THEATRE ARTS (THAR)

THAR 0076 Theatre in Philadelphia
What *is* the role of theatre in our always-on-screen American culture? More specifically, what is the role of theatre in the life of Philadelphia? And in our own lives? Is it for “special occasions” only? Or might it play an important part in the intellectual, social, and political fabric of our society—and within our own world views? The focus of this course will be on the subject of its title: Theatre in Philadelphia. Each week, we will travel together across our city, encountering a wide array of plays, performances, and places, analyzing live theatre as both an art form and a cultural experience. These theatrical events will be examined in their entirety, as we consider performance spaces; audiences; production elements such as directing, acting, and design; as well as the text of the plays themselves. Our readings will provide historical and theoretical contexts for our viewing; we will also examine the scripts of some of the plays we see, as well as critical commentary about them, and about theatre in Philadelphia. The course will include tours of local theatres, and discussions with professional artists.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

THAR 0100 Introduction to Theatre Arts
This course is an introduction to theatre as a unique art form, in which we will pursue the following questions. What is theatre? For whom—and by whom—is it created and performed? What does it take to “make theatre?” What is the role of theatre in society and in our culture(s)? We will learn to read plays as scripts designed for performance, and one of our key goals will be to discover how to interpret and assess the experience of live performance itself. Among the things we will consider are the distinct roles of actors, directors, designers, playwrights, producers, spectators, and critics; we will also visit a variety of performance spaces in Philadelphia, where we will view live theatre together. The class will feature visits from professional artists, and may present opportunities for creative as well as analytical work.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

THAR 0101 Theatre, History, Culture I: From Classical to the Middle Classes
This course investigates the history of theatre practice in Europe and Asia from Fifth-Century Athens to roughly the end of the Eighteenth Century. In addition to analyzing major dramatic works, this course examines the evolution of production methods - scenography, acting, costuming, theatre architecture - across cultures and key socio-historical moments. Readings will be drawn from historical research, theoretical writings, plays and contemporary social documents. A particular focus will be on the integral role that the theatre plays as a cultural institution in the ongoing civic life of major cities. The course approaches theatre as broadly interdisciplinary and examines its intersection with religious practice, political developments, national identity, geography, the visual arts and the urban landscape.
1 Course Unit

THAR 0102 Theatre, History, Culture II: Romantics, Realists and Revolutionaries
This course investigates the history of theatre practice from the end of the Eighteenth-Century to the present, with an emphasis on interplay of mainstream practices with the newly emerging aesthetics of acting, scenography, and theatrical theory, and the interplay of popular entertainment and audiences with the self-defined aesthetic elitism of the Avant Garde. Among the aesthetics and phenomena we will examine are romanticism and melodrama; bourgeois realism and revolutionary naturalism; emotional-realist acting; the reaction against realism; political theatre; physical theatre; theatre and media; non-dramatic theatre; and theatre that challenges long-standing categories of national identity, empire, gender, and sexuality.
1 Course Unit

THAR 0103 The Play: Structure, Style, Meaning
How does one read a play? Theatre, as a discipline, focuses on the traditions of live performance. In those traditions, a play text must be read not only as a piece of literature, but as a kind of “blueprint” from which productions are built. This course will introduce students to a variety of approaches to reading plays and performance pieces. Drawing on a wide range of dramatic texts from different periods and places, we will examine how plays are made, considering issues such as structure, genre, style, character, and language, as well as the use of time, space, and theatrical effects. Although the course is devoted to the reading and analysis of plays, we will also view selected live and/or filmed versions of several of the scripts we study, assessing their translation from page to stage.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: COML 1859, ENGL 1859
1 Course Unit

