

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program
M. A. / Ph.D. Handbook

2024-2025

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Important Contacts and Resources

Program Website

<https://english.wisc.edu/intertheatrestudies/>

Program Officers

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Jen Plants, English

Ann Shanahan, Theatre and Drama

Mark Vareschi, English

Natalie Zervou, Dance

Academic Policies and Procedures in the Graduate School

The Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program complies with the Graduate School's policies and procedures regarding such issues as curriculum and administration, student grievances and appeals, and incidents of discrimination or harassment. **If you have a question, concern or complaint about your experience as a student in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies, please contact your advisor, the appropriate program officer (see list above) and/or the Program Director.** For information about the Graduate School's policies on these and other administrative concerns please go to this link: Academic Policies and Procedures: <http://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>

Introduction

This Handbook provides you with general information about our programs, including requirements, opportunities, and timelines. While it offers an important overview of graduate studies in the department and on campus, it is only a guide. You should stay in close touch with your advisor, the Program Director, the Graduate Coordinator, the Department Administrator, and other administrators, professors, and mentors to gain the most from your experience at UW-Madison.

The Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program at UW-Madison prepares MA and PhD students to pursue innovative, interdisciplinary research in theatre studies, and to relate their scholarly research to production and/or teaching. The MA can serve as a preparatory degree for the PhD, or as a terminal degree for students seeking greater exposure to theatre studies beyond the undergraduate degree. Through rigorous coursework and participation in a variety of artistic production processes, the PhD program prepares graduates for positions as college and university researchers and instructors as well as public intellectuals, dramaturgs, and critics.

The program's faculty are leaders in theatre and performance studies, whose scholarship and engagement with the profession is recognized nationally and internationally. Our students work closely with faculty who have a teaching appointment in ITS, as well as affiliated ITS faculty members in such fields as African Studies, African-American studies, Art, Art History, Classics, Communication Arts, English, French and Italian, Gender and Women's Studies, German, Music, Spanish and Portuguese, Theatre and Drama, and Visual Cultures.

Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies attracts students from across the United States as well as internationally, and creates opportunities for students to engage in teaching and practice as part of their research. Many of our students participate in theatre and performance groups as actors, dramaturgs, directors, devisers, designers, and playwrights on and off campus, allowing them to experiment with a wide range of performance modes. At the same time, all students are expected to develop a strong foundation in current practices in theatre history, theatre and performance theory, and dramatic literature, in addition to their specific area of interest.

The MA program requires completion of 30 credits, including 5-8 thesis credits taken in the final semester of course work. The PhD program requires completion of 69 credit hours of course-work and a dissertation. MA students who continue to the PhD may transfer up to 24 credit hours towards the PhD requirements. Incoming PhDs who have received the MA from another institution may transfer a maximum of 18 credit hours in consultation with the Program Director.

Overview of MA and PhD Programs

Degree Curricula and Requirements

During the first semester of study, all new MA and PhD students take the pro-seminar, Introduction to Research in Theatre, to familiarize themselves with the methods and materials of theatre research and writing. Thereafter, Master's students in ITS construct an individualized program of study culminating in a thesis. PhD students take a range of lecture/discussion and seminar-style

courses in dramatic literature, history, and theory approved by the Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program and construct a Minor based on courses in other related disciplines. If they choose, they may also fulfill a foreign language requirement. They are admitted to dissertator status after an oral exam based on a selection of research papers (Prelim A), followed by a dissertation proposal defense (Prelim B), and the final dissertation defense. MA and PhD students also participate in the production process by serving as dramaturgs, assistant directors, performers, designers, or technicians, working on theatre and performance projects on and off campus.

Learning Goals and Objectives for the MA and PhD

MA

1. Articulate, critique, or elaborate the theories, research methods, and approaches to inquiry or schools of practice in theatre, drama and performance.
2. Identify sources and assemble evidence pertaining to questions or challenges in the study of theatre, drama and performance.
3. Demonstrate understanding of theatre, drama and performance in historical, social, and global contexts.
4. Select and/or utilize the most appropriate methodologies and practices. Evaluate or synthesize information pertaining to questions or challenges in the fields of drama, theatre and performance.
5. Communicate clearly in projects that include collaborative theatre practice, writing seminar-level research papers, and a master's thesis.
6. Recognize and apply principles of ethical and professional conduct.

PhD

1. Demonstrate understanding of the theory, history, and practice of drama and theatre as collaborative cultural forms across historical periods.
2. Master the methods and materials of theatre and performance research and writing in order to produce original scholarly projects that range in complexity from term papers to dissertations.
3. Develop methods for theatre and performance practice and theory in order to test the reciprocal relations between research and practice through reflective participation in the production process.
4. Identify and distinguish among the diverse global locations of theatre and the intercultural contact among theatre traditions, especially as these multiply in the modern and contemporary periods.
5. Prepare for future careers combining theatre and performance scholarship, teaching, and/or practice.
6. Demonstrate professionalization in the discipline of theatre through participation in conferences and submission of work to scholarly journals.

