Theatre Arts and Performance Studies

UNDERGRADUATE HANDBOOK

This document supersedes previous Undergraduate Student Handbooks.
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The handbook is addressed to current and prospective undergraduate students to be used as a planning guide and reference resource throughout a student’s academic career. Pertinent University web resources should be regarded as the primary references for degree requirements and options.
Undergraduate Program Introduction

Undergraduates at Brown make theatre, dance, and performance-based work all over campus. Plays have been written to be produced in bathtubs. Performances have been written for hallways, breezeways, walkways, as well as our proscenium stage in Stuart Theatre in Faunce House or our flexible Leeds Theatre in Lyman Hall. Work has been produced without a play in mind – improvised, found, choreographed on the spot. Other work has been incubated and nurtured for years at a time. Well-known plays from the dramatic canon are produced alongside lesser-known newcomers or buried treasures rarely produced. Some work is sudden. Other work long baked. Some work is surprising. Other work seems like a long lost friend – well known and well met. Some work takes multitudes, other work flies solo. The point is that there is a lot going on in a very exciting atmosphere of creative and intellectual exchange where traditions and heritages of craft are as highly valued as the rough draft of innovation and experimentation.

The Department offers a concentration in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies. Concentrators choose a "track" to study within the concentration - Theatre Arts, Performance Studies, or Writing for Performance. Classes are open to everyone, not just concentrators, and we often draw widely from interested students across the university. That said, more advanced classes do have entry requirements, so plan your course of study carefully.

As a student, you can be involved in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies whether you become a concentrator or simply take a single course. Anyone who auditions – and all undergraduates can audition for our shows – can be cast.

Classes are a key way to get to know faculty and other students well. But there are also shows to help out on as running crew. There are costumes to design and build, lights to hang, lines to memorize, muscles to stretch, voices to warm, directing projects to propose. There are producing boards to sit on and there are sets to design, dances to choreograph, reviews to write, plays to write, songs to write, philosophies to write, and – always – posters to hang.
The Concentration Overview:

The Department offers a concentration in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies. Concentrators choose one of the following "tracks" to study within the concentration:

- Theatre Arts
- Performance Studies
- Writing for Performance

Each track has a requirement of ten (10) courses to fulfill the concentration and culminates in a collective senior seminar in which concentrators work with advisers to present a culminating Capstone project, as well as explore possibilities for careers in their area of study after graduation.

As a student, you can be involved in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies whether you become a concentrator or simply take a single course.

The Concentration Tracks:

Theatre Arts Track

The engagement of the student in theatrical performance in order to help him or her to arrive at a fuller understanding of the relationships between drama as literature and theatre as enactment is an essential aspect of the Theatre Arts concentration track. The Theatre Arts track combines the study of dramatic literature, theatre history, and dramatic and theatrical theory with the opportunity to take practicum courses in various theatre arts, including playwriting, acting and directing, design, dance, and film and video making.

Course offerings are drawn from throughout the University and interdisciplinary work is stressed. Along with courses stressing scholarship and research, sequential practicum courses are available beginning in the freshman year in acting and directing, playwriting, dance, and technical direction, stage management and design. Participation in exchange programs in the United States and abroad is possible and Double Concentration and Honors programs are also available.

Graduates in Theatre Arts from Brown are currently attending many of the finest graduate and professional theatre programs throughout the world and have attained a high degree of success in academic and professional theatre.

Students wishing to enroll as concentrators in the Theatre Arts track should see the track advisor (Professor Kym Moore, who serves as the undergraduate Theatre Arts track advisor in order to discuss options that will best serve their interests.)
Required Courses for the Theatre Arts track:

1. TAPS 0230 Acting/Directing
2. TAPS 0250 Introduction to Technical Theatre and Production
3. TAPS 1230 Performance Theory: Ritual, Play and Drama in Context
4. TAPS 1240 Performance Historiography and Theatre History
5. TAPS 1250 Twentieth-Century Western Theatre and Performance
6. Either: TAPS 0220 Persuasive Communication, any dance history or practice course, or any design or theatre production course.

7-8-9. Three electives to be selected from applied design, performance or writing areas and/or from relevant theoretical and text-based studies throughout the university, at least one of which should demonstrate geographical breadth. These classes must be approved by the concentration advisor.