THAR 0114 Playwriting Workshop
This course is designed as a hands-on workshop in the art and craft of dramatic writing. It involves the study of new plays, the systematic exploration of such elements as storymaking, plot, structure, theme, character, dialogue, setting, etc.; and most importantly, the development of students’ own short plays through a series of written assignments and in-class exercises. Since a great deal of this work takes place in class - through lectures, discussions, spontaneous writing exercises, and the reading of student work - weekly attendance and active participation is crucial. At the end of the semester, students’ plays are read in a staged reading environment by professional actors.
Spring
Also Offered As: ENGL 3604
1 Course Unit
THAR 0120 Introduction to Acting
Rooted in the system devised by Constantine Stanislavsky, but incorporating a wide variety of approaches, including improvisation, this course takes students step by step through the practical work an actor must do to live and behave truthfully on-stage. Beginning with relaxation and physical exercise, interactive games, and ensemble building, students then learn and put into practice basic acting techniques, including sensory work, the principles of action, objectives, given circumstances, etc. The semester culminates in the performance of a scene or scenes, most often from a play from the Realist tradition. This course strongly stresses a commitment to actor work and responsibility to one’s fellow actors. Practical work is supplemented by readings from Stanislavsky and a variety of other acting theorists that may include Uta Hagen, Robert Cohen, Stella Adler, among others. Students are required to submit short essays over the course of the semester in response to the readings and in preparation for their final scene project.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

THAR 0121 Introduction to Directing
This class will introduce the basic principals of stage directing, beginning with the fundamentals of three-dimensional storytelling in script and character analysis. The aim of this course is to provide students with a basic knowledge of directing through an introduction to the functional tools of the craft. Classes provide lectures and practical work in dealing with topics such as the function of the director, analyzing a script, visual composition, blocking, stage business, and working with actors. This course is a prerequisite for Advanced Directing.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

THAR 0130 Introduction to Light, Set, and Costume Design
Design for theatre (and all of the performing arts) is a dynamic, collaborative process that engages both intellect and emotion in staging the dramatic moment. The personal vision of the designer must navigate the often-uncharted waters of the production process, from the earliest, personal moments of design inspiration to the opening night performance. Design flows from creativity is structured by research and theory, and is realized in living form by collaboration in the dynamic process of theatre-making. This class will integrate history, theory and practice of stage design in the interactive setting of the Collaborative Classroom in Van Pelt Library in this special interdisciplinary, active-learning course offering open to all Penn students. Group and individual projects, field visits, practical projects and guest speakers will be featured in this newly-revised course.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

THAR 0170 Voice for the Actor
This introductory course is designed to help the actor find new freedom and range of expression with their voice and to connect their voice to their impulse. Our focus on relaxation, sensitivity and awareness, using Fitzmaurice Voicework techniques inspired by yoga and meditation, help the student access and develop their own authentic sound. They will learn how to support their voice in a healthy way, with a view to longevity, spontaneity and flexibility of use. In this course, these kinds of vocal exercises will be applied to short, character monologues, in order to foster sensitivity to our voices and breath and to the habits and tensions we have formed around speaking in public. For an actor, reconnecting with their authentic voice is essential for an honest, connected and compelling performance. This training is also useful for anyone who wants to speak in public with confidence, sincerity and ease.
Fall
Prerequisite: THAR 0120
1 Course Unit

THAR 0171 Movement for the Actor
The study of the art of bodily expression throughout history in theory and practice, from Classical and Oriental, African and Latin forms of dance and movement theater to the contemporary dance and theater, including mime, modern dance, post modern dance, physical theater, film, and performance art.
Spring
1 Course Unit

THAR 0180 Acting for the Camera
This class focuses on teaching students the creative and technical skills needed to excel in on-camera acting. Beginning by exploring theatre techniques to investigate character, relationship and conflict, this class will then focus on identifying the parameters of film & TV scripts of the last five years. Students will learn to identify the primary function of their character within that structure, and to imagine, create, and make playful choices that foster the story being told. By exploring acting techniques that bridge stage and screen, students will gain experience with producing professional self-tapes that reflect current industry standards, understanding the complexity of framing, vocal quality and eyelines in Zoom callbacks, and experimenting with the use of digital media in theatre.
Also Offered As: CIMS 0180
1 Course Unit
THAR 0785 Queer Archives, Aesthetics, and Performance
This course focuses on questions of how to represent the queer past, which it approaches from several angles: through training in archival methods and in scholarly debates about historiographical ethics (or, in the words of David Halperin, "how to do the history of homosexuality"); through engagement with the work of artists who make archives central to their practice; and through lab-based training that aims to represent encounters with queer history through embodied performance. The course will address both practical and theoretical issues raised by research in LGBT archives. We will take advantage of local resources in Philadelphia, including the John J. Wilcox Archives at the William Way Center (http://www.waygay.org/archives/). But we will also visit the Lesbian Herstory Archives (http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/) and The Downtown Collection at the Fales Library at NYU (https://guides.nyu.edu/downtown-collection) and the Franklin Furnace Performance Archives (http://www.franklinfurnace.org), all in New York City. We will also bring artists to campus to work directly with students, and will meet with artists in New York. Fall, odd numbered years only
Also Offered As: ENGL 0785
1 Course Unit

