

# THEATRE ARTS (THAR)

## **THAR 0020 Fundamentals of Acting: First-Year Seminar**

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. This First-Year Seminar covers the same material as THAR0120 Introduction to Acting, and a student may not receive credit for both courses.

Mutually Exclusive: THAR 0120

1 Course Unit

## **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.

Also Offered As: ENGL 1875

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 0104 On the Stage and in the Streets: An Introduction to Performance Studies**

What do Hamilton, RuPaul's Drag Race, political protest, TikTok Ratatouille, and Queen Elizabeth's funeral have in common? They all compose repertoires of performance. From artistic performances in theatres, galleries, and concert halls to an individual's comportment in everyday life, to sporting events, celebrations, courtroom proceedings, performance studies explores what happens when embodied activities are repeatable and given to be seen. In this course we ask: what is performance? How do we describe, analyze, and interpret it? What do theatre and everyday life have in common? How does performance legitimize or challenge the exercise of power? How has social media shifted our understanding of the relationship of our daily lives to performance? How does culture shape what is considered to be performance and how it functions? What isn't performance? Throughout the semester students will apply key readings in performance theory to case studies drawn from global repertoires of contemporary and historical performance. In addition to analyzing artistic performances, we will also consider sporting events, celebrations, political events, and the performance of everyday life. We will attend to the challenges provoked by performance's embodied, ephemeral, affective, effective, relational, and contingent aspects. Coursework will include discussion posts, class facilitation, and the opportunity to choose between a research paper or creative project for the final assessment.

Also Offered As: ANTH 1104, COML 0104, ENGL 1890

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 0115 Self-Scripting: Writing through Body and Space**

Students in Self-Scripting will write through a variety of exercises and activities that put text into play with the body and space. Over the course of the semester, students will actively engage space and composition as they develop and explore scriptwriting for performance. This course aims to expand on techniques for writing plays, poetry, and experimental biography. To learn more about this course, visit the Creative Writing Program at <https://creative.writing.upenn.edu>.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ENGL 3650

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

Mutually Exclusive: THAR 0020

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. See the English Department's website at [www.english.upenn.edu](http://www.english.upenn.edu) for a description of the current offerings.

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, MELC 1960, 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 0114) 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 1115 Adaptation**

This course is designed to explore the techniques and practices of adaptation in order to transform stories not originally written for the stage into plays. We will reimagine material from other media, considering how the original author's intent intersects with a student's own artistic voice. Through reading and writing exercises, we will focus on themes, characters, setting, as well as theatricality, and better understand the value of transferring ideas from the page to the stage. Students will investigate what makes a story stage worthy as they work to create a short play from source material of their choosing.

Also Offered As: ENGL 3607

1 Course Unit

**THAR 1117 Plague Lab: Writing through Infection and Affliction**

How do we write through a plague? In this creative writing class we will begin with the question of how plagues make and disrupt meaning. In addition to canonical examples, we'll explore off-center, anti-colonial, and non-Western literary and popular culture works. Students will then produce across a number of genres including poetry, fiction, memoir, zines, double-blind studies, sculpture, installation, performance, or found object scavenging. To learn more about this course, visit the Creative Writing Program at <https://creative.writing.upenn.edu>.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ENGL 3517, FNAR 3517

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 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 its 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 1180 The Art of Revolution**

This course offers an international and multidisciplinary tour of revolutionary art from the 20th and 21st centuries, including cinema, literature, visual art, theater, and performance art. See the English Department's website at [www.english.upenn.edu](http://www.english.upenn.edu) for a description of the current offerings.

Also Offered As: CIMS 1280, COML 1180, ENGL 1180, GSWS 1180, LALS 1180

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 1272 Broadway Musicals in the 21st Century**

Wicked, Spring Awakening, Dear Evan Hansen, Haddeshtown. And of course, Hamilton. The innovations we see in Broadway musicals since 2000 are particularly fascinating in that they, so to speak, boldly go where no musicals have gone before—while at the same time honoring and building on the long-standing traditions of this beloved form. From the powerfully romantic *Light in the Piazza*, which nods to roots in European operetta, to the boundary-defying Black queerness of *A Strange Loop*... and everything in between. In this course, we will go year by year through musical theater from the quarter-century, to see where the form has gone recently... and where it's headed. In addition to the works already mentioned, we'll look at *Caroline or Change*, *The Color Purple*, *In the Heights*, *Fun Home*, and more. This course will also consider some recent "revisals," like director Daniel Fish's *Oklahoma!*, and Marianne Elliott's gender-reassigned *Company*: reinterpretations of classic American musicals that imagine them in more contemporary light.

