography. Most likely, this proposal will go through two or three 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.**
- During the process, the candidate and the Acting Thesis Advisor establish the **timeline** for the development of the Final Paper, which should be 15-25 double-spaced pages.
- When the Acting Thesis Advisor determines the paper is ready to be seen by the student's committee, it will **be distributed at least one week prior to the oral defense.**
- The student will provide copies of any necessary materials (e.g., acting journals) to the committee members.
- 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 of the role and research.** Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

Written Proposal

Length of Proposal: **8-12 double-spaced pages**. The written proposal should include the following:

- I. **Title Page** that lists:
 - Title for the thesis
 - Play title/playwright/role
 - Audition and performance dates
 - Director, designers, Marketing/PR Director

- II. **Introductory Narrative** (2-3 pages)
 - Discuss why you have chosen an Acting Thesis as the culminating project of your study. Be certain to scaffold in a discussion of your coursework and how it prepares for or relates to your project. Consider challenges and opportunities.
 - Included here, briefly describe:
 1. Your **development** as an actor prior to your thesis work.
 2. What you hope to learn about yourself as an actor through the rehearsal process and performance of the role.
 3. In what ways you think **this role in particular** will help you grow and challenge you as an actor.

- III. **Script analysis** of the role in relation to the play as a whole (4-6 pages) **”Hunting and gathering” work should be included in an Appendix and not in the body of the proposal.**
 - Please include the following in a **narrative with evidence and distinct headings**:
 1. Larger Given Circumstances / Immediate Given Circumstances: Why did the playwright craft this world to surround this story with these specific character interactions? How did the playwright design the setting and the passage of time within the play? Why is this design important?
 2. Character Analysis: How did the past events the playwright purposefully includes in the text in fact shape (1) the values and behaviors of the characters, (2) their superobjectives, and (3) the action within the play?
 3. Major Dramatic Question / Central Conflict: Reflect on / respond to the reciprocal relationship of your character’s values and the values of the Larger Given Circumstances and how this relates to the Major Dramatic Question in the play. Articulate your understanding of the central conflict of the play. If your character is not directly involved in the Central Conflict, please articulate how your character fits into the action of the plot.

- IV. **Goals** (1 page or less)
 - 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.

V. Bibliography

VI. Appendices

After Approval

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.**

Once the committee has agreed to serve, your Thesis Advisor will work with you to schedule your defense as soon as possible.

Timing of Thesis Defense: The student will submit the final Thesis paper **one week after the production has closed**. The student's committee must have at least one week to read the thesis paper before the defense.

During rehearsals, keep a comprehensive and detailed **rehearsal journal**. You will meet with your Acting Thesis Advisor on a regular basis, to be determined by you and your advisor, to chart your process, answer any technical questions about the process, prepare you for your thesis defense, and establish the **timeline** for the development of the Final Paper, which should be 15-25 double-spaced pages.

After The Production Closes

Use your journal notes to write a paper (15-25 double-spaced pages) analyzing your rehearsal and performance process. The paper is a means for you to reflect on your performance critically, and for the committee to evaluate it further. The paper may figure prominently in your Thesis Project Defense.

In your paper, feel free to write about whatever arises for you in order of importance, but be sure to touch on the following in any sequence that seems appropriate:

- **Preparation**
 - Describe your preparation for the role. What outside research did you undertake? What dramaturgical information was useful? How did you prepare physically and vocally?
- **Education**
 - In what way did your work on the role intersect with class work from your course of study here at Villanova?
- **Collaboration**
 - Describe your work with the director. What did you understand as his/her vision for the play? To what extent were you successful in contributing to the realization of the vision? What were rehearsals like for you? What kind of collaboration were you able to establish with the director? What

elements contributed to the success of your work with the director and what were the obstacles, especially your own?

- **Growth and Development**

- What were you most afraid of in playing the role? How did you manage your fears? What were the traps of the role? Did you fall into any of them? What were the greatest challenges in rehearsal and performance? How did you attempt to meet the challenges?
- What new ground, if any, have you broken with the rehearsal and performance of the role? How has working on the role changed you as an actor? Describe a specific turning point or breakthrough you experienced in a rehearsal or performance.

Submission of Thesis Paper

When the Acting Thesis Advisor determines the paper is ready to be seen by the student's Project Committee, the Thesis Advisor (not the student) will **distribute the paper at least one week prior to the Thesis Project oral defense.**

Defense

The student will meet with the committee to discuss the work completed and how the Thesis Project has and will impact their growth and development as an artist. The student will lead off this conversation with a **10-minute presentation of the role and research.** They should assume the committee has read their paper, so the presentation content should be distinct from the paper. Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.