THAR 1025 Narrative Across Cultures
The purpose of this course is to present a variety of narrative genres and to discuss and illustrate the modes whereby they can be analyzed. We will be looking at shorter types of narrative: short stories, novellas, and fables, and also some extracts from longer works such as autobiographies. While some works will come from the Anglo-American tradition, a larger number will be selected from European and non-Western cultural traditions and from earlier time-periods. The course will thus offer ample opportunity for the exploration of the translation of cultural values in a comparative perspective. Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: COML 1025, ENGL 0039, NELC 1960, SAST 1124
1 Course Unit

THAR 1114 Advanced Playwriting
This course is intended to reinforce and build upon the areas covered in Level 1 Playwriting (THAR-114) so that students can refine the skills they've acquired and take them to the next level. Topics covered will include techniques for approaching the first draft, in-depth characterization, dramatic structure, conflict, shaping the action, language/dialogue (incl.subtext, rhythm, imagery, exposition etc), how to analyse your own work as a playwright, dealing with feedback, the drafting process, techniques for rewriting, collaboration (with directors, actors etc) and the 'business of the art' - working with theatres, agents, dramaturgs etc. Students will undertake to write their own one-act plays over the course. The classes will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, study of dramatic texts, writing exercises and in-class analysis of students' work. Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 3605
Prerequisite: THAR 0114
1 Course Unit

THAR 1120 Advanced Acting
This course continues the work begun in the Introduction to Acting class. The specific focus of the course will be on helping students to connect more deeply and truthfully with each other on stage, freeing up the body of the actor to fulfill the physical demands of characterization, and analyzing the dramatic text to clarify objectives and focus action through unit breakdown. Attention will also be given to helping students work through specific problems and personal, creative obstacles. The basis of the course will be scene work taken from the twentieth-century repertoire (realist and non-realist plays), a classical monologue, and exercises taken from a variety of performance traditions. The course also includes readings from modern theorists and practitioners. Not Offered Every Year
Prerequisite: THAR 0120
1 Course Unit

THAR 1131 Concepts of Lighting
In this course we will cover the basic concepts of the art and craft of Stage Lighting Design. As a craft we will examine mechanics and technology of lighting design including light sources, power distribution, optics, and control. As an art we will explore how lighting ties together all the visual elements of a production and helps create an appropriate atmosphere that heightens the audience’s understanding and enjoyment of the play. Topics include: what light is, what it does, and how light influences our perception and understanding of what we see. Exercises will help the student learn how to see and to understand how light shapes and affects the appearance of people and objects on stage and in everyday life. Projects work will emphasize design theory and practice (design methods, script analysis, and drafting skills). Lighting design has it roots in the theatre. The theatre continues to be a prime training ground for lighting designers, no matter what their field. Fall
1 Course Unit

THAR 1132 Concepts of Stage Design
In this course we will cover the basic concepts of Scenic Design for the stage. Scene Design is about the look or physical appearance of the stage for a play. It reflects the way that the stage is composed artistically in regard to props, actors, shapes and color. We will explore Scene Design and the Theatre (story telling, place and local, time and period, society and culture) . Scene Design as a Visual Art (principals of design and composition, style, use of space, expression of concept) and examine how it ties together all the visual elements of a production to create an appropriate atmosphere that heightens the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play. Topics will include: Script Analysis, Technical Production, Period Decor and Ornament; Drawing, Drafting, Model Making; and Scene Painting. Fall
1 Course Unit