Also Offered As: CIMS 1275, ENGL 1891

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 tragicomic 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 1274 The Musical Theatre of Stephen Sondheim**

Just days before Stephen Sondheim died in November 2021, he attended a revival of *Assassins* at Classic Stage Company, as well as a radical rethinking of *Company* that had transferred from London to New York. A few days later, a public performance of the song "Sunday" was organized in Duffy Square by Lin-Manuel Miranda. A new production of *Into the Woods* is currently on Broadway, and another of *Sweeney Todd* is planned for February 2023. Though it's been nearly 15 years since Sondheim's final new musical, he is very much part of our theatrical present—through his own works, which continue to be produced internationally, and through his influence on several generations of composers, lyricists, and more. Still today, among theatre critics and a large sector of the public, Sondheim is generally considered the most significant composer and lyricist in the contemporary theatre; he is, in fact, accorded the kind of serious consideration generally reserved for "legitimate" playwrights. In this seminar, we will examine in detail Stephen Sondheim's writing over six decades. We'll begin with Sondheim's earliest work as a lyricist, collaborating with composers Jule Styne (*Gypsy*), Leonard Bernstein (*West Side Story*), and later, Richard Rodgers (*Do I Hear a Waltz?*). Beginning in 1970, Sondheim – now both composer and lyricist – in partnership with director Harold Prince produced a series of musicals (including *Company*, *Follies* and *Sweeney Todd*), still thought to be among the most innovative and substantial in the history of the genre. We will also focus on Sondheim's musicals after his 1981 break with Prince. These later works, created with writers and directors including James Lapine (*Sunday in the Park with George*, *Into the Woods*, *Passion*), Jerry Zaks (*Assassins*), and John Doyle (*Road Show*) are often smaller in scale, intensely personal, and incorporate elements of performance art and popular culture. Finally, we will consider revival productions of Sondheim's work, which often are reconceived from their original form, often with Sondheim's involvement and occasional rewriting. This course is open to all students interested in theatre and musical theatre. The ability to read music is not required.

Also Offered As: CIMS 1274, ENGL 2874

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 1276 Movie Musicals: From Oz to La La Land**

The very first major sound film—The Jazz Singer, in 1927—featured not only speaking, but also singing. Audiences around the country hungrily consumed this new cinematic genre—one that was also strongly influenced by the stage musicals that were taking New York by storm. The synergy between Hollywood and Broadway was electric. Virtually every major composer and lyricist, including Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, and Rodgers and Hammerstein, worked both coasts. At the same time, the movies created new film celebrities, including Frank Sinatra, Lena Horne, Judy Garland, The Nicholas Brothers, and more. In the Depression 42nd Street, The Wizard of Oz, and Stormy Weather provided entertaining escapism—and sometimes a critical lens into reality. As time moved on movie musicals moved with them... and continue to do so. Jailhouse Rock, A Hard Day's Night, Sparkle, The Who's Tommy, Robert Altman's Nashville, and Damien Chazelle's La La Land are just a few of the films that reinvent and even subvert the genres, while showcasing stars from Elvis Presley to Tina Turner to Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone. Movie Musicals will explore the development of this form and the artists who made it, including Busby Berkeley, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Bob Fosse, Baz Luhrmann... and of course, Walt Disney. The class will also present an international perspective: Bollywood, Nollywood, and the Scandinavian sensibility of Bjork and Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark*. Also Offered As: CIMS 1276, ENGL 1892

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 1880 African American Drama: Origins to present**

This course will introduce students to African American drama from its origins to the present. See the English Department's website at [www.english.upenn.edu](http://www.english.upenn.edu) for a description of the current offerings.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: AFRC 1880, ENGL 1880

1 Course Unit

**THAR 2236 Acting Shakespeare**

All the world's a stage and Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed on it. In this open-level acting course we'll explore the performance of three of Shakespeare's greatest dramatic works (*Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Romeo and Juliet*). We'll dive deep into the language, verse, rhetoric, and dramaturgy of Shakespeare's texts to create performances that are passionate, spontaneous, and real. Through acting exercises, text analysis, scene study, and vocal training, we will develop the skills needed to bring Shakespeare's dramatic works to their most impactful life. Students will leave the course not only with techniques to perform and appreciate Shakespeare's work, but with expressive tools that will serve them in all kinds of performance or public speaking.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ENGL 2879

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 2325 August Wilson and Beyond**