Teaching and Project Assistantships

The Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program supports its graduate students as much as possible through Teaching, Research, and Project Assistantships. It is our policy to provide financial aid, when available, for at least three years to PhD students. MAs matriculating into the PhD program may

receive a total of four years of support if they had already received a year of assistantship during the MA, although assistantships for MA students are exceptional rather than customary.

Current Students interested in receiving any kind of assistantship must submit an application for a department assistantship to the ITS Graduate Coordinator, Brenda Weiss, by January 15 each year. Because of the quality and range of skills among our graduate students, an increasing number, after they finish course work, have received TA positions in departments other than Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies. We encourage qualified students to explore these options; however, it is important for graduate students receiving a PhD in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies to teach courses related to our program (if an assignment is available to them) for at least two or three semesters during their years of coursework and dissertation writing, in order to obtain teaching experience specifically in theatre studies. It is our policy that any TA/PA/RA support from other departments counts towards the five years of support offered to students as they progress through the doctoral program.

Readerships

In addition to the longer-term support outlined above, the program offers more modest support in the form of scholarships and/or readerships. Readers are hired on an hourly basis to assist faculty members in grading papers for large lecture courses with 40-60 students. These are ad hoc appointments.

Program Faculty and Administration

The Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies Program is housed administratively in the Department of English, and is served by faculty members in two main categories.

- Throughout this document, the term “**ITS Core Faculty**” refers to members who have an administrative connection to ITS, regularly offer ITS courses, and have primary advising, mentoring, and governance responsibilities in the program.
- **Core Faculty** are de facto members of the **ITS Program Committee** (the administrative governing body for the Program), but may petition to request exemption from that role in a specific semester or academic year.
- “**Affiliate faculty**” refers to members in other units (departments or programs) who are formally affiliated with ITS, periodically offer courses appropriate for ITS students, and can serve on ITS MA and PhD committees (but not as advisors).

The MA Program


The Master of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies can serve as the preparatory degree for the PhD, or as a terminal degree for students seeking greater exposure to theatre, drama, and performance studies beyond the undergraduate degree.

MA Requirements (30 Credits, 24 minimum in ITS Courses)

- **Pro-seminar in Theatre Research (ENGL 850)** All students must take this course in the fall semester of their first year as part of their 30 credits.
- Engl 795, taken in the Fall semester of the first year, by those teaching English Literature course
- **Significant participation in an approved theatre production or performance event** as dramaturg, director, assistant director, stage manager, assistant stage manager, actor,

- designer, or technician.
- ***Thesis.*** A candidate for the MA degree must choose an advisor from the Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies faculty before the end of the second semester of study and prepare a thesis under their guidance. Before the degree can be conferred, the thesis must be approved by a committee consisting of three faculty members--the advisor, at least one more member from ITS or affiliate faculty, and one other member from an appropriate department or program. The approved thesis must be filed according to Graduate School deadlines. The thesis should represent independent research carried out by the student in consultation with the thesis committee. Students enroll in 5-8 credit hours for completing their thesis.
- ***A one-hour oral defense of the thesis.*** At the defense, the student explains the contribution of the thesis to the field of study and responds to questions and critiques by the committee. Completion of the MA requires successful completion of the thesis and a satisfactory defense of it.
- ***Review the Graduate School's Guide to [Completing your Master's Degree](#)*** This guide includes information about things you need to know and do, graduation information, deadlines, formatting requirements, depositing your thesis, etc.

MA Program Timeline

The MA program is designed to be completed in 3-4 semesters of full-time study. 

MA Program: 1st Year

During Welcome Week of the Fall semester, all students receive the Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies MA and PhD Handbook which contains current policies about program requirements and progress. They register for the ITS Pro-seminar and are advised by the Program Director about other appropriate courses. Because MA students must choose an advisor by the end of their second semester, they are encouraged to take courses with various members of the regular teaching faculty during the first year of study. All first-year MA students are assessed informally during the spring semester of the first year. Students who are struggling with coursework or research writing must meet with the Program Director and their advisor to discuss courses for the following semester, and strategies for improvement.

MA Program: 2nd Year

Second year students continue completing course requirements, with an emphasis on the production requirement, and begin work on a thesis proposal in consultation with their advisor. After the advisor has approved the thesis proposal, the student selects a thesis committee consisting of the advisor and two other faculty members, including at least one other member from ITS Core or Affiliate faculty. Students petition for a thesis defense by writing to the Program Director, and schedule a date in coordination with their thesis committee and the Graduate Coordinator.