10. TAPS 1520 Senior Seminar

Performance Studies Track

How is performance an active ingredient in the maintenance, negotiation, or possible change of social and cultural norms? How do multiple modes of performance and representation travel across borders to be “read” or “experienced” or “felt” in times or places far distant from their initial articulation? Is crossing borders a “given” for performance? How? Why? These, and so many other questions, are basic to Performance Studies.

The Performance Studies track in the Theatre Arts and Performance Studies concentration can offer a base for students interested in a variety of performance forms across cultures and across media. The central focus in Performance Studies can be contrasted to the central focus in Theatre Arts. The central emphases in Theatre Arts are the history, theory, and practical skill-sets required for a well-rounded student of global theatre practices. Performance Studies, in contrast, focuses on the multiple modes in which live performance articulates culture, negotiates difference, constructs identity, and transmits collective historical traditions and memories. Performance Studies is not primarily invested in theatre; it is equally invested in other modes of performance, such as dance. Performance Studies includes ritual, play, game, festival, spectacle and a broad spectrum of “performance behaviors” under its umbrella of inquiry. The study of performance behavior across mediums such as dance, theatre, ritual, and orature allows for great geographic and historical flexibility as not all cultures parse theatre from dance, nor, historically, genres of religious or political ritual from genres of entertainment, play, or game.
At least two of the ten required classes must show geographic or cultural breadth, and be approved as such by the undergraduate concentration advisor. Participation in practical classes in modes of performance is also required.

Students wishing to enroll as concentrators in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and take the Performance Studies track should see Professor Spencer Golub, who serves as the undergraduate Performance Studies track advisor, in order to discuss options that will best serve their interests.

**Required Courses for the Performance Studies Track:**

1. TAPS 1230 Performance Theory: Ritual, Play and Drama in Context
2. TAPS 1240 Performance Historiography and Theatre History

3-5. Three (3) of the following, one of which must show geographical breadth:
   - TAPS 1250 Twentieth-Century Western Theatre and Performance
   - TAPS 1270 Performance in the Asias
   - TAPS 1280O Acting Outside the Box: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in Performance
   - TAPS 1280Y Issues in Performance Studies
   - TAPS 1330 Dance History: The 20th Century
   - TAPS 1280N New Theories for a Baroque Stage
   - TAPS 1380 Mise en Scene
   - TAPS 1390 Contemporary Mande Performance
   - TAPS 1430 Russian Theatre and Performance
   - TAPS 1610 Political Theatre of the Americas
   - TAPS 1630 Performativity and the Body: Staging Gender, Staging Race
   - TAPS 1640 Theatre and Conquest
   - TAPS 1650 21st Century American Drama
   - TAPS 1670 Latino Theatre and Performance
   - TAPS 1690 Performance, Art, and Everyday Life
   - TAPS 2120 Revolution as a Work of Art
   - AFRI 0990 Black Lavender: Black Gay/Lesbian Plays/Dramatic Constructions in the American Theatre
   - AFRI 1110 Voices Beneath the Veil
   - AFRI 1120 African American Folk Traditions and Cultural Expression

6-7. Two full credit courses based in performance craft in either Acting, Directing, Speech, Dance, Design, Literary Arts (with a performance emphasis), Visual Arts or Music. These classes must be approved by the concentration advisor.

8-9. Two additional courses in the academic study of performance and performance culture(s) to be culled from those listed above as well as other courses in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies or throughout the university in consultation with advisor. For example:
   - AFRI 1070 RPM: Traditional and Contemporary Elements of Intertribal Indigenous Theatre in America.
AFRI 1120 African American Folk Traditions and Cultural Expression  
ANTH 1212 The Anthropology of Play  
MCM 1503W Getting Emotional: Passionate Theories  
CLAS 1930C Parasites and Hypocrites  
MCM 1502K Race as Archive  
MUSC 0040 World Music Cultures  
RELS 0910 Music, Drama and Religion in India

10. TAPS 1520 Senior Seminar

**Writing for Performance Track**

The Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies (TAPS) supports a strong and thriving culture of Writing for Performance, with professors in TAPS, Africana Studies, and Literary Arts involved in teaching and mentoring young playwrights. Undergraduate classes are offered at the introductory and advanced levels. We offer an undergraduate concentration track in Writing for Performance, which coheres curricular options, affords a focused level of mentorship, and creates solidarity (through regular meetings, retreats and intensives). Opportunities to explore embodied performance of your own writing abound, formally and informally: via Production Workshop (Brown’s wholly student-run theater), RPM in Rites and Reason Theatre, and collaborations with the MFA Playwrights who annually produce a festival of new work.

