

# Wesleyan Theater Department

## Senior Projects Guidelines, Requirements and Proposals

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### Section I

## Eligibility and Requirements for Submitting a Proposal for Honors in Theater

### Eligibility

Students are eligible to pursue Honors in Theater if they attained an average of A- (3.7) or better in the major. Please note that eligibility does not guarantee approval. Eligibility will be computed using the grades for courses within the Major only (and which appear in the Major Certification Form). The table used in computing an A- average is found here: [http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/general\\_information/GPA\\_calculation.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/general_information/GPA_calculation.html). The column "4.0 GPA equivalent" will be used for the calculation. Students whose aggregate GPA does not meet the 3.7 minimum may petition for admission to the Honors program.

### Requirements for all theater theses

- At least two advanced courses in the proposed thesis area of focus (if applicable) with an A- average. (If a student has yet to complete these courses by the time of proposal, a petition for the plan of completion should be added to the proposal).
- Participation in a Theater Department faculty production in their area of focus (if applicable)
- Completion of all requirements or near completion of requirements for the major. If a student has not completed all the requirements they will need to petition for special permission with a plan for completion. In order to complete an honors thesis you must also be Gen Ed stage1 compliant, and Gen Ed stage 2 complaint for high honors.

### Proposal Guidelines for an Honors in Theater Project

Please follow these subheadings and submit as a pdf to the Theater Department. The deadline for proposal submission will be announced each academic year.

- **Area of focus in theater making\***  
Indicate if you are proposing to submit a creative project or a written thesis. Briefly describe your ideas regarding form and content. (150 word count).
- **Title and topic of your proposed project**  
Provide your provisional thesis title and briefly describe the concept of your project and where it fits within the discipline of theater and performance. (250-300 word count).
- **Rationale**  
Describe the goal of your proposal: what do you hope to accomplish and why do you want to pursue this investigation? What are you bringing to this project that is original? Clearly state your thesis, methodology, and theoretical framework. What is your contribution to the field

and/or to the Wesleyan community? How will this research contribute to your educational experience at Wesleyan? Please explain how your project will engage your participants, collaborators, and audience. Additionally, please explain what your thesis reader will take away from your work. (300- 500 word count).

- **Candidate's justification and qualifications**

Honors written and creative projects are regarded as culminations of a student's progress in your theater career at Wesleyan. Demonstrate, citing all relevant experience, the qualifications and background research you've undertaken that have led to this project. List academic courses in and outside the Theater Department and impactful readings, workshops, and productions. Please detail their influence on your proposed topic.

- **Resources and Bibliography (MLA style)**

Please provide a comprehensive working list of titles and additional resources you will use in your research such as interviews, articles, art collections, panels, performances, and so forth. This list is meant to provide us with the potential scope of your research, and the early places your investigation is leading you.

- **Annotated Bibliography**

In addition to the above, please annotate 10 sources (at minimum). This annotated bibliography (roughly 150-250 words per source) will describe the material, demonstrating the research and reading you have already done that prepare you to undertake a rigorous senior project. Your annotated bibliography should be specific to your area of focus. ([See example of annotated bibliography here](#))

- **Course and Requirements checklist**

To determine your eligibility, please list all courses towards the major—Gateway and requirements; additional courses when applicable—as well as the grade received for each.

- **Production team and confirmed rights**

When appropriate, please confirm you have retained rights to your script of interest, or report on your process of obtaining the rights (Department Administrative assistant, Dawn Alger can help you with this; please see her). Also list your production team or describe your plans for building one, including anyone who has already committed or expressed interest in joining the project. (This is important particularly because scene, space, costumes and media designers may need to enroll in THEA434 the semester before a project goes up to design, build, or create content.)

**\*A note about theatermaking:** The Theater Department promotes interdisciplinary collaborations outside traditional theater productions; however, students must demonstrate that they are prepared to undertake the project proposed, as reflected in their completed coursework and apprenticeships and/or interdisciplinary credit-awarded endeavors at Wesleyan. Remember, senior projects are a culmination of a student's progress in their theater career at Wesleyan. Furthermore, the scope and feasibility of the project should fit within the credit hour and funding and location constraints as stipulated in this document.

## Evaluation of Honors Proposals

Proposals should be submitted to the entire faculty by the first Wednesday after Spring Break (see previous page for proposal format/outline). Please consult with various faculty members as you draft your proposal, particularly faculty members who teach in your particular area of focus. The Theater Department may request the submission of a revised proposal addressing the faculty's questions, suggestions, and/or concerns.

Each proposal will be evaluated based on the candidate's preparation; quality of preliminary research as demonstrated in your annotated bibliography; clarity of the objectives of the process; and articulation of impact and contribution to the theater community at Wesleyan.

