

Undergraduate Minor: Text-to-Performance

Purpose

The purpose of a “Text-to-Performance” minor is to introduce undergraduates to the complexities of dramatic interpretation – how a text on the page is realized on the stage by actors and directors. It will occupy a position equidistant between the literary study of plays and a theater training in performance. Students will be introduced to textual analysis, to the interpretive work of director and dramaturge, and to the challenges of acting (and designing) stage productions.

Justification of Need

Many students come to the UM/LSA with a background or interest in theater, but unless they choose to pursue a pre-professional program, they are largely limited to the study of drama as literature in the English major. The RC Drama Program has built a curriculum and presence in the Residential College that combines the study of text and context with stage productions of the plays that are studied. By developing an undergraduate minor, open to LSA students as well as to RC students who are pursuing concentrations in other areas, the RC seeks to increase the population of students who combine the serious study of dramatic literature with practical theater work. The minor combines literature with performance in an focused interdisciplinary approach that will foster more informed theater-makers and theater-goers, as well as more sophisticated readers of dramatic literature.

Pre-requisites

There are no pre-requisites for this minor

Requirements

Students must complete a minimum of 5 courses (15-20 hours of credit), no more than two of which may be at the 200-level

The courses are divided into two required core courses and a limited selection of electives drawn from the three cooperating units.

Core Requirements

Two core courses based in the Residential College must be taken in sequence, for a total of 8 credits

- 1) RC Hums 281: “Inside the Dramatic Experience: Script Analysis and Theater Production” – an introduction to basic textual analysis of scripts and the basics of acting and directing, leading to mid-term and end-of-term studio productions of one-act plays or scenes from established full-length plays.

RC Hums 481: “Play Production Seminar” – an advanced immersion in the production experience, involving the study, research, planning, design and execution of a full production of a major play (recent examples include: *Peer Gynt*, *The Seagull*, five late pieces by Samuel Beckett, *Good Person of Setzuan*). Every student engages in some background research on the play, playwright, theatrical tradition, and historic context, including its stage history and critical reception and the place of the play in the career of the playwright (reading five or six other works by the same author). Every student also contracts to work on aspects of the production, including acting, assistant directing, design and technical work, and dramaturgic work for the program and post-performance discussions.

Note: these courses must be taken in sequence. Ideally, students should plan to complete their electives in the interval between taking RC Hums 281 and RC Hums 481, although it is understood that this desirable pattern is not always possible.

Electives

There are three electives in the minor, organized in two categories.

1) Texts and Scenes

Students select one course that studies a particular genre or playwright in the dramatic literature with a view to developing scene work. These are experiments and improvisations with dramatic texts that explore performance under direction without doing a full-scale productions.

Students must select one from the following:

RC Hums 380. Greek Theater and Modern Adaptations

RC Hums 381: Shakespeare on the Stage

RC Hums 382: Moliere and Commedia dell’arte

RC Hums 383: Ibsen and Strindberg

RC Hums 385: The Theater of Bertolt Brecht

RC Hums 389: The Modern Theater

RC Hums 390: Period and Place Drama

2) The Varieties of Literature for the Theater

Students select two courses offered in LSA departments and units that study dramatic literature or themes and locations of dramatic performance. Concentrators in any of these programs may double count only one course. The list will include:

ALC 310: The Theater of China and Japan

CAAS 341/Thremus 222: Introduction to Black Theater

CAAS 342/Thremus 233: Acting and the Black Experience

CLCIV 386: Greek Drama

ENG 267: Introduction to Shakespeare

ENG 445: Shakespeare's Rivals

ENG 446: World Drama: Congreve to Ibsen

ENG 447: Modern Drama

ENG 448: Contemporary Drama

German 320: German Expressionism in English Translation

German 360: Art and Politics in Weimar Germany

German 381: Eighteenth to Nineteenth Century Drama (German needed)

German 382: Nineteenth to Twentieth Century Drama (German needed)

MEMS 367/ENG 367: Shakespeare's Principal Plays

MEMS 368/ENG 368: Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

MEMS 421/RC HUMS 386: Medieval Drama

Italian 471: Commedia dell'arte and Goldoni (Italian needed)

Spanish 425: Latin American Theater (Spanish needed)

Spanish 460: The Spanish Comedia (Spanish needed)

Spanish 468: Modern Spanish Theater (Spanish needed)

Russian 463: Chekhov

Thremus 323: Contemporary American Theater and Drama

Thremus 324: Contemporary Black Theater

Thremus 332: Performing Gender

Thremus 402: Ideas of Theater: Dramatic Theory and Criticism

Exclusions and Intended Audience

Students concentrating in the RC Humanities or majoring/minoring in Theater and Drama may not do this minor. Undergraduates in other concentrations, with an interest in dramatic literature or in theater as a force for social change or as a barometer of historical processes will find this minor useful as an introduction to the art and craft of theater. Students with a background in theater or involved in extracurricular theatrical activity will be able, through this minor, to ground their interests in a more rigorous academic frame.

Advising

The Text-to-Stage minor will be based in the Residential College and advising will be handled by the co-teachers of the core courses, Martin Walsh and Kate Mendeloff, both of the RC Drama Program.