There is no singular style to the playwriting that comes out of Brown – from classical to postmodern to site-specific to high naturalism to agitprop, camp or kitsch, all writing is welcome. We cherish only a wealth of experiment, fun, rigor, craft, openness to others, and discovery!

Concentrators explore the craft and sensibility of writing for live performance in the broad context of art in a changing society. Moving through a graduated series of skill-based writing classes, students additionally encounter theater history in core courses and focused seminars, engage with the practical aspects of production, and relate theatre to other disciplines. Writing is viewed neither as an alienated cause nor a terminal outpost, but as a co-equal aspect of a creative ecology, sharing space with orature, acting, scenography, ethics, and all fields that focus attention, invoke fascination, and alert the will to the possibilities of transformation.

Students wishing to enroll as concentrators in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and take the Performance Studies track should see **Prof Elmo Terry-Morgan**, who serves as the undergraduate Performance Studies track advisor, in order to discuss options that will best serve their interests.

**Required Courses for the Writing for Performance Track:**
1. TAPS 0100 Playwriting I or another equivalent introductory level Playwriting Course, to be approved by advisor.

2. One course from the following:
   AFRI 1050A, D, E RPM Playwriting
   LITR 0610A Unpublishable Writing
   LITR1150Q Reading, Writing, Thinking for the Stage
   LITR 1010C Advanced Playwriting
   LITR 1150S What Moves at the Margin
   TAPS 0200 Playwriting II
   A course from the TAPS 1500 series (A-Z)

3. A writing/composition class in a discipline outside of playwriting (e.g. literature, screenwriting, digital media) in consultation with advisor. Samples include:
   TAPS 1210 Solo Performance
   TAPS 1280S Libretto Workshop
   TAPS 1500I Screenwriting
   TAPS 1500J Script Adaptation
   ENVS 0520 Wild Literature in the Urban Landscape
   LITR 0110A Fiction I
   LITR 0110B Poetry I
   LITR 0210A Fiction Writing II
   LITR 0210B Poetry Writing II
   LITR 0210D Poetry Writing II
   LITR 1010G Cave Writing
   LITR 1150E Strange Attractors: Adaptations/Translations
   LITR 1150M Short Fiction Experiments
   TAPS 1500L Acting Together on the World Stage: Writing and Political Performance

4. TAPS 0250 Introduction to Technical Theatre and Production

5. One performance-based class:
   Options include Acting, Directing, Speech, Dance, Visual Arts, Music or Sign Language.

6-7. Two classes in theatre and performance history
   TAPS 1230 Performance Theory: Ritual, Play and Drama in Context
   TAPS 1250 Twentieth-Century Western Theatre and Performance

8-9. Two additional Theatre/Performance History/Theory classes to be culled from those listed below as well as other courses in the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies or throughout the university in consultation with advisor:
   TAPS 1240 Performance Historiography and Theatre History
   TAPS 1270 Performance in the Asias
   TAPS 1330 Dance-History: The 20th Century
   TAPS 1280N New Theories for a Baroque Stage
   TAPS 1380N Mise en Scene
TAPS 1390 Contemporary Mande Performance
TAPS 1400 Advanced Performance
TAPS 1430 Russian Theatre and Drama
TAPS 1610 Political Theatre of the Americas
TAPS 1630 Performativity of the Body
TAPS 1640 Theatre and Conquest
TAPS 1650 21st Century American Drama
TAPS 1670 Latino Theatre and Performance
TAPS 1690 Performance, Art, and Everyday Life
AFRI 0990 Black Lavender
AFRI 1110 Voices Beneath the Veil
AFRI 1120 African American Folk Traditions and Cultural Expression
TAPS 2120 Revolution as a Work of Art
TAPS 2200A Abstraction and Resistance

10. TAPS 1520 Senior Seminar
Information for All Concentrators:

Double Concentrations

In cases where dual concentrations are declared, the Department allows two courses to be counted toward both concentrations.

Capstone Project

The Capstone is a culminating project/experience designed by the student that fulfills the concentration track. TAPS capstones can take a variety of forms, such as a solo performance or dance piece, the writing of a play, an honor’s thesis or a design project, or directing a production. Students begin working on their capstone in the required senior seminar course, which is offered in the fall term. Capstone projects may be completed in either the fall with the termination of the Seminar, or in the subsequent spring term.