Following review by faculty in a department meeting, feedback and/or further questions will be given to the student for consideration in revising the proposal. Revised proposals that have addressed any outstanding questions from the faculty are expected to be submitted by the last Friday of April.

Honors thesis projects will be approved or rejected and advisors assigned before the end of the Spring semester. At this point, a contract will be sent to the capstone student to illustrate the conditions and requirements for the project to proceed as proposed. Readers will be finalized by the deadline stipulated by the Honors College.

## **Honors Program Guidelines for the Theater Department**

### **Honors/High Honors**

The Theater Department will award honors on the basis of the student's committee evaluations and recommendation. The committee's recommendation will take into consideration both process and the quality of written and creative work (when applicable). The Honors Tutor is responsible for assigning grades for the senior thesis tutorial courses THEA 409 and THEA 410. Students will receive the grade for both semesters at the end of the project. Senior thesis tutorial grades are separate and do not need to reflect the committee's recommendation to award or deny Departmental Honors.

### **Honors committee**

The Theater Department will assign an appropriate tutor and readers. The Honors Tutor must be a Theater Department faculty member. When the student is a double major or the field of research is explicitly outside of the Theater Department's areas of expertise, the Theater Department may invite one outside faculty to serve as a reader. Each thesis has two readers. Readers are chosen by the Theater Department.

### **About the written component**

Fully written theses should have a minimum of 60 pages and a maximum of 90 pages, excluding appendices and list of works cited.

Creative theses will each have an accompanying research paper of 20-30 pages.

Double majors should request written permission to submit a Theater thesis or essay to another department. In their proposals, double majors are expected to provide a clear justification as to why their topic demands interdisciplinary research.

Writing Manual Styles: Modern Language Association (MLA)

### **A Suggested Timeline for Written Essay Component for Honors Projects**

Honors candidates are expected to begin work on their project over summer break and meet with advisers to set a calendar for feedback and work sessions. All honors projects will culminate in a brief presentation to faculty and peers at the end of the year.

In order to continue as a candidate for Honors in Theater, thesis students must submit a sample of their research essay (typically about 15 pages) to the Theater Department Honors Coordinator by the last day of classes before winter break. Following review, the honors coordinator will consult with your thesis advisor to discuss your progress on your work, and to evaluate your status for continued honors eligibility.

### **Guidelines for written work in theater making:**

1. Originality of research and topic, including contribution to the field(s)
2. Clear thesis argument
3. Clear development of your research question
4. Sustained engagement with your topic throughout the sections
5. Appropriate and original evidence/examples from primary and/or secondary sources such as performances, case studies, texts, and so forth

### **Guidelines for creative work in theater making:**

Evaluation of an Honors Creative Project will be based on the form and intention of both the project and the student's role within it.

Your thesis project should be grounded in a thesis question that guides your project and point of view. The creative project will be accompanied by a significant research paper of 20-30 pages that addresses your thesis question on a scholarly level, bringing in the range of thinkers and theories that can contextualize your practice and your project within a larger field of thought and/or practice. Writing guidelines will be given to you by your advisor. Depending on the project, research could include:

1. Dramaturgical research, visual research, etc
2. Influences/Theoretical context
3. Production or project histories
4. History of related art or performance movements
5. Articulation of how the above integrates into your process and final project or performance/event

In evaluating your project, readers will take into account the execution of the work in conjunction with a prepared statement of intent (250-500 words). A reader will assess preparedness; craft and execution; clear point of view; and aesthetic understanding. When possible, they may also address processes (meeting of deadlines, collaboration, and so forth). More specifically, criteria may include:

**1. Text work:** If the project involves text, is there a shown understanding of and ability to work with the structural and rhythmic demands of text, ability to analyze language, contextualize and analyze your use of language within broader contexts?

**2. Preparation:** Your preparation may include research, rendering, drafting, model-making, script analysis, site visits, etc. Is your preparation full and complete? How does your preparation relate to your process and product? Are your thematic choices grounded in this preparation?

**3. Command of the form:** Your advisor will provide your readers with specific criteria relating to excellence in the form of your project. This criteria will be shared with and can be influenced by you. For example, an actor might be evaluated on their use of body, voice, and study to create character; a director on their ability to analyze a script, provide a clear point of view and lead a room; a designer or object maker on the execution, dramaturgy, technique and context of their creation, or control and pertinence of design elements and principles; a writer on depth and thematic complexity. Please consult with your thesis advisor to receive explicit criteria guidelines for your project.

**4. Process and Community:** As theater makers, creative projects are most often made in community with others. As a leader of a project, is your process clear, equitable, and ethical? Is your leadership consistent? Throughout your time as a Wesleyan theater major, there has been an emphasis on community and collaboration. How does your thesis project demonstrate this value?