THAR 1133 Costume
Costume history and design provides a framework for organized study and practice in this particular facet of theatre production. It is a one-semester course, scheduled to meet once a week for a three hour session. Spring
1 Course Unit
THAR 1135 Theatrical Collaboration: Directors and Designers
This course aims to teach students the art and craft of theatrical collaboration between directors and designers. Through the study of effective collaborative practices and the examination of production case studies, students will learn theory they can put into practice not only in this course, but also in endeavors beyond the classroom. During the course's three major projects, students will bring the independent work of script analysis, dramaturgical research, and creative inspiration to the collective work of conceptual synthesis, design visualization, and project proposal. Individually and together, students will learn and practice how to create the world of the play through physical space, character-defining costumes, visual representation, and styles of performance. While rotating through the roles of director, scenic designer, and costume designer, students will learn new technologies to foster expression and comprehension between and among team members, whether in-person or remote. The four plays examined in this course will require an exploration of the politics, social issues, and cultures of the period in which they are each written.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

THAR 1271 American Musical Theatre
The American musical is an unapologetically popular art form, but many of the works that come from this tradition have advanced and contributed to the canon of theatre as a whole. In this course we will focus on both music and texts to explore ways in which the musical builds on existing theatrical traditions, as well as alters and reshapes them. Finally, it is precisely because the musical is a popular theatrical form that we can discuss changing public tastes, and the financial pressures inherent in mounting a production. Beginning with early roots in operetta, we will survey the works of prominent writers in the American musical theatre, including Kern, Berlin, Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Hart, Hammerstein, Bernstein, Sondheim and others. Class lecture/discussions will be illustrated with recorded examples.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: CIMS 1271, ENGL 1271
Mutually Exclusive: THAR 0271
1 Course Unit

THAR 1273 Dark Comedy in Theatre and Film
This course will examine the "troublesome genre" of dark comedy by looking at the ways in which theatre and film use comic and tragic structures and traditions to explore concepts and stories seemingly at odds with those traditions. Although not always organized chronologically in time, we will examine the formal and structural characteristics of tragicomedy by tracing its development, from some of its earliest roots in Roman comedy, to its manifestation in contemporary films and plays. Aside from close readings of plays and analysis of films, we will read selected critical essays and theory to enhance our understanding of how dark comedies subvert categories and expectations. We will look at how dark comedies affect audiences and read sections of plays aloud in class. Issues to be considered include comparing the way the genre translates across theatre and film (adaptation) and examining the unique placement of the genre at the heart of contemporary American culture. Students will have the opportunity to experiment with creating tragiomic effect through performance in their presentations. The class is a seminar, with required participation in discussions. Other assignments include an 8-10 page paper and a presentation. We will read plays by authors as diverse as Plautus, Anton Chekhov, and Lynn Nottage, and filmmakers including Charlie Chaplin, Sofia Coppola, and Bong Joon-ho.
Also Offered As: CIMS 1273, ENGL 1273
1 Course Unit

THAR 1275 Advanced Topics in Theatre
This course will combine an intensive practical and intellectual investigation of some area of the making of theatre: performance techniques, theatrical styles, a particular period of theatre history. Please visit the Theatre Arts Program website for current topics for Thar 275 and other Theatre Arts Courses and special topics: https://theatre.sas.upenn.edu Please visit the Theatre Arts Program website each semester for information on the available THAR 275 special topics courses: https://theatre.sas.upenn.edu
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

THAR 1279 Women in Theatre and Performance
What is feminist theatre? How do artists use live performance to provoke not only thought and feeling, but also social, personal, and political change? This course will examine a wide array of plays and performances by and about women; these pieces are, in turn, serious, hilarious, outrageous, poignant—and always provocative. Our focus will be on English-language works from the late 20th century to the present (#metoo moment). We will read these performance texts and/or view them on stage/screen; we will also read essays that provide contextual background on feminist theatre theory and history. Throughout the semester, we will engage diverse perspectives on women and race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender identity; the issues we encounter will also include marriage and motherhood, career and community, feminism and friendship, and patriarchy and power. The class will take full advantage of any related events occurring on campus or in the city, and will feature visits with guest speakers. Students will have the opportunity to pursue research on their own areas of interest (some recent examples are "women in comedy," trans performance, drag kings, feminist directing, etc.).
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 1279, GSWS 1279
1 Course Unit