Your Capstone may be a set design, a completed script, a blueprint for an installation work, an in-depth character analysis, a plan for directing, etc. It also may be a live performance, but if so, that performance must be closely documented and accompanied by a written demonstration of research and method. In other words, if the project is not already a written piece of work – whether a scholarly paper, director’s research analysis, actor’s in-depth character analysis, or a full-length play – you will pass in a written component along with the project that documents research tools, research methods, and research outcomes. Capstone Projects will demonstrate breadth and depth of creative and/or scholarly research, engagement in critical and creative thinking, and deployment of available resources such as library materials, interviews, or fieldwork.

Honors

The standard pattern above, plus an honors thesis taken during Semester VII (TAPS 1990), the topic of which would be determined before Semester VII. Candidates for the honors program should have an outstanding academic record and should apply to the Department by April 1 of Semester VI. The honors advisor and undergraduate thesis advisor is Professor Rebecca Schneider. Proposals can be submitted electronically to taps@brown.edu.

Honors are awarded for theses in all concentration tracks. All theses are substantive pieces of writing. Some theses are strictly academic. Other honors theses may include a creative component (such as the directing of a play, a solo performance piece, the study and performance of a major role, or the design of a production), but the thesis itself will be a critical, written work based in research relative to that artwork. For plays submitted for honors, an essay should accompany the play, reporting on the research and process of the writing, though the play itself counts as the substantive written work.

The proposal should include:
1) An abstract of the thesis that indicates the topic and set of questions you are asking about the material/subject you are researching. If you are submitting a play for honors in the playwriting track, submit a short description of the play or project and the themes or forms the play or project will explore.

2) A transcript (unofficial is OK, as we can access the official one from the Department). Please note that we look for students with a majority of A’s and S’s on their transcripts. It will not be possible to receive honors for the concentration if your grades have been subpar.

3) A preliminary bibliography and a research plan. For a play, simply submit a research plan.

4) The name of the advisor you will work with. Also include names of potential additional readers for your thesis, if you wish to have them. Students must have an advisor and often have one or two additional readers. Please contact your advisor and readers before submitting their names.

Additional information:
• There is no set length for this proposal, but 4-10 double spaced pages is a generally acceptable range.
• Students are notified about their approval to write an honors thesis by the end of the Spring semester. Every proposal is considered by the Department as a whole, and voted on, in the Department meeting. The decision for honors is not made by your advisor alone.

Thesis Guidelines
• Honors theses are generally between 60 and 100 pages long.
• Plays submitted for honors should be accompanied by an essay 10-30 pages in length.
• A preliminary draft of the thesis is due on or before March 15 of the student's senior year to all readers. You may arrange chapter submissions before this date with your advisor.
• A final draft is due on April 15 the student's senior year at the latest. Students should submit one copy to each reader, and also one copy for the Department. These copies must be bound.
• Most students require two semesters to plan and complete an Honors Thesis. Generally, research occurs during the summer before and the fall of senior year. Writing usually begins by the end of the fall term.
• All theses must use a consistent citation style, and must include a full bibliography. See the Honors Advisor for sample cover pages, etc. Prior honors theses can be perused in the Becker Library.
• Students must enroll in TAPS 1990 in Semester VII.

Assuming that your thesis is approved for honors by all readers, you will be recommended for honors from the department. This will occur by the beginning of May of the student's senior year and honors will be conferred upon graduation.
Senior Slot Opportunity:

An excellent opportunity for a capstone experience is the annual Senior Slot Production, which occurs every Fall semester. Every year, one junior (or .5 senior) TAPS concentrator is selected to direct a mainstage production in the following academic year’s Sock and Buskin Season. We have now opened this opportunity to playwrights, as well as directors. This opportunity is thus open for proposals from:

- A junior director submitting any play or project of their choice (to be directed in their senior year)
- A junior writer submitting their own play (to be produced during their senior year)
- A junior director and a writer co-submitting a proposal for a student-written play (to be produced during the director and playwright’s senior year only)

The chosen play is given a budget, full production, and faculty mentorship. (Professor Kym Moore is currently Senior Slot advisor.) The play is usually mounted in Leeds Theatre in early December of the concentrator’s senior year, but other spaces may be considered from time to time (e.g. for site specific work). To be selected for senior slot, students must submit a proposal to be adjudicated by a committee composed of TAPS faculty. Juniors and/or .5 seniors with a proven track record, quality grades, as well as sustained interest and achievement in the art of directing or writing for performance are encouraged to apply.