"The people need to know the story. See how they fit into it. See what part they play." - August Wilson, *King Hedley II* If you want to get to know community members from West Philadelphia, collaborate deeply with classmates, gain deeper and more nuanced understandings of African American history and culture, engage in a wide range of learning methods, and explore some of the most treasured plays in the American theatre, then this is the course for you. No previous experience required, just curiosity and willingness to engage. In this intergenerational seminar, Penn students together with older community members read groundbreaking playwright August Wilson's *American Century Cycle*: ten plays that form an iconic picture of African American traditions, traumas, and triumphs through the decades, nearly all told through the lens of Pittsburgh's Hill District neighborhood. (Two of Wilson's plays are receiving fresh attention with recent acclaimed film versions: *Fences* with Denzel Washington and Viola Davis; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* with Davis and Chadwick Boseman.) Class participants develop relationships with one other while exploring the history and culture that shaped these powerful plays. As an Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) course, the class plans and hosts events for a multigenerational, West Philadelphia-focused audience with community partners West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance / Paul Robeson House & Museum, and Theatre in the X. Class members come to a deeper understanding of Black life in Philadelphia through stories community members share in oral history interviews. These stories form the basis for an original performance the class creates, presented at an end-of-semester gathering. Wilson's plays provide the bridge between class members from various generations and backgrounds. The group embodies collaborative service through the art and connection-building conversations it offers to the community.

Fall

Also Offered As: AFRC 2325, ENGL 2222

1 Course Unit

**THAR 2500 Theatre Workshop**

This course will examine a specific aspect of theatrical practice, taught by a visiting professional theatre artist. The course, with 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 2520 Collaborative Practices: Staging Projects Together**

Collaborative Practices is an ABCS course in which Penn students will build and hone their stage practices in collaboration with young artists and performers in Philadelphia. Collaborative Practices offers models for staging original works in collaboration from start to finish and interrogates assumptions about collaboration inside a hands-on mentorship relationship. To learn more about this course, visit the Creative Writing Program at <https://creative.writing.upenn.edu>.

Also Offered As: ENGL 3653

1 Course Unit

**THAR 2720 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 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 2810 Method Acting: From Self to Stage and Screen**

What, exactly, is “method acting”? Jeremy Strong became notorious on television’s *Succession* for “staying in character” while filming, to the great irritation of his castmates. Jared Leto “transformed” himself by gaining sixty pounds for a role in *Chapter 27*, then losing another thirty for a role in *Dallas Buyer’s Club*. Are such approaches really “method” acting? Are they healthy and sustainable? And do they produce truly compelling performances? This course aims to demystify “the method” through a combination of historical inquiry and hands-on acting work. We will explore the cultural phenomenon of “the method” by tracing its historical, theatrical roots, from the core theories and practices of Russian actor-director Konstantin Stanislavsky through the American Group Theatre experiments of the 1930s, the heyday of New York’s Actors Studio in the 1950s, and its culmination in iconic stage and film performances. (One prime example is Marlon Brando’s famed portrayal of Stanley in Tennessee Williams’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*, as directed by Elia Kazan). Our studies will involve reading historical, theoretical, and dramatic texts, viewing selected films, and practicing acting exercises. Course assessment will comprise participation, facilitation, short responses, and a final project that can take the form of a research paper, presentation, or performance.

Also Offered As: CIMS 2810, ENGL 2882

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: COML 2820, ENGL 2880, LALS 2820

1 Course Unit

**THAR 2825 The Threat of Climate Change and Theatre**

Can theatre save the world? In the face of the climate crisis, this question feels especially urgent. This course will consider the relationship of theatre to the environment and climate change, looking at how we got to this point, and where we might go from here. We will consider how ideas about the environment have been spread through classic texts such as Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Ibsen’s *Enemy of the People*. We’ll compare how non-western performances offer different relationships with the environment. And we’ll analyze how performance has responded to climate anxiety; through visions of dystopia and an end of the world, as in Caryl Churchill’s *The Skriker* and Anne Washburn’s *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play*; through arts activism; and through experimental performance like environmental and immersive theatre. This course is for anyone who is concerned about climate change and interested in how the arts could respond. Most sessions will function as seminar, with short lectures and in-depth discussion about artistic and theoretical texts. We will also workshop different ideas on their feet. The aim is for students to become comfortable enough with this artistic and theoretical mode that they can critique performances across genres from this perspective, articulate their own relationship to it, and see how it might inform their own work.