The Thesis

The MA thesis is a scholarly contribution to knowledge that attests to the student's ability to define, research, and articulate in writing a topic related to the field of Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies. Topics should be discussed with the advisor, and may focus on any aspect of theatre, drama, and

performance studies, depending on the student's interests. Students who plan to petition for admission to the PhD program may choose a topic related to their possible area of focus in the PhD program. The MA thesis is typically 75-90 double-spaced pages in length, including the bibliography. *Students must distribute the thesis to committee members and request a degree warrant form from the Graduate Program Manager at least three weeks prior to the thesis defense date.*

Choosing an MA Advisor

The Graduate School requires every graduate student to have an academic advisor. The advisor is the primary contact person within the department and the faculty member who will guide the student most closely through their degree program. MA students work with the Program Director during their first semester in the program. In addition to meeting with the Director to plan the fall course schedule, students begin to discuss possibilities for a thesis advisor.

The Director and the Graduate Coordinator continue to serve as the liaison between the Graduate School and graduate students, working closely with the student's advisor on such issues as graduation requirements. , for Students are expected, however, to stay informed about both Graduate School and program requirements, and are responsible for making sure they are on track and meeting deadlines

The PhD Program

The PhD program in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison prepares students to assume professional positions as scholars, educators, and researchers in theatre and performance studies. The degree requirements are designed to balance theoretical and critical investigations with practical applications, and to allow for interdisciplinary studies that enhance the value and possibilities of the degree. Students are encouraged to participate in national and international professional meetings, and to publish in the field.

PhD Program Timeline

PhD coursework is usually completed within five or six semesters. Most students complete their dissertations four to six semesters after finishing their coursework. The number of MA credits transferred, the time taken to complete coursework requirements, and other factors can affect this timeline.

Coursework: 69 Credits

Courses numbered 300 and above count toward a graduate degree. Courses numbered from 301-699 carry both undergraduate and graduate credit, but the course must provide a separate syllabus for graduate students. Courses numbered from 700-800 carry graduate credit only. Seminars offer in-depth study of specific areas of faculty expertise with a focus on scholarly discussion and research-based writing,, and are listed as English 859: Seminar in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies.

- Engl 850 Pro-seminar in Theatre Research taken in the Fall semester of the first year.
- Engl 795, taken in the Fall semester of the first year, by those teaching English Literature course
- 7 courses in dramatic literature, theatre history, and theatre theory.
- 3 practicum courses (courses that engage directly with the practice of theatre and

- performance).^{[1][1]}_{SEP}
- 8 courses grouped to provide an area of specialization within the major field of study (may include some courses from the history, theory, and literature group)^{[1][1]}_{SEP}
 - Courses in fields other than Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies, grouped as a Minor to complement the area of specialization and the major. Students, in consultation with their advisor, might choose a focused PhD minor supervised by another department or program, or they might select to complete a distributed minor in several departments or programs; see, *The Minor* section below.
 - 3 seminars in the field of Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies, taught by ITS Core faculty during the student's period of coursework. In exceptional cases, a student may petition the ITS Program Committee for approval of a seminar that falls outside these categories but is demonstrably appropriate to their course of study.

Over the course of the PhD program, students must acquire comprehensive knowledge of the field by taking at least two courses at the 500-level or above in each of the following areas of theatre research: dramatic literature, theatre history, and theatre and performance theory. Students must work with their advisors to ensure that both depth and breadth are achieved through the balance of courses and the final papers written for the courses. Of the six total courses, four courses should be taken with Core faculty; two courses may be taken with Affiliate faculty and with the advisor's approval, one may be taken in any department or program appropriate to the student's course of study. Upper-level courses taken at another university and Independent Study courses do not count towards satisfying this requirement.

Up to two Independent Study research courses may be taken with individual ITS Core or Affiliated faculty members during the PhD coursework. Only one Independent Study may be taken with any one faculty member from the Core or Affiliate list. A student who wishes to request an exception due to special circumstances must apply to the ITS Program Committee for a waiver of this policy.

Area of Specialization

In selecting their coursework, students develop an area of specialization, based on the focus of their scholarly work. The area of specialization may be defined by a genre, a theoretical approach or methodology, a time period, and/or a geographical or linguistic area. It should be focused, yet broad enough for students to take eight courses relevant to it. At least four of the eight courses in the area of specialization must be taken with ITS Core faculty (the usual number is six). Generally, students define an area of specialization only when they are near the completion of course work, and it is possible to reorganize the checklist at that time to reflect the emerging area of specialization.

The Minor

PhD Students must complete a Doctoral Minor or Graduate Certificate in consultation with their advisor, who will help them make the choice most appropriate for their research and career plans. Options include:

1. External minor: see external minor options [here](#)

Students must have approval and advisement from the external minor department.