THAR 1790 Performing Parables: Ragas and Sagas of the Sundarban
In this course writer Amitav Ghosh invites Penn students to engage his ongoing collaboration with the musician/performer Ali Sethi to stage his newest book Jungle Nama. Ghosh's book Jungle Nama employs dwipdipoyar verse form and the popular folk tale of Bon Bibi the guardian spirit of the Sundarban to address the eroding ecosystem of the Sundarban. In this course students will work in a short intensive collaborative process with the artists to realize a lyric and musical performance of Jungle Nama. The class employs both academic research and performance methodologies to guide students through histories of traditional Indian performance and folk takes and a thorough examination of Ghosh's source materials and influences (including studies of the Sundarban and its ecosystem). The course is co-taught with Director Brooke O’Harra. O’Harra, Ghosh and Sethi will lead students in a rigorous process of research, development and rehearsal, culminating in a public performance of a musical version of Jungle Nama. All levels and experience are welcome. Performance roles will be cast based on individual interests. In addition to performance roles, students will assume responsibility for other aspects of the process and production. In advance of registration, students are asked to audition and/or interview for the course depending upon initial interest. Actors, singers, dancers, musicians, artists and scholars are all encouraged to apply.
Also Offered As: ANTH 1790, ENGL 3654, FNAR 1790, SAST 1790
1 Course Unit
THAR 1880 African American Drama: From the 1920's to the present
This course will introduce students to Pulitzer-prize winning plays such as Lynn Nottage's Sweat, groundbreaking plays such as Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls, as well as less known plays that show the wide range of form and themes in 20th and 21st century African American drama. We will focus on performance as a mode of interpreting a script and performance as a way of understanding the intersections of race, class, and gender. In-class viewings of selected scenes in recorded productions of the plays will energize our analysis of the scripts. Short creative, performance-oriented writing assignments will produce the questions explored in the two critical essays. In addition to Sweat and For Colored Girls, our line-up may include Zora Neale Hurston's Color Struck, Anna Deavere Smith's Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, Suzan-Lori Parks' 100 Plays for the First Hundred Days, August Wilson's Radio Golf, Lydia Diamond's Harriet Jacobs, Amiri Baraka's The Slave, and Claudia Rankine's The White Card.

Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: AFRC 1880, ENGL 1880
1 Course Unit

THAR 2236 Topics in Renaissance Drama: Acting Shakespeare
This is a hands-on studio course designed to empower actors (and directors, designers and dramaturgs) to use the structure of Shakespearean language and the conventions of Shakespearean stage to build performance, using the skills and method of the contemporary actor. After the class works collectively on sonnets and speeches, all of the speech-and-scene work will be drawn from a single Shakespeare play (to be determined), with two reciprocal goals: to use the script to build the performance, and to use what we discover through performance to build an interpretation of the script. NOTE: the normal prerequisite for this course is THAR 120 or THAR 121 or their equivalents; but exceptions will be made by permission of he instructor.

Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 2879
Prerequisite: THAR 0120 OR THAR 0121
1 Course Unit

THAR 2240 Advanced Topics in Theatre History
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the basic materials and methods of theatre history and historiography, as applied to a particular topic, organized around a specific period, national group, or aesthetic issue. This course is concerned with methodological questions: how the history of theatre can be documented; how primary documents, secondary accounts, and historical and critical analyses can be synthesized; how the various components of the theatrical event—acting, scenography, playhouse architecture, audience composition, the financial and structural organization of the theatre industry, etc.—relate to one another; and how the theatre is socially and culturally constructed as an art form in relation to the politics and culture of a society in a particular time and place.

Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

THAR 2250 Theatre Workshop
This course will examine a specific aspect of theatrical practice, taught by a visiting professional theatre artist. The course will have different topics, may be repeated for credit. Recent topics have included performance art, Jacques LeCoq technique, Suzuki, and Viewpoints.

Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

THAR 2270 American Theatre and Performance
This course examines the development of the modern American theatre from the turn of the century to the present day. Progressing decade by decade the course investigates the work of playwrights such as Eugene O'Neil, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, David Mamet, August Wilson and Tony Kushner, theatre companies such as the Provincetown Players and the Group Theatre, directors, actors, and designers. Some focus will also be given to major theatrical movements such as the Federal Theatre Project, Off-Broadway, regional theatre, experimental theatre of the Sixties, and feminist theatre.

Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 2888
1 Course Unit

THAR 2720 American Theatre and Performance
This course will introduce students to Pulitzer-prize winning plays such as Lynn Nottage's Sweat, groundbreaking plays such as Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls, as well as less known plays that show the wide range of form and themes in 20th and 21st century African American drama. We will focus on performance as a mode of interpreting a script and performance as a way of understanding the intersections of race, class, and gender. In-class viewings of selected scenes in recorded productions of the plays will energize our analysis of the scripts. Short creative, performance-oriented writing assignments will produce the questions explored in the two critical essays. In addition to Sweat and For Colored Girls, our line-up may include Zora Neale Hurston's Color Struck, Anna Deavere Smith's Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, Suzan-Lori Parks' 100 Plays for the First Hundred Days, August Wilson's Radio Golf, Lydia Diamond's Harriet Jacobs, Amiri Baraka's The Slave, and Claudia Rankine's The White Card.

Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: AFRC 1880, ENGL 1880
1 Course Unit

THAR 2740 Dramaturgy
This course will examine the functions and methods of the dramaturg—the person in the theatrical process who advises the artistic collaborators on (among other things) new play development, the structure of the script, the playwright's biography and other writings, the play's first production and its subsequent production history, and the historical and regional details of the period depicted in the plays action. We will study the history of the dramaturg in the American theatre and discuss contemporary issues relating to the dramaturg's contribution to the theatrical production (including the legal debates about the dramaturg's contribution to the creation of RENT). And, in creative teams, the class will create dramaturgical portfolios for a season of imaginary (and, potentially, a few actual) theatrical productions.

Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 2899
1 Course Unit
THAR 2800 Improvisation: History, Theory, Practice
With roots in Vaudeville, Commedia dell’Arte, and beyond, improvisatory theatre has a rich tradition of political, social and artistic subversions. In this course, we will both explore the history and theory of improvisation, and experiment with it in practice. Some classes will be devoted mainly to discussion of assigned readings and viewings, and some mainly to the practice of improvisation (there can be overlap between discussion and practice in any given class). Students are required to write a paragraph about all assigned readings on Canvas. Students are expected to come to each session fully prepared to discuss all assigned materials, and to participate in all exercises and improvisations. (Participants need to wear comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement.) Additional assignments are listed separately. Classes may occasionally deviate from the syllabus; in this case, advance notice will be given. The course features class visits from professional theatre artists with an expertise in improvisation and devised theatre, from whom students will learn a rich variety of traditions and techniques.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

THAR 2820 Theatre and Politics
This course will examine the relationship between theatre and politics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. How do theatre artists navigate their artistic and political aims? How do we distinguish between art and propaganda? Throughout the semester we will ask how the unique components of theatre—its poetic structure, engagement with spectators, aesthetics of representation, relationship to reality, and rehearsal process—contribute to its political capacity. Students will read a variety of plays drawn from late twentieth century and contemporary global theatre practice alongside political and aesthetic theory to interrogate the relationship between artistic production, power, and resistance. We will conclude with a consideration of the ways politics is itself a performance, considering how power is supported by theatrical means and how performance functions in resistance movements.
Also Offered As: LALS 2820
1 Course Unit

THAR 2830 Backstage Drama in Theatre and Film
Inviting audiences into a special relationship with illusion, backstage dramas (whether on film or on stage) and plays-within-plays reach beyond and alongside traditional plot-driven narratives, to reflect on the process of representation itself. Drawing from classical debates about the relationships between reality, illusion, representation, and imitation (mimesis), we will examine a variety of plays and films as we articulate the complex network of responses and underlying assumptions (whether cultural, political, or social), about art and life, that these works engage.
Fall, odd numbered years only
Also Offered As: CIMS 2830, ENGL 1896
1 Course Unit

