

Faculty and Courses

Program Director: Todd Ristau (THEA 501, THEA 520, THEA 561, THEA 570)

Resident Professional Teaching Artist: Ian LaRoy/Rachel Dean (THEA 536, THEA 550)

Resident Dramaturg: Nelson Barre (THEA 511, THEA 563)

Megan Gogerty (THEA 510, THEA 542, THEA 551)

John Bergman (THEA 514, THEA 536)

Ruth Margraff (THEA 562, 571)

Dominic Taylor (THEA 513, THEA 524)

Cheryl Graef (THEA 532, THEA 565, THEA 574)

THEA 501: Playwright's Lab (4) Ristau (Lab) (Upstairs Studio)

Playwriting

MW 7-10

All students, faculty, staff, and guests meet regularly for readings of student work, guest presentations, exercises, and discussion. Students submit an example of their best work for available public reading slots. Students whose work is selected for readings are responsible for arranging, rehearsing, and presenting them. A moderated discussion follows each reading. Grades are primarily based on attendance and energetic participation with clear, perceptive, and informed analysis in discussion. The course must be repeated three consecutive summers. **(Required)**

THEA 510: Playscript Analysis (4) Gogerty (Analytic) (VAC 112)

Required of All First Year Students

T TH 9-Noon

Intensive critical analysis of the playscript as a blueprint for production covering representative texts from a range of theatre styles, genres, and periods. Plays are considered in both their original historical/cultural context as well as implications for contemporary audiences. Course covers major approaches to dramatic criticism and the tools used in theatre research. **(Required for all first-year students)**

THEA 511: DRAMATURGY (4) (Barre)

Playwriting Elective, Applied Theatre Concentration, Dramaturgy Elective, MA Elective

WF 9-Noon

Intensive study in theoretical and practical approaches to the realization of a text on the stage. Historical research, criticism, play analysis, conceptualization for production, cutting, adaptation, literary management, evaluation of text, advocacy of new writers, development of new plays, audience development, public relations, publicity, and arts education are all touched upon in this comprehensive survey of the role of the dramaturg. **(Required for Dramaturgy Certificate and Dramaturgy Concentration in the MA in New Play Development--strongly encouraged for the MFA)**

THEA 513: TOPICS IN THEATRE HISTORY – The Harlem Renaissance (4) (Taylor)

Playwriting Elective, Dramaturgy Elective, MA Elective

T-TH 9-Noon

This course is an examination of the beginnings of a formal Black Theatre movement in the United States and will cover Federal Theatre Project's Negro Unit, the Krigwa Players of BuBois, and the NAACP.

THEA 514: Theatre in Society: Theatre for Special Populations (4) Bergman (Analytic) (Pleasants 107)

Playwriting Elective, Applied Theatre Concentration, Dramaturgy Elective, MA Elective

WF 2-5

This course will be taught by John Bergman, one of the nation's leading experts and practitioners in the field of drama therapy. Using a combination of lecture, readings and creative role-playing exercises, Bergman will address the history of using theatre to address the needs of specific populations, such as the handicapped, incarcerated, troubled youth, mentally ill, sexually abused, and others.

THEA 520: Narrative Theory and Structure (4) Ristau (Creative) (VAC 112)

Required of All First Year Students

WF 2-5

Introduction to the basics of storytelling and the creation of dramatic texts using both organic and formulaic models with an emphasis on the one act play. Students will learn to observe the world for meaning, build characters, place characters in settings, write monologues, create dialogue between characters, and lay the groundwork for longer, more substantive work. **(Required for all first-year students)**

THEA 524: DIRECTING THE NEW PLAY (4) (Taylor)

Directing Certificate, Playwriting Elective, Dramaturgy Elective, MA Elective

T TH 2-5

Focused instruction on directing and rehearsal techniques with particular emphasis on approaching the new play when the playwright is attending rehearsals. Students who complete this course will have the confidence to determine whether problems lie in the unfinished text or in the performer's approach to the play and how to come up with practical ways to differentiate between them.

THEA 532: PERFORMANCE AS PROFESSION: The Artist as CEO (4) (Graef)

Performance Certificate, Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

WF 9-Noon

Nuts and bolts practical instruction in how to manage your career in the performing arts while showcasing your experience as someone experienced in new play development. A practical guide to managing your career, placing yourself in the position of CEO of yourself as a theatre artist. How to present yourself professionally, audition successfully, be selective in choosing opportunities, and make smart choices in the real world. Primarily intended for actors, but useful for all disciplines. Subjects covered include headshots, portfolios, agents, internships, showcase performances, working in other mediums like film and television, demo reels, and professional organizations such as Actors Equity, Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, Dramatists Guild, and more. **(Required for Performance Certificate)**

THEA 536: WRITING PLAYS WITH MUSIC (4) (LeRoy/Dean)

Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

T TH 9-Noon

Writers are given guided instruction in creating stage plays which incorporate music. Students will be given some historical background in American Musical Theatre, Revues, and straight plays which incorporate original compositions. Students will have an opportunity to meet with and possibly work with a composer on short pieces which use music to help tell the story.