2. Distributed Minor: four courses (12 credits) forming a coherent topic, from two or more departments. (Effective term Fall 2024, 9 credit minimum distributed minor).

The student's ITS advisor will approve a distributed minor course-work.

3. Graduate Certificate : Please contact the specific certificate program for requirements and approval process

Please declare the PhD minor / Graduate certificate prior to Preliminary Exam A.

To declare a minor: go to MyGradPortal <https://my.grad.wisc.edu/> select Add/Change Programs > Enrolled Programs > Add doctoral minor

To declare a graduate certificate: Please contact the certificate program directly for instructions.

Portfolio Revision Credit

In their final semester of course work, students may enroll in a directed study (English 999) for one to three credits and use that time to revise their portfolio papers for the Preliminary A Exam (described below).

Second Language

Although no longer a program requirement, strong second language ability expands possibilities for future research and teaching significantly, and the Program strongly recommends that PhD students who are not fluent in a second language should pursue language study during their coursework. Students who elect to pursue dissertation projects that require knowledge of other languages will be expected to develop competency in these languages to the satisfaction of their dissertation advisor.

Practicum Course Requirements

PhD students are required to take three practicum courses. A practicum course is defined as a course that substantively incorporates practice into its curriculum. Recommended courses for the fulfillment of this requirement include 3-credit courses in Playwriting in English; production courses in the Department of Theatre and Drama; performance courses in Art; Arts Institute guest residency courses; and foreign language department courses that include the production of a play. In lieu of *one* of their three required practicum courses, students can participate in three pre-approved production activities as playwrights, dramaturgs, assistant directors, performers, designers, technicians, etc.. See the description of production activities, below, for more information.

Production Activities

Students are encouraged, but not required, to engage in production activities which further their research as part of their graduate studies. Particular production activities may be taken for one credit of ENGL 699. If you wish to get credit for a production activity, discuss the matter with your advisor for approval so that you can arrange the ENGL 699 registration. Students should sign up for the credit as early in the semester as possible, and certainly before the course registration deadline. Three credits of such production activities may count as one of the three practicum courses students are required to take. Production credits accepted for 699 credit are usually for performances produced by University Theatre, University Opera, or the Dance Department. In some cases, student or off-campus productions may count toward this credit, if the project offers the opportunity for students to work with professional artists, or will broaden the student's production skills. However, such productions must be vetted at least by the beginning of the student's involvement in the

project, with an ITS Core or Affiliate faculty member observing the student's activity and discussing the process and outcomes with the student. The more clearly the student can demonstrate that work on a production will gain them new and important insights into performance practice, the more likely it is that this credit will be approved. Students will also be required to write a 1000-word reflection essay on their production activity and submit it to the instructor of record for the 699 credit. In some cases, a 4-credit course involving research and production may allow students to use 3 credits for a practicum course credit, and 1 credit for a production activity.

Preliminary Exams

After the final semester of coursework, and after fulfilling all the course distribution and practicum requirements, PhD students need to pass the Prelim A Exam to be advanced to Dissertator status. A portfolio of three research papers (discussed at length below) along with a request for the Preliminary Exam warrant form must be submitted to the Graduate Program manager for distribution to attending faculty at least three weeks prior to the exam, which involves an oral defense of approximately 90-120 minutes.

The Prelim B Exam is a one hour oral defense of the dissertation proposal conducted by the candidate's dissertation committee. This exam is typically taken one semester after passing the Prelim A exam, and must be taken before the end of the second semester after the Prelim A.

The Dissertation

The culminating project of the PhD degree, the dissertation is an original and substantial contribution to knowledge that establishes the student as a scholar and professional in the field of theatre studies. The PhD degree is awarded after a successful two hour defense of the dissertation led by the candidate's doctoral committee. Students may request permission from their advisor to invite family members or other doctoral students to the defense as auditors, but participation is limited to committee members.

PhD Program Timeline

PhD Program: 1st Year

During Welcome Week of the Fall semester, all students receive the MA and PhD Handbook which contains current policies about program requirements and progress. Students enroll in the Pro-seminar in Theatre Research (unless already taken for the MA degree in ITS) and are advised by the Program Director to take as many Theatre Research classes as is feasible during the first year. Incoming students are encouraged to look at the online timetable and have a proposed schedule of classes in mind before meeting with the Director. Students holding Teaching Assistantships may wish to register for only three courses (including the 1-credit Pro-seminar in the Fall semester of their first year), while non-TAs (including Fellowship students) may take four courses per semester.

All new PhD students should meet with the Program Director (or their advisor, if they have already selected one) early during the Fall semester to discuss transfer credits. For MA students continuing into the PhD, 24 credits may be transferred; for new PhD students, up to 18 credits are allowed. All first year PhD students are assessed formally at the end of the spring semester and receive a

written progress report.

