

DESIGN THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Prerequisites

- Course Requirements: Scenography
- Assistant Stage Manager and Stage Manager a Mainstage Production
- Work experience in a shop as a Graduate Assistant or (with approval) work in a shop as a Work-Study student or in fulfillment of a practicum
- Approval by Design Thesis Advisor, supervisor in the design area, and director of production after an interview and discussion of the play

Budget: Design Thesis students are afforded a \$50 budget. 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.

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.

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 **Design Thesis Advisor**, based upon the design area.
- 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 **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, or faculty and appropriate production staff. The director of the production cannot serve on the committee. **Students should not personally invite faculty members onto their committees.**
- Throughout the design process, the candidate should keep a comprehensive and detailed journal, including notes from meetings with the director, Technical Director or Costume Shop Manager; notes from production meetings; documentation of shopping trips, prop lists, costume fittings, etc.
- The candidate and Design Thesis Advisor should work together to establish the **timeline** for the development of the Thesis design work (much of which will be driven by the Villanova Theatre production calendar) and the candidate's final presentation materials. These should include relevant visual research, renderings, and production photos, comprising a professional design portfolio for the production. In addition, maintain an

updated bibliography of visual research and a record of all design/concept changes and their respective justifications.

- The Design 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.
- 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 research and design work**. Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

Written Proposal:

Length of Proposal: **10-15 double-spaced pages**. The written proposal should include the following:

- I. Title Page** that lists:
 - Title for Thesis
 - Play Title/Playwright
 - Performance Dates
 - Director, Designers, Production Manager
- II. Introductory Narrative** (1-2 pages)
 - Discuss why you have chosen a Design Thesis as the culminating project of your study. Be certain to scaffold in a discussion of your coursework and how it prepares or relates to your project. Consider challenges and opportunities.
 - Included here, briefly describe:
 1. Your **development** as a designer prior to your thesis work.
 2. What you hope to learn about yourself as a designer through the process and production.
 3. In what ways you think this project in particular will help you grow and challenge you as a designer.
- III. Script analysis** (4-5 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.
4. Style: Describe the style inherent in the text, including physical, visual, and textual characteristics of the style.

IV. Visual File / Dramaturgical Research (2-3 pages)

1. Assemble a Visual File (to be included as an Appendix) of imagery evoking time, place, style, or society of the play.
2. Discuss the world of the playwright and the world of the play with reference to cultural concerns of the historic moment.
3. Consider the production history of the play.
4. Include any other background material you need to approach the production design.

V. Design Concept (1-2 pages)

1. Clearly articulate your understanding of the director's concept for the production as it applies to potential design choices.
2. Describe, in some detail, your visual idea for the play.
3. Succinctly define the overall scale of the design project.

VI. 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.

VII. Bibliography

VIII. 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.

During the process:

- Abide by the requirements listed in your design contract.
- Establish the **timeline** for the development of the Thesis design work and the candidate's final presentation materials.
- Keep a comprehensive and detailed journal. Include notes from meetings with the director beginning with the initial introductory meeting; notes from meetings with the Technical Director or Costume Shop Manager; notes from Production meetings; shopping trips, prop lists, costume fittings, and anything else that is relevant to the process.
- The use of photography is encouraged.
- Maintain an updated bibliography of visual research and a record of all design/concept changes and their respective justifications.

Budget/Reimbursement

The Theatre Department maintains a \$50 budget for the reimbursement of Design Thesis expenses. 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 Closes

The Design Thesis Advisor determines the candidate is approved to move forward with the defense. In preparation for the defense:

- Review all design materials and re-do anything that is not portfolio ready. For example, if a costume or set piece changed during tech, redraw the sketch to reflect what it looked like on opening night.
- Prepare a professional portfolio including all design materials to bring to the thesis defense, including archival photographs of the production. **While there is no specific length required, the portfolio will be substantive.**
- Complete the journal, including the record of design and concept changes, and prepare the relevant visuals, research, and bibliography. Bring these materials to the defense.

The 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 research and design work**. Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

Design Thesis Project Budget

Maximum request: \$50

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