## Wesleyan University Honors

\*University Honors candidates will be selected by a unanimous vote of the faculty based upon the following criteria:

1. A thesis that is notably good even when compared with other theses that receive High Honors.
2. An academic record that shows excellence in general scholarship as well as in the theater major.
3. General knowledge of substantial scope and more than superficial depth.
4. An ability to form connections and to reason from inconclusive evidence.

Department selection of candidates for University Honors should be made with great care. High Honors are a necessary but not a sufficient qualification.

\*From the Honors College, April 1993

## SECTION II

# Your 'Honors in Theater' Creative Component Project and Collaborative Team

### Collaborators

All collaborators must be approved and credit will be determined by the Theater faculty.

#### **Design**

Design students will earn credit through the appropriate faculty in the Theater Department.

- Lighting designers should have completed or be enrolled in THEA305: Lighting Design;
- Scenic Designers should have completed or be enrolled in THEA359: Space Design for Performance;
- Costume Designers should have completed or be enrolled in THEA383: Costume Design;
- Media Designers should have completed or be enrolled in THEA360: Media for Performance.

Designers will be approved through the appropriate design faculty, and on a case by case basis they will be required to submit a portfolio that includes images of projects, conceptual ideas, renderings and/or technical drawings, if pertinent.

Design budgets will be determined based on the number of thesis students involved in each project.

#### **Other student collaborators**

Other production collaborators such as composers, musicians, music directors, choreographers, playwrights, and so forth, should also be approved by the department. **Credit will be determined and awarded by the Theater faculty.**

### Technical and Artistic Teams

All major technical positions, stage manager, and crew heads must have completed THEA105: Production Laboratory in the appropriate area and be approved by the Theater Department's Head of Production. The minimum qualification for technical positions is the completion of THEA 105: Production Lab.

Stage Managers must have completed THEA105 and THEA315, and have been involved in a department production.

Ideally, all positions should be filled prior to the production's approval. The final deadline to fill production positions will be one week after the drop/add deadline, at the latest. Directors are responsible for assembling their staff, but the Department will help in finding collaborators, designers and technicians when necessary and possible.

All positions must be enrolled in the assigned Theater Department course for credit. [Sample syllabi](#) for these courses are available on the department website.

## Expectations and Procedures for Creative Projects

The Theater Department allows students a wide range of authority and independence over their intellectual research and creative projects once they have been granted approval. This authority carries with it major responsibilities. These include:

1. Responsibility to adhere to the approved concepts and budget.
2. Responsibility to follow the guidelines and meet deadlines established by the department, as well as in the Advisor/Advisee relationship for the project.
3. Responsibility to respect and protect the involvement and learning experiences of other contributors to the production.

If the department determines that a candidate's research or creative component presents major difficulties in its development—including failure to meet stipulated deadlines, budgetary issues, problems with the creative team, and so forth—then the following procedures will be used:

1. The student(s) work out the problem with the advisor.
2. If that does not solve the problem(s), the Department will meet with the student(s) and tutor to assess whether to:
  - a. Require a modification of the written and/or creative project, or;
  - b. Terminate the written or creative project eligibility for Honors in Theater, and/or;
  - c. Cancel the creative project.

## Guidelines for Honors Production Meetings

**Budget:** When appropriate, students approved to pursue honors that include a creative component will receive a production budget from the Theater Department. This budget will be communicated to the student by the Department Production Manager.

**Initial project meeting:** Candidates engaged in a creative project must schedule an initial project meeting with the Theater Department's Production Manager, design faculty and student collaborators as soon as the honors production is approved by the Theater faculty and no later than the second week of the fall semester. At the initial project meeting, the timeline of the creative component will be discussed with the Department faculty and staff. Specific procedures will be discussed concerning the use of the Center for the Arts, Patricelli '92 Theater, or alternative spaces, already assigned.

**Design meeting(s):** A design meeting should be scheduled prior to the beginning of regularly scheduled production meetings (see below). The design meeting is where specific scenic and costume design concepts are presented (renderings, model and drafting), as well as a written budget breakdown showing the various areas of expenditure. You must also inform your thesis tutor of the meeting and ask them to attend. It is the responsibility of each candidate (through your Stage Manager) to arrange the meeting and to inform the above participants in writing (e-mail). All of the above participants must be present at the meeting, unless alternate arrangements are made through the Production Manager and/or your tutor. Prior to this meeting, each candidate must have met with their tutor to thoroughly discuss the overall design/production concept. When applicable, also each designer must have a preliminary planning/concept session with the appropriate design faculty prior to the meeting. Candidates and design students should work out any questions with the Production Manager, design faculty, and/or tutor before the meeting.