Also Offered As: ENGL 2881

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 2850 The Black Arts Movement: Theatre and Performance**

This course examines the Theatre and Performance practices of the Black Arts Movement from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. The Black Arts Movement (BAM) emerges in New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Philadelphia among other locations, as a cultural component of the Black Power Movement, and its legacy continues to this day. BAM artists, poets, playwrights, musicians, dancers, producers, directors, and teachers, shared a goal to develop an alternative theatre based in Africanist and Black aesthetics combining poetry, music, and dance in a non-linear fashion allowing stories to emerge through alternative and abstract structures that are activist in nature. We will ground our examination of the period in a growing global black consciousness, as well as the relationship between black aesthetics and self-determination. The course will explore a breadth of mid twentieth century Black experimental theatre ranging from Jean Genet's *The Blacks* and Imamu Amiri Baraka's *Black Arts Repertory Theater and School*, to Ntozake Shange's *Choreopoems*, and the performance poetry Jayne Cortez. The course culminates in the work of present-day performance artists that have taken up and evolved the form. The course is designed to incorporate theory and practice through play and poetry readings, movement investigations, student presentations of Theatre/Performance Artists, and viewing performances either virtually or in person. Students will develop either a choreopoem of their own or curate an imagined Black Arts Movement theatre festival or season. Also Offered As: AFRC 2852, ENGL 2850

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 geo-political and geo-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 (THAR 0120) and Introduction to Directing (THAR 0121). 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**

Do you have some acting experience but want to dive deeper? Do you long to play on your feet with a wide variety of material and explore your range? Do you love acting and just want more? This is a course for students with previous acting experience who want to build on and refine their skills. Through in-depth, on-our-feet scene work we will explore how to bring the actor's craft to bear on a wide variety of material. We will work on three scenes of varying styles: one from the modernist period (Chekhov, Ibsen), one a "style" piece (Wilde, Hansberry, Coward, Wilson), and a contemporary scene. At the same time, through games and improvisations, we will continue to develop our imaginative capabilities and skills at physical transformation and character development. Course texts will include plays, theoretical texts, and performance viewings. This class is intended for students who already have a working vocabulary surrounding the actor's craft (actions, objectives, given circumstances) and experience with script analysis.

Fall

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. This course does not follow a typical meeting pattern. Please see Section Details for production-specific details including meeting times and audition/permit information.

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

**THAR 3501 Production for Performance**

Theatre Production for Performance provides students with deep intellectual, artistic and technical immersion in the theatrical process through intensive research, project management, tangible creation, and synchronized application of a full-length stage production. Each semester, the play will be featured in the Theatre Arts Program production season, and performed by the students in THAR 3500 Rehearsal and Performance. Before the end of Course Selection Period students enrolled in 3501 will choose a focus area: props, scenery, lighting, costumes, or sound. Some semesters will provide an opportunity for a focus in projections. Students will learn from design professionals working on the production in tandem with the course instructor. This course does not follow a typical meeting pattern.

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, Ntozake Shange, Octavia Butler, Adrienne Kennedy, Lucrecia Martel, Aimé Césaire, Jamaica Kincaid, Regina Jose Galindo, Raul Ruiz, Josefina Baez, Zadie Smith and Cherríe 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, GSWS 3600, LALS 3600

1 Course Unit

**THAR 3606 Experimental Playwriting**

A course on writing for theater and performance. Students will take cues from myriad experimental playwrights and performance artists who have challenged conventional ideas of what a script should look and sound like, 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. To learn more about this course, visit the Creative Writing Program at <https://creative.writing.upenn.edu>.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ENGL 3606

1 Course Unit

**THAR 3655 Writing Class**

Gayatri Spivak has stated, "Of race, class and gender, class is the least abstract." While materially true, in literary, theatrical, performative and cinematic representational schemes, class is often occluded, made permeable in opposition to longstanding economic realities or simply wished away in order to focus on plot and pleasantries. Within this course, students will instead focus their writing on class, whether that be on the middle classes, the bourgeoisie, ruling class, or the world's majority: the working class. Work on class can take the form of satire or solidarity; expose conflict and antagonism between and within a given class; historicize individual relationships within the history of property relations; focus on finances, wealth, or poverty; portray class ascent or descent. Writing may be in any genre: poetry, fiction, memoir, political essay, film script, play or performance. We will read and view work by artists such as Tillie Olsen, Kae Tempest, Leslie Feinberg, Zadie Smith, Cherríe Moraga, Alma Luz Villanueva, Helena Maria Viramontes, Gary Indiana, Gloria Naylor, Paul Beatty, Robert Altman, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the Dardenne Brothers, Ken Loach, Lucrecia Martel, Bertolt Brecht, Clifford Odets, Adrienne Kennedy, Studs Terkel, Jean Toomer, Valerie Solanas, and the Chicano, Black and Nuyorican Theater Movements. We will develop work in/on class via writing exercises, attend readings, plays and performances both on and off campus. Students will do a midterm presentation of their work in progress. Final projects can be a short story, essay, a suite of poems, a play or film script, a short video, a collection of vignettes or a mélange of these genres. Let the writing of class begin!

Also Offered As: ENGL 3655, GSWS 3655, LALS 3655

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