PhD Program: 2nd Year

Students continue taking mainly Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies courses, but are also advised to begin fulfilling other requirements (e.g. Practicum courses, courses for the Minor, and courses relating to their areas of interest taught in other departments). *Students must select an advisor by the end of their third semester on campus*, and meet with them to discuss the process of writing and revising portfolio papers for the Prelim A exam. All portfolio papers must be written during the period of coursework for the PhD program.

In addition to their course-based assessments and grades, second-year students are assessed formally in the late Spring. The second-year assessment letter is based on written comments from the advisor and the faculty members with whom the student has taken courses during that year. It documents that the student is either (1) making satisfactory progress; or (2) deficient in some areas (research skills, writing, conceptualization, etc.); or (3) not making expected progress and likely to be placed on probation.

PhD Program: 3rd Year

During the third year, advising focuses on completing course requirements as specified on the PhD checklist. Special attention will be given to seminars, Practicum courses, production activities (if applicable), the PhD Minor, the area of specialization, and Prelim A portfolio papers. Once requirements are completed, students may petition the Program Director for permission to take the Prelim A Exam during Finals Week, or Welcome Week of the next semester. . During the intervening time students work on revisions to the portfolio papers, and may receive up to 3 credits for doing so by enrolling in directed study credits (English 999).

Choosing a PhD Advisor

The Graduate School requires every graduate student to have an academic advisor. The advisor is the primary contact person within the department, and the faculty member who will guide a student most closely through their degree program.

The Program Director serves as the advisor for PhD students during the student's first three semesters or until the student selects an advisor from among ITS faculty.

The choice of advisor is an important one, and students should reflect on the best fit with their own scholarly pursuits. They are encouraged to decide on a permanent advisor by the beginning of their third semester, and are *required* to do so by the end of that semester. After a student has chosen an advisor, they should write a memo to that faculty member confirming the agreement, with copies to the Program Director and the Graduate Coordinator (this second copy will be added to their permanent file). Students who graduated from the MA to the PhD within the ITS program may change their advisor for doctoral work. Students who wish to change their advisor after the Prelim A or B exam may also do so after appropriate consultation with the current and future advisors. The Program Director and the Graduate Coordinator continue to serve as the links between the Graduate School and graduate students, working closely with each student's advisor on such issues as fellowship competitions, graduation requirements, transfer credits, and residency requirements.

However, students are responsible for making sure they are on track, meeting deadlines, and filling out appropriate applications.

Advancement to Dissertator Status

The Preliminary A (Prelim A) Exam

Upon the completion of coursework and practicum requirements, PhD students petition the Program Director to schedule their comprehensive Prelim A Exam, which advances them to dissertator status. For this exam students prepare a portfolio of three research papers. Portfolio papers must be written and revised during doctoral coursework, and must be based on work done in advanced graduate courses (500-level and above) that have been taught by ITS Core or Affiliate faculty. They should be works of substantial scholarship dealing respectively with topics in theatre theory, theatre history, and dramatic literature. Each paper must demonstrate the candidate's ability to define a viable area of inquiry, use appropriate research methods and materials, and present a clear and cogent scholarly argument. Papers must also conform fully to acceptable professional standards of research writing and documentation. *Each paper is required to be 20-25 double-spaced pages (6000-7500 words) in length, excluding the endnotes and bibliography, and must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator for distribution to the attending ITS Core faculty two weeks prior to the exam.*

The Prelim A is an oral exam of approximately 90-120 minutes, conducted by members of the ITS Core faculty. It is open to all such members in residence during that semester, *but must be attended by at least three of them*. It is usually scheduled during Welcome Week of the semester following the completion of course work and all other requirements for the doctoral degree, and formally admits a student to PhD Dissertator status.

The Prelim A Portfolio: Expectations and Guidelines

Preparation of the Prelim A portfolio is an essential and important part of a student's progress towards the PhD degree. While deciding on a plan of study in consultation with the Program Director and/or their advisor, students should identify the courses in which they are likely to develop potential Prelim A papers, and inform the course instructors of their decision early in the semester. Each instructor will provide appropriate guidance and feedback during the semester that the student can use to develop a successful portfolio paper, and will have an additional meeting with the student early during the next semester for a fuller discussion of revision strategies. The advisor may also provide general guidance on the selection of papers at the beginning of the revision process. *However, ITS faculty do not read or comment on papers while they are being revised for inclusion in the portfolio, and the responsibility for creating and developing the final portfolio rests with the student.*

Portfolio papers should be distinguished carefully from term papers submitted as final projects in graduate-level courses. While a final paper may be satisfactory and even evaluated as excellent in the context of a specific class, the student must plan the changes that will develop it into a substantial document which meets the specifications described below. Revisions, therefore, are conducted outside the regular course of advising, and become the sole responsibility of the student. Portfolio papers do not need to identify the original courses for which they were written.