THEA 537: ADVANCED PERFORMANCE TECHNIQUES (4) (Bergman)

Performance Certificate, Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

T TH 2-5

Intense and rapid training in a variety of performance techniques and styles with an emphasis on applications to new play development. Building on prior experiences in performance, this course will guide students through intensive instruction in mask work, character creation, movement, improvisation, commedia, and other performance techniques with an emphasis on how to apply them to working on new plays. **(Required for Performance Certificate and Applied Theatre concentration)**

THEA 542: Adaptation (4) (Gogerty)

Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

WF 2-5

In this class, we will experiment with using preexisting works as a jumping-off point to new material. We'll approach adaptation less as translation – that is, trying to remain faithful to the source material – and more as a way of surprising ourselves with originality via form. We're going to write a lot. Rather than write one full-length adaptation of one thing, we'll use the summer session to experiment boldly and recklessly with as many short plays as we can. Hopefully, students will leave the course with several new tools, approaches, and a stack of could-be plays and short works that contain seeds of something larger and more complex. This is not the class for your opus, but instead a class for your I-don't-know-let's-try-this urges and wild hares.

THEA 550: SPECIAL TOPICS IN PLAYWRITING: MUSICAL THEATRE INTENSIVE (4) (LeRoy/Dean)

Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

WF 2-5

Building on the fundamentals explored **THEA 536: Plays with Music**, this course is an intensive introduction to more practical and focused areas of musical theatre, including writing, rehearsing, performing, producing, and recording songs. Topics will include the practical and pragmatic requirements specific to musical theatre productions, as well as best practices for collaboration with other members of a musical's artistic team--including musicians, composers, lyricists, musical directors, and more. Intended for playwrights looking to expand their writing into this field, but actors and directors are also encouraged to take this course in order to more empathetically engage in this theatrical genre.

THEA 551: Memoir as Performance (4) (Gogerty)

Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

T TH 2-5

Explores approaches to translating autobiography and memoir into a theatrical form. In this class, we will study examples and mine them for strategies, and apply to our own writing, culminating in a series of final presentations of student work. The class will have a special emphasis on solo, author-performed work. While we won't limit our investigations to solo performance, students are expected to take to the stage at regular intervals to fully embody and take ownership of their own stories. Students are encouraged to bring to class a sense of curiosity, play, experimentation, and joyous risk-taking to the process.

THEA 561: Directors and Playwrights in Collaboration (2) Ristau (Collaboration) (Upstairs Studio)

Directing Certificate, Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

M 9-Noon

Guided instruction leading up to the reading of a new play in Festival and functioning as a production meeting with participation of the playwright and performers discussing process and progress toward the presentation of the work to the public. All students enrolled in the certificate in New Play Directing will be required to direct a reading in the Hollins Playwright's Festival, which presents ten new play readings to industry professionals from all over the world. This course is designed to guide directing students through the process of collaboration from the initial read and interview with a playwright, development of concept in consultation with the playwright, and included practical exercises to ensure that when it comes to the test the playwright and director are on the same page. Monday meetings function as a kind of production meeting for the festival readings and will include Festival playwrights. Wednesday sessions are open only to the directing students to discuss their process and problems under the supervision and guidance of the instructor. Repeated each summer.

THEA 562: Non-Linear Playwriting (4) Margraff

Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

T TH 9-Noon

Students will be guided in the creation of nonlinear and nontraditional approaches to the drama, as well as study the work of recent avant-garde playwrights both in this country and abroad. (Previously taught as "Experimental Playwriting.")