THAR 2840 Icons in Performance: Actors and Others Who Have Shaped the Arts
Many talented performers bring works to life on a stage or in film. But a select few artists are so distinctive they become icons, defining for audiences—often for many years beyond their careers—the art they serve. Marlon Brando defined a new kind of American acting. Sidney Poitier broke the color barrier for leading man movie stars. Maria Callas showed that opera was equal parts theatre and music. Greta Garbo helped us understand the visual power of a film image. This seminar course will focus on iconic performers, directors and others, and the roles they play in defining their art forms. It is part analysis (interpreting in detail what it is these artists do) and part cultural study (why it matters, and also seeking to understand the larger circumstances at play in forging an icon). In addition to the performers mentioned above, we’ll also study Mae West, Fred Astaire, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, and more. We will also look at a handful of iconic directors—including Alfred Hitchcock, Douglas Sirk, and others—whose style makes a definitive mark on American film and theater. And we will also look at how critics (in addition to popular audiences) assess performers through comparisons, and by understanding the evolution and tradition of the art. To support our work, we will use film, audio recordings, scripts, criticism and analytical essays, biography, and more.
Also Offered As: CIMS 2840, ENGL 2890
1 Course Unit

THAR 2860 Latin American and Latinx Theatre and Performance
This course will examine contemporary Latin American and Latinx theatre and performance from a hemispheric perspective. In particular, we will study how Latin American and Latinx artists engage with notions of identity, nation, and geopolitical and cultural borders, asking how we might study “national” theatres in an age of transnational globalization. Our consideration of plays, performances, and theoretical texts will situate Latin American and Latinx theatre and performance within the context of its politics, culture, and history.
Also Offered As: COML 2086, ENGL 0490, LALS 2860
1 Course Unit

THAR 3000 Acting & Directing Lab
This course operates as a continuation of both Introduction to Acting (THAR120) and Introduction to Directing (THAR121). Students can take the course as actors, directors, or both. Each semester the course covers a unique topic of exploration for actors and directors. This is a studio class with a focus on scene work within various genres, styles and concentrations of theatrical practices. Some special topics might include: Japanese Theatre, Theatre as Event, Experimental Theatre, and Feminism and Form.
Spring
Prerequisite: THAR 0120 OR THAR 0121
1 Course Unit
THAR 3120 Scene Study
Scene Study is an advanced acting class that combines intensive script analysis with performance of scenes; material to be explored will be chosen specifically for the members enrolled in class. Open to students who have successfully completed Introduction to Acting, this course continues with greater emphasis on the actor’s work with the text. We will study several plays together as a group, conducting Stanislavskian table work. We will then workshop and perform scenes from these plays in subsequent class sessions. In consultation with the instructor, students will identify individual goals, building on discoveries made in other Theatre Arts courses and/or prior stage work, exploring roles and plays that present actors with new challenges and expand their range. Depending on the number of students enrolled in the class, we are likely to perform at least three scenes and a monologue. Plays will be read alongside key theoretical texts, and class work will be complemented by attendance at selected live productions on campus and in Philadelphia.
Fall  
Prerequisite: THAR 0120  
1 Course Unit

THAR 3355 Japanese Theater
Japan has one of the richest and most varied theatrical traditions in the world. In this course, we will examine Japanese theater in historical and comparative contexts. The readings and discussions will cover all areas of the theatrical experience (script, acting, stage design, costumes, music, and audience). Audio-visual material will be used whenever appropriate and possible. The class will be conducted in English, with all English materials.
Fall or Spring  
Also Offered As: COML 3555, EALC 3355  
1 Course Unit

THAR 3500 Rehearsal and Performance
Theatre Rehearsal and Performance provides students with deep intellectual and artistic immersion in the theatrical process through intensive research, rehearsal, and performance of a full-length stage piece. Students may enroll in this course as actors (by audition only) or as assistant directors, stage managers, dramaturgs, or designers (by permission of the instructor). Each semester, the play will be featured in the Theatre Arts Program production season; the class meeting times will vary, but will typically consist of 16-20 hours per week in the evening hours.
Fall or Spring  
1 Course Unit