Students will be expected to continue to have design meetings with their team outside of scheduled production meetings, as necessary.

**Production meetings:** Production meetings will be regularly held on Tuesdays or Thursdays from 4:45-5:45 and are required. For performances in the Patricelli '92 Theater, production meetings must also include the building's Manager. You and your production team will be expected to present a production proposal that fits in your budget guidelines. Failure to do so will result in a canceled meeting.

We look forward to these meetings. We hope the result will be artistically successful and technically safe/efficient productions.



## SECTION III

### Guidelines for Senior Projects in Theater (one-semester)

#### General description for one-semester senior project:

- A one-semester senior project may take a variety of forms:
  - An research paper on a topic related to Theater taken as a tutorial for 1.0 credit (THEA 403 Fall, or 404 Spring)
  - A theatermaking project taken as a tutorial for 1.0 credit (THEA 403 Fall, or 404 Spring). This does not need to be a traditional production; projects could be in playwriting, various manifestations of design for performance, site-based interventions, community engagement, etc.

#### Guidelines for a one-semester senior project production:

- Performances will take place in a festival setting. Please see the timeline (next page).
- The festival will take place in one location, and each production will receive two days of performances.
- The festival format will necessitate advanced coordination of performance times as needed due to production elements and other specific requirements.
- The space configuration will be the same for all senior performance projects in the same festival. Students and faculty advisors will collaborate to choose a festival orientation that will satisfy all planned projects.
- Senior projects in design may take as their subject one aspect of design for the entire festival.
- Additional personnel needs for these senior project productions will be determined by faculty, including necessary collaborations amongst students as appropriate.
- **Performances taking place outside of the festival will receive a limited level of departmental production support, which would be clarified on a case-by-case basis. These conditions and limitations will be incorporated into the contract sent to the capstone student by the project advisor.**

#### Proposal Guidelines for a One-Semester Senior Project

All senior project proposals must include the following information:

**1. Title and topic of your proposed project**

Briefly describe the concept of your project and where it fits within the discipline of theater and performance. (150-250 word count).

**2. Rationale**

Describe the goal of your proposal: what do you hope to accomplish and why do you want to pursue this investigation? What are you bringing to this project that is original? How will this research contribute to your educational experience at Wesleyan? Please explain how your project will engage your participants, collaborators, and audience. (500 word maximum).

**3. Candidate's justification and qualifications**

Demonstrate, citing all relevant experience, the qualifications and background research you've undertaken that have led to this project. List academic courses in and outside the Theater Department and impactful readings, workshops, and productions. Please detail their influence on your proposed topic.

**4. Students involved and their capacities (if needed)**

Provide evidence of collaboration, and list any relevant qualifications.

## Capstone Timelines

<b>Thesis &amp; Senior Project proposal submission deadline</b>	Wednesday after Spring Break
<b>Initial department response to proposals</b>	2nd Friday of April
<b>Revisions due back to department</b>	2 weeks after department response
<b>Final decision by department</b>	Decided and communicated by last day of classes, spring semester by the department chair, to be followed up with conditions of project completion agreement
<p>➤ To be communicated before the end of the spring semester by department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decision on approval or rejection of proposal</li><li>• Specifics on projects as per below list (approvals of teams, setting location/dates/times, approval of titles)</li><li>• Setting project advisors</li><li>• Preliminary budget amount</li></ul>	
<p><b><u>The following must be finalized at the time of proposal revision deadline:</u></b> <i>(specific date to be announced each year):</i></p> <p>➤ For All Creative Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Names for your creative team</li><li>• Technical team</li><li>• Ideal venue</li><li>• Last deadline for confirmed rights</li></ul>	
<p><b>(This allows the department to discuss your requests and provide feedback before the end of the Spring semester)</b></p>	

**Students who fail to submit proposal revisions according to the timeline above, or who fail to address outstanding issues as requested in department responses in the revisions, may lose their eligibility to pursue the project.**

<b><u>One-Semester Senior Project Dates:</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Theater Department will host a weekend festival of theatrical senior project performances. This will be held during the last weekend of classes, typically the last weekend of April or the first weekend of May.</li> <li>• Alternative forms of theater making for these projects can be considered - dates and locations will vary (typically site specific projects).</li> </ul>	
<b><u>Thesis Dates:</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are two options for thesis production dates each year - the last weekend of classes in December or the last three days before Spring Break.</li> <li>• All thesis projects receive up to three days of performances.</li> </ul>	

**Additional Expectations and Requirements for ALL Senior Projects:**

- Production meetings are held on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 4:45pm and 5:45pm; you and your production team **must** be available
- All design collaborators on any project **must** be enrolled for credit, advised by design faculty and be able to meet with project tutors on a regularly scheduled basis.