In their final semester of coursework, students may enroll in ENGL 999 (Directed Study) for one to three credits and use that time for revising the portfolio papers; they are also encouraged to take advantage of study circles, support groups, the University Writing Center, and other resources on campus. *Portfolio papers cannot be written during the semester of the Prelim A Exam.* Students who write a portfolio paper in their last semester of coursework should schedule their Prelim A during Welcome Week of the following semester (August or January). The lead advisor is the administrative faculty of record for the course, but students complete revisions on their own.

Revisions may include, but are not limited to, expanding upon the topic, responding to faculty comments received during the class for which the paper was written, deepening the research by consulting additional sources, and refining the methodology. A student may add substantially to an earlier, shorter paper (one which is less than 6000 words) in order to submit it as a portfolio paper. An exemplary Prelim A paper is one that is potentially publishable in a scholarly journal. Students can request the Graduate Coordinator to share samples of strong Prelim A papers that are maintained on file.

Portfolio Papers

Theatre History portfolio papers are concerned with the production and enactment of the full range of dramatic, theatrical, and performance texts, in the context of their own, particular historical moments. *They are informed interpretations of the theatrical past that focus on performances, productions, and the material/cultural institutions from which these events emerged.* Many methods are acceptable, from empirical studies of specific productions to revisionist readings of texts in performance. Papers might focus on such subjects as individuals or groups involved in the performance (actors, directors, designers, producers, audiences); techniques of directing, acting, or design; the economics of theatre production; performance histories of specific works or clusters and their reception, government regulations and censorship; and so on. They might take on such matters as the cultural or ideological traditions on which a performance was built, the material conditions of the performance event, the socio-political contexts of the performance, or the implications for future theatrical practice of performance during a particular historical period. A theatre history paper does not always require the writer to perform original archival work, but it must be informed by historical documentation, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the historical contexts of the subject.

Portfolio papers dealing critically with dramatic literature, performance, and dramaturgy are interpretive projects that deal primarily and substantially with one of three questions:

- plays as verbal constructs emerging from particular aesthetic, cultural, political, and theatrical conditions, typically focused on an interconnected cluster of texts which may well belong to different times, cultures or styles; dealing with a single play is much less common.
- Live performances considered as multi-dimensional cultural events, analyzed in their phenomenological and perceptual richness, current historical context, and/or relation to written texts.
- Play scripts analyzed prospectively for production (whether hypothetical or realized with the involvement of the student); such papers typically argue for a strong and specific dramaturgical “reading” of a play (or plays) and support that argument with close textual analysis and description of the opportunities and challenges in staging the text(s).

These portfolio papers deal in historically and contextually informed ways with questions of form, mode, genre, style, influence, language, characterization, meaning, and affect. Papers might also take up a widely held reading, context, or perspective and then discuss how plays in production may challenge and/or validate the dominant ideology. While the paper must offer an original thesis, it must also engage with the existing criticism on its subject.

Theatre and Performance Theory portfolio papers focus on theoretical texts, ideas, or arguments that articulate the *general principles of composition* underlying drama, theatre, and performance, and posit a philosophy, paradigm, or insight for performance. This may refer to theatre theory *per se*, such as writings on the theatre by Bertolt Brecht, Gertrude Stein, or Zeami Motokiyo. Theory may also include works of critical and cultural theory from other disciplines, such as literary studies, cultural studies, visual culture studies, anthropology, affect theory, or neuroscience, or it may involve the development of new conceptual arguments about theatre or performance in light of existing theories, ideally engaging with those theories to reinterpret or recombine them. The formulaic application of theoretical structures and concepts to simple dramatic examples is not appropriate for a portfolio theory paper. *Rather, portfolio theory papers build arguments using high-level, generalized concepts in a manner both clear and sophisticated.*

The Prelim A Exam Defense

A student approaching the end of course-work for the PhD should petition the Program Director to schedule the Prelim A exam, and be admitted to Dissertator status after the successful completion of the exam. The Prelim A exam is routinely scheduled either at the beginning of the semester, during Welcome Week, or at the end of the semester, during Study and Exam Week. *Papers must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator for circulation to the attending ITS Core faculty at least two weeks prior to the exam date.*

At the beginning of the exam the student has an opportunity to contextualize and comment briefly on the selection of papers in whatever way they consider appropriate (5-8 minutes). In conducting the exam, the ITS faculty consider the portfolio as a measure of both the student's research accomplishments at the end of the period of coursework, and their preparedness to undertake advanced research in the fields of drama and theatre and to revise work according to accepted scholarly standards. The student is evaluated on both the revised portfolio papers and the oral defense. The oral exam lasts approximately 90 to 120 minutes.