Proposals for the following academic year will be accepted until midnight on April 1st before your Senior Year and should be emailed to Professor Kym Moore.

How to Propose:
Write a proposal and address the following in detail:

- What play do you propose to direct (or have produced) and why?
- Provide a brief analysis of your chosen play.
- What are your goals or objectives for this production?
- What will be your approach to realizing these goals?

If you foresee unusual or specific technical requirements (regarding costume, set design, lights and/or sound) that might require advance attention, please note that in your proposal.

If you are submitting as a writer/director team, please include sections from each of you on the questions above – that is, we would like to hear from both the writer and the director in co-submitted proposals. This category of proposal is highly encouraged.

If your proposal is selected, a design team will be assigned to you. If you are a writer submitting without a director, we will assign a student director as well. However, any thoughts you wish to share with the selection committee regarding your potential production needs or desires will be helpful and can be stated in the proposal. For questions regarding the process, contact Professor Kym Moore or discuss with your concentration advisor.

Word of advice: It is best to choose something that has not been recently produced on campus.
Frequently Asked Questions About the Undergraduate Program

Our “Top FAQ” can be found [here](#).

How large are most of the classes in your department?
Size depends entirely on the nature of the class. First year acting classes have 18 students. Some performance classes have a few as 12 students. There are plenty of small seminar-style classes as well.

How many Theatre Arts and Performance Studies majors typically graduate each year?
We graduate 19-25 per year, 5-8 of whom are also Double Concentrators in something other than Theatre (such as Modern Culture and Media, Economics, History of Art and Architecture, Engineering, Neuroscience and Archaeology).

What are some of your alums doing?
Check out our [News page](#) for notices about Alumni activity. You can find recent alums at the [Public Theater](#), at the [Fiasco Theater](#), in the MFA in Stage Management program at [UCSD](#), and [writing](#), to name a few.

How do I find out about auditions, technical positions, and other theatre related openings?
Cast lists are posted on the doors at the entrance to Lyman Hall. Audition notices are posted on the main bulletin board just inside the building, as well as on most doors and boards around Lyman Hall. Auditions are also listed in the News section of our website and on the [TAPS Facebook page](#). Student employment positions are posted on [Brown’s Student Employment Website](#).

Is there any kind of requirement you must fulfill in order to perform in a show, for example, to have worked backstage for one previous show, or to have completed a course?
No.

Who usually directs the shows?
Faculty or distinguished guests usually direct four of the six the mainstage shows, and a student directs Senior Slot. For a description of this opportunity, and the benefits involved, see the [Senior Slot section](#) in this handbook. There are also many opportunities all over Brown campus directing with the many undergraduate student theatre and arts groups. There are anywhere from 80-100 performance events on campus, resulting in over 1,200 performances in any given year.

How many musicals are put on a year?
Due to the unique structure of Sock and Buskin and how our season is curated, we don’t mandate a given kind of performance, such as a ‘Spring Musical’, but we usually produce at least one musical on our mainstage each season. There are also several student groups devoted to producing musicals each year (such as Musical Forum and Brown Opera).

Would I be able to take voice lessons at Brown?
We offer Voice and Speech as part of our curriculum. If you are interested in singing or
instrumental lessons, you could take lessons through the applied music program in the Music Department.

**What design and production opportunities exist on campus?**
There are [design and production opportunities](#) all over Brown campus.

**Do I need experience to get involved?**
No. But you’ll gain experience by getting involved!

**How can I usher for productions?**
Call the box office (863-2838), email [boxoffice@brown.edu](mailto:boxoffice@brown.edu) or stop by the box office during regular box office hours (Tues.-Fri. 12noon- 4pm during the academic year) to sign up. Usher training takes place on nights of performance and is open to all underclassmen and graduate students. Ushering is a wonderful opportunity to see free theatre!

**What do I do if my question isn’t answered here?**
We strongly encourage you to [contact us](#) via our website or by calling our administrative offices at 401-863-3283 if you don’t find the answers to your questions here. General questions about the department can also be sent to [taps@brown.edu](mailto:taps@brown.edu).