THAR 3512 Italian Performance Studies
Taught in Italian. Topics vary. Please check the department’s website for a course description at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/italians/courses
Not Offered Every Year  
Also Offered As: ITAL 3512  
1 Course Unit

THAR 3600 The Planets in my Pen: Experiments in Writing, Visual Art & Performance
The Planets in my Pen is a multi-genre creative arts workshop constellated around experimentation. We will be looking at innovative writing, visual art and film as models for the making of poetry, fiction, memoir, drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, plays and performance. The genres, techniques and movements of science fiction, surrealism, performance art and the political essay will be key with an emphasis on feminist, queer, left and anticolonial models of art and world making. The works of William S. Burroughs, John Rechy, Nelly Santiago, Jean Genet, Nozake Shange, Octavia Butler, Adrienne Kennedy, Lucrcia Martel, Aimé Césaire, Jamaica Kincaid, Regina Jose Galindo, Raul Ruiz, Josepha Baz, Zadie Smith and Cherrie Moraga will be among those read, viewed and studied. As their final project students will submit a final manuscript, performance and/or art object as well as participate in a public reading/viewing/screening.
Also Offered As: ENGL 3608, GSW 3600, LALS 3600  
1 Course Unit

THAR 3606 Experimental Playwriting
In this course, students will write for theater and performance. Writers in the class will take cues from a myriad of experimental playwrights and performance artists who have challenged conventional ideas of what a script should look and sound like. Students will be asked to challenge how narrative is constructed, how characters are built and what a setting can be. This class will push beyond the formal structures of the well-made play script and address how writers explore and reinvent form and language as a means for radical change in the field of performance. Some playwrights we will read include Gertrude Stein, Suzan-Lori Parks, Maria Irene Fornes, Robert O’Hara, Young Jean Lee, John Jesurun, and Toshiki Okada. This class is ideal for playwrights, performers, screenwriters, and writers of experimental fiction. This course is cross-listed with Theatre Arts.
Not Offered Every Year  
Also Offered As: ENGL 3606  
1 Course Unit

THAR 5279 Provocative Performance
What is feminist theatre? How do artists use live performance to provoke not only thought and feeling, but also social, personal, and political change? This course will examine a wide array of plays and performances by and about women; these pieces are, in turn, serious, hilarious, outrageous, poignant—and always provocative. Our focus will be on English-language works from the late 20th century to the present (#metoo) moment. We will read these performance texts and/or view them on stage/screen; we will also read essays that provide contextual background on feminist theatre theory and history. Throughout the semester, we will engage diverse perspectives on women and race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender identity; the issues we encounter will also include marriage and motherhood, career and community, feminism and friendship, and patriarchy and power. The class will take full advantage of any related events occurring on campus or in the city, and will feature visits with guest speakers. Students will have the opportunity to pursue research on their own areas of interest (some recent examples are “women in comedy,” trans performance, drag kings, feminist directing, etc.).
Not Offered Every Year  
1 Course Unit
THAR 5790 Provocative Performance
What is feminist theatre? How do artists use live performance to provoke not only thought and feeling, but also social, personal, and political change? This course will examine a wide array of plays and performances by and about women; these pieces are, in turn, serious, hilarious, outrageous, poignant—and always provocative. Our focus will be on English-language works from the late 20th century to the present (#meToo) moment. We will read these performance texts and/or view them on stage/screen; we will also read essays that provide contextual background on feminist theatre theory and history. Throughout the semester, we will engage diverse perspectives on women and race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and gender identity; the issues we encounter will also include marriage and motherhood, career and community, feminism and friendship, and patriarchy and power. The class will take full advantage of any related events occurring on campus or in the city, and will feature visits with guest speakers. Students will have the opportunity to pursue research on their own areas of interest (some recent examples are "women in comedy," trans performance, drag kings, feminist directing, etc.).
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: ENGL 5790, GSWS 5790
1 Course Unit

THAR 9999 Graduate Level Independent Study
Course for graduate-level Independent Study registration.
Fall, Spring, and Summer Terms
1 Course Unit