

DIRECTING THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Prerequisites

- Practicum: Assistant Stage Manager and Stage Manager mainstage productions
- Course Requirements: Script Analysis; Principles of Acting; Directing; Directing Styles

Budget: Directing Thesis students are afforded a \$300 budget. Budget proposals must be submitted with the Thesis Proposal. 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 **Directing Thesis Advisor** (typically, though not always, Prof Edward Sobel).
- Under the guidance of the advisor, the candidate should develop a **written proposal**. Most likely, this proposal will go through several 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. **Students should not personally invite faculty members onto their committees.**
- The candidate and Thesis Advisor should work together to establish the **timeline** for the project, including booking rehearsal and performance spaces, and scheduling the oral defense (often immediately following the final performance).
- At 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 **15-minute presentation on their work**. Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

Written Proposal:

Directing Thesis projects must run 35 to 45 minutes. They may be one-act plays, an act of a full-length play, or a cutting or adaptation of a full-length play. A copy of the proposed text should be appended to the written proposal.

Proposed dates for the performance must be submitted along with the proposal; two performances are required. Dates must be approved by the Directing Thesis Advisor, the Technical Director, and (if relevant) other department staff. No changes may be made to the performance schedule without approval of the Directing Thesis Advisor and the Technical Director.

Length of Proposal: **10-15 double-spaced pages, not including bibliography and appendices.** The written proposal should include the following:

- I. Title Page** that lists:
 - Title for Thesis
 - Proposed performance dates

- II. Introductory Narrative** (2-3 pages)
 - Discuss why you have chosen a Directing 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 director prior to your thesis work.
 2. What you hope to learn about yourself as a director through the process and production.
 3. In what ways you think this project in particular will help you grow and challenge you as a theatre artist.

- III. Project Description** (10 pages or less)
 - Preliminary analysis:
 1. In 10 sentences or less, summarize the action (tell the story) in a way that reflects your point of view.
 2. In 3 sentences or less, state the central thematic idea being explored.
 3. Identify and concisely explicate the five most important moments.
 4. Answer the questions: Why must this play be done now, and why by you?
 5. Language: describe its functions in the play. What are the rhythms and diction(s)? Is there dialect? What devices of language are used?
 6. Character: for each, what are their given circumstances, in what way are they dynamic (do they change, does our view of them change?), what is/are their essential need(s) and what is/are the obstacles to those need/s, in what ways are they unique, what is their role in the larger story being told?

7. Visual and Aural world: what images/sounds are important in the play, how does the play live in space?
 8. What is theatrical about the piece?
 9. If you are doing a cutting or part of a larger work, explain the rationale for the section(s) of text you have chosen.
- Scale: What is the overall vision and scale of the setting, costumes, lighting, sound, and any other production elements? Give as full a sense of these elements as is possible at this point.
 - Practicability: Discuss how this production can be done on the main stage with limited resources. (Alternative performance spaces will be considered; please be prepared to justify this choice in detail.) Also discuss your sense of the availability of actors for casting
 - Challenges: What is most challenging about the play and potential production?
 - Dramaturgy: What background material do you need to approach the script and the production? Consider the playwright, the play, the cultural background, historical and contemporary criticism, the stage history, present-day intellectual/social/aesthetic/political issues, etc. Attach a bibliography of your research up to this point.
 - Dates for performance: Two performances are required. Dates must be approved by the Directing Thesis Advisor, the Technical Director, and (if relevant) other department staff. No changes may be made to scheduling without going through the Directing Thesis Advisor and the Technical Director.

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**, identifying necessary dramaturgical research and resources

VI. **Appendices**

After Approval

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

During the process:

- It is up to the candidate and the Thesis Advisor to establish a meeting schedule, including regular check-ins, a date for the thesis defense, etc.
- It is the candidate's responsibility to book rehearsal and performance spaces, to acquire necessary design elements, and to enlist the aid of a stage manager or other tech assistants. The Advisor can be of use in troubleshooting production issues, so communicate any roadblocks in a timely way.
- Keep a comprehensive and detailed journal. Include notes from meetings with your designers and technical team, beginning with the initial introductory meeting, e.g.: notes from meetings with others as deemed relevant; preparations for rehearsals; notes of actual rehearsals and tech, each performance, and anything else that is relevant to the process. Maintain an updated bibliography of dramaturgical research and a record of all design/concept changes and their respective justifications. While you will not be asked to share your journal, you should bring it to the defense.

Budget/Reimbursement

The Theatre Department maintains a \$300 budget for the reimbursement of Directing 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.

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 **15-minute presentation on their directing work**, including a discussion of the process and a self-critique. Following the entire discussion (approximately 45-50 minutes), the committee will announce its Pass/Fail decision.

Directing Thesis Project Budget

Maximum request: \$300

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