THEA 563: Dramaturgs in Collaboration (2) Barre (Collaboration) (Upstairs Studio)

Dramaturgy Certificate, Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

M 9-Noon

Guided instruction in the collaborative process leading up to the presentation of a new play in our playwright's festival of staged readings at the end of the summer session. Dramaturgs will facilitate effective conversations between playwright and director, as well as provide additional information to the acting company under the guidance of the resident dramaturg and/or the course instructor. Coursework will include the creation of a detailed production notebook, dramaturg's notes, mockup of a lobby display, and an objective critique/review of the public reading to which they have been assigned. **(Required for Dramaturgy Certificate)**

THEA 565: Ensembles in Collaboration (2) Graef (Collaboration) (Upstairs Studio)

Performance Certificate, Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

M 9-Noon

All students enrolled in the Certificate in New Play Performance will be required to perform in at least one, but no more than two, Hollins Playwright's Festival readings. This course is designed to guide performance students through the process of collaboration from the initial table read with the playwright through final performance. The course affords performers an opportunity to debrief their experiences with an experienced theatre professional with expertise in best practices. Performance students are encouraged to serve as readers for festival season and selection and are invited to sit in on the casting session for Festival--at which time they will be able to make preferences known, hear frank discussions of casting needs by directors and playwrights, as well as having input on final casting decisions. Such transparency can be challenging but is extremely instructive for all concerned.

THEA 5XX: APPLIED DRAMATURGY (4) capstone project, independent study (Department)

The student will consult with the program director and resident dramaturg to propose a suitable project to be completed either between their first and second summer or over the year following their second summer--such as a dramaturgy internship, actual work as a dramaturg on a formal production (such as the Hollins-Mill Mountain Winter Festival of New Works), presentation of a scholarly paper at a conference, submission for publication, an extensive research project, or some similar intensive and practical application of their classroom studies in the field. The student is responsible for securing their internship, project, or presentation and will likely register for the course in the second summer to either complete the dramaturgical notebook on the project during that time or be given leave to complete the coursework with a set deadline in the academic year. This project would function as a capstone, or the

equivalent of a thesis, for the certificate. This course's contact hours could be conducted online. **(Required for Dramaturgy Certificate, may be considered for the MA and MFA programs)**

THEA 570: Master Class: First Drafts (4) Ristau (Master Class) (Pleasants 209)

Playwriting

T TH 2-5

In this intensive workshop students come to each class with a completely new play resulting in six new first drafts over the six-week course, each in a different style or genre and incorporating a set list of prompts. While it is possible that these first drafts might eventually be developed and revised into final drafts, the emphasis is on mastering the discipline necessary to produce substantive work on a deadline as well as reinforcing the student's understanding of the fundamentals of play structure.

THEA 571: ADVANCED WORKSHOP (4) (Margraff)

Playwriting

T TH 2-5

A workshop course in which students further develop skills in the writing and analysis of stage plays. Designed for students with prior experience in playwriting. Students will bring to the class a project they would like to further develop through the workshop format – involving analysis by other students and careful, intentional questioning by the instructor. Work for this class must not have been previously submitted for credit in any other course without the written consent of both the current instructor and the instructor for whom the work was originally submitted, along with prior approval of the program director, as this course is intended for the development of new materials. The final for this course is a submission ready draft of the play, properly formatted and ready for production. Ideally, this course is taken in the final summer of study, in place of THEA 501.

THEA 574: ADVANCED SCENE STUDY (Creative) (4) (Graef)

Performance Certificate, Playwriting Elective, MA Elective

WF 2-5

This course provides guided instruction in selecting, preparing and performing two-person scenes from contemporary texts. Through this advanced training in scene study, performers will be better prepared to apply these specific performance strategies to interpreting the evolving characters and contexts found in new plays still under development in rehearsal. This course builds on the foundational courses Playscript Analysis and Ensembles in Collaboration, taken during the first year of the program.

THEA 580: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PRACTICUM (1-4)

Department

When students have an off campus reading, internship, or production opportunity in a legitimate theatre, they may register for this course and receive academic credit for the experience. They will be required to maintain a journal and document every aspect of the production and, if possible, provide a DVD of the event. The quality of the production is not the focus of the grade, but rather the objective analysis of the process, which must be detailed and chronicled in a scholarly portfolio with a written dramaturgical analysis of the experience. May be repeated. **Prior approval required.**

THEA 590: INDEPENDENT STUDY IN PLAYWRITING (4)

Department

This guided-distance instruction in an approved course area may be either creative or analytical.

THEA 599: THESIS (4, 4) Department

The thesis must be a properly formatted, production-ready final draft of a full-length play script (at least two acts of 45-60 pages each), two thematically linked one-act plays, or a substantial collection of thematically lined ten-minute plays. The thesis must include a scholarly narrative essay with objective dramaturgical analysis of the student's own work as preface or afterward. This essay will place the work in the context of the student's arc of progress toward their degree explaining how the work is a capstone project. It will be developed in consultation with the student's thesis advisor and must have been begun, revised, completed within two years of taking their final class. Substantial revisions of earlier works may be considered, but rarely approved, as thesis plays. After the thesis committee has reviewed the work, the student will take a comprehensive final exam. **This course is required for the MA and MFA.**