A student whose portfolio is satisfactory and who passes the oral Prelim A exam will advance immediately to Dissertator status and begin working on the dissertation proposal. A student whose portfolio is unsatisfactory and/or who does not pass the oral defense will have an advisory meeting with the attending faculty immediately following the defense, during which faculty members will provide specific feedback and suggestions for further revision. The student will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit one or more papers later in the semester or at the beginning of the next semester. When the paper/s are resubmitted, ITS faculty will decide whether to schedule a second defense, or to communicate their decision to the Program Director without meeting again. A student who does not pass the Prelim A exam on the second attempt has to leave the PhD program.

Dissertator Status

Dissertator (or “ABD” status) is achieved when a student meets all the requirements on the PhD checklist and has passed the Prelim A exam. Dissertators register for a maximum of three credits each semester, usually for 990: Thesis/Dissertation Research. A dissertator registered for three credits of graduate-level coursework is considered a full-time student, although in some departments a student must take 6 credits to hold a TA appointment.

The Dissertation Committee

The dissertation committee consists of four or more members, including the Dissertation Advisor and one other member of the ITS Core faculty. Of the two remaining members, at least one member must represent a unit outside ITS (possibly including ITS Affiliate faculty), and one may be a graduate faculty member from another institution. The dissertation advisor must be a Core faculty member with a teaching appointment in the ITS Program. A committee may have two co-advisors, but at least one of the co-advisors must be a Core faculty member. At least three committee members must serve as readers, responsible for reading the entire dissertation closely. In some circumstances, a dissertation committee might include a member who is not expected to assess the dissertation with the same degree of engagement as a reader. With the approval of the ITS Program Committee, one Academic Staff member who holds a terminal degree may also serve on a dissertation committee. The committee is formed by the dissertator in consultation with the advisor, and the dissertator is responsible for obtaining written confirmation from the committee members that they have agreed to serve on the dissertation committee.

Preliminary B (Prelim B) Exam

Once the Prelim A exam is completed and a student has obtained Dissertator status, he or she begins writing a dissertation proposal. Dissertators work closely with their advisor to plan a mutually feasible schedule for writing and defending the dissertation proposal. This defense should take place no later than 6 months after passing the Prelim A Exam (excluding the summer and winter breaks). Students must circulate the proposal to their dissertation committee at least two weeks before the scheduled Prelim B exam and defend it in a one hour oral exam. The Prelim B Exam is typically scheduled during Finals Week of the semester in which the student has achieved Dissertator status, or during Welcome Week of the next semester. However, this exam may be scheduled during the semester if that is most feasible for the student and all committee members.

The Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal is prepared under the guidance of the student’s dissertation advisor. The proposal may vary from 20-25 pages depending on the candidate’s topic. It should be accompanied by a substantial *bibliography* of 3-5 pages and a one-page *abstract* that summarizes the project. The proposal should be a focused and coherent document that clearly identifies and conceptualizes the subject of the dissertation, its relation to existing scholarship, its principal research methodology, and its contribution to the scholarly field. It should also include at least a brief outline and description of the various chapters. The bibliography need not be exhaustive but must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the relevant major primary and secondary sources.

The Prelim B Exam Defense

The proposal defense most often takes the form of a conversation during which the candidate introduces and contextualizes the proposal, followed by comments and questions from the committee. The purpose is to assist the candidate in defining and refining their dissertation project. The committee may help the candidate identify relevant textual and contextual materials, ask for clarifications of methodology and conceptual framework, and discuss the study's scope and breadth. The dissertation proposal may be approved at the Prelim B Exam with no revisions, or with suggestions for revision that are provided to the candidate in writing. It may also be rejected in its existing form, with recommendations for substantial revision. If the proposal is accepted with no revisions, it will be added to the student's file and the PhD checklist will be signed. If the proposal is accepted with revisions, the revisions should be completed within three months of the Prelim B Exam, and should be reviewed either by the dissertation advisor or by the full committee before the proposal is filed and recorded and the checklist is signed. If the proposal is rejected, a new Prelim B will be scheduled within a period of time to be decided by the committee. Prelim B exams cannot be taken more than twice.

Once the Dissertator has passed the Prelim B, they begin writing the dissertation under the guidance of the dissertation advisor and with varying degrees of input from the entire committee. The dissertation committee's endorsement of the proposal indicates the committee members' willingness to work with the dissertator on that project. Although the project is likely to change in the process of research and writing, it should bear a clear, recognizable relationship to the accepted proposal. If the committee changes, new members should receive an accepted proposal and must agree in writing that they are willing to work with the dissertator on the dissertation. If the dissertation changes to the extent that it has no recognizable connection to the accepted proposal, a new proposal must be submitted to the dissertation committee, and may result in a second Prelim B defense.

The Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense must be scheduled during or before Finals Week of a semester in which the student is enrolled as a dissertator. Dissertators should notify the Program Director and the Graduate Coordinator of their intention to defend at least one month in advance so that the necessary paperwork can be prepared. Students must submit their dissertation to committee members at least three weeks before the defense date. The student is responsible for providing a hard copy of the dissertation to any committee member who requests it.

The defense usually lasts about two hours. It assesses the dissertation in regard to its completeness, coherence, and contribution to the field. The dissertation may be accepted without revisions, accepted with minor revisions, accepted with major revisions, or rejected altogether. Most dissertations are accepted with either minor or major revisions. If committee members recommend that the dissertation can be deposited with minor or no substantial revisions, they will sign the "PhD Warrant" and the "Committee Page" form. Revisions have to be completed before the dissertation can be deposited. In the rare instance that a dissertation is rejected, a new defense will need to be scheduled within a time period stipulated by the committee.

In exceptional cases (such as when a student accepts employment away from the University), the dissertation defense may be held as an "in progress" defense if approximately three-fourths of the

dissertation is complete *and if the Advisor approves*. An "in progress" defense is based on the assumption that significant work will be done to revise the material that has been discussed, and also that the remaining work will be shaped by the discussion at the defense. A student must request permission from the advisor to schedule an "in progress" defense, who will determine in consultation with the thesis committee whether an in-progress defense is feasible. In such a case the committee will decide whether the final version is to be reviewed by the advisor only, or by some or all of the committee members.

Depositing the Dissertation

All dissertations that have successfully been defended must be deposited with the university. Before the dissertation can be deposited with the Graduate School, the student needs to arrange with the Graduate Program Manager to request the "PhD Final Defense Warrant". At least three weeks prior to the final defense, students can request the degree warrant form from the Graduate program manager. Once the Graduate School has generated the warrant form, the program manager will send a link to all committee members, shortly before the defense date. Committee members will e-sign the final degree warrant after the defense. Once all signatures are in, the Graduate program manager will email the student with instructions on how to download the warrant form. Students will upload a copy of the signed degree warrant form with their dissertation at the time of submission.

Review the Graduate School's Guide to [Completing Your Doctoral Degree](#) this guide includes information about things you need to know and do, graduation information, deadlines, formatting requirements, depositing your dissertation, etc.

Degree Deadline

The Graduate School requires Dissertators to complete the dissertation within five (5) years of having reached Dissertator status, and to complete and deposit the dissertation within one (1) year of the oral dissertation defense. It may be possible to get an extension on the five-year rule for completion of the dissertation. Petitions for an extension need to be made to the Graduate School and are subject to current policies. Please consult with the Graduate Coordinator and the Program Director for further information.

MA Checklist

Name _____ Date Entered Graduate work at UW _____

TA/PA/RA from Dept.

Position

Date

Coursework

Courses: ^[]_{SEP}

30 Credits Total;
(24 min., includes
5-8 thesis credits)

Number

850 _____

Date

Title

Prosem. In Theatre Rsch

990

Thesis (# of credits = ____)

990

Thesis (# of credits = ____)

Production Activity (Optional):

Function/Show _____ Date _____

MA Thesis Title _____

Advisor _____

Committee _____

Final Oral Examination on Thesis (Defense) _____

Date of Completion _____

PhD Checklist

Name _____

Date entered graduate work at UW _____ Date entered PhD program _____

TA/PA/RA from Dept. Position	_____	Date	_____
	_____	Date	_____
	_____	Date	_____

I. Completion of Coursework _____ Date _____

II. Verification from outside minor dept.: _____

III. Language Requirement: Exam or Course Title _____ Date passed _____

IV. Production Activities (Optional)	Production	Function
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

V. Preliminary Examination A _____ Date of Completion _____

VI. Preliminary Examination B _____ Date of Completion _____

Dissertation Title _____

Dissertation Advisor _____

Dissertation Committee (Name/Department)	
_____ (Advisor)	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

VII. Final Oral Examination on Dissertation

Date of Defense _____ In Progress/Final

Date of Completion _____

PhD Course Checklist

Deficiencies

Removed

Date

Transfer Credits

Course No.

Approved By

Date

General

(8 courses
including Intro
to Theatre
Research)

#

850

Date

Title

Proseminar in Theatre Research

L/H/T/S*

N/A

Specialization Area

(8 courses)

#

Date

Title

L/H/T/S

Specialization Description

--

Theatre Practice

(3 courses)

#

Date

Title

Minor

(9 cr., 3 courses)

#

Date

Title

L/H/T/S

* PhD students must take three seminars (S); and 2 Literature (L), 2 History (H), and 2 Theory (T) courses, 500-level and above. Seminars can also count toward the literature, history and theory courses.