THEATRE ARTS (THAR)

THAR 073 Radical Arts: Literature, Visual Arts, Theater and Cinema in the Americas
Also Offered As: ARTH 299, CIMS 073, COML 073, ENGL 073, LALS 073
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 076 Theatre in Philadelphia
This course will investigate the state of the contemporary, non-profit theatre culture of Philadelphia by examining the history, artistic mission, and current production work of selected city theatre companies. This course will also explore the creative process of theatre-making as undertaken by these theatres through the reading of plays being produced by them this fall, through an analysis of the collaborative contribution of the playwright, director, actors, and designers to the creation of a production, and, finally, through attendance at those productions mounted by the theatre companies under investigation.

The members of the class will write individual essays responding to these productions, do research and give group presentations on other Philadelphia theatre companies, and participate daily in a spirited dialogue about the vitality, level of artistic accomplishment, and cultural/social value of contemporary theatre in Philadelphia.
Taught by: Malague and Schlatter
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Frequently offered as a Freshmen Seminar

THAR 100 Introduction to Theatre Arts
An introduction to different approaches to understanding and analyzing performance, representational theatre, and non-representational theatre, using as test cases both dramatic scripts and live performance. Different aspects of theatre art and theatrical process (acting, design, audience, musical theatre) will be taught by guest lecturers drawn from the Theatre Arts faculty and local professionals.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Malague and Schlatter
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 101 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.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Also Offered As: ENGL 087
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 102 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.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Also Offered As: ENGL 097
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 114 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.
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: ENGL 114
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 120 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.
Taught by: Ferguson, Malague, Schlatter, and Staff
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Required of all Theatre Arts Majors
THAR 121 Introduction to Directing
This class will introduce the basic principals of stage directing, beginning with the fundamentals of three-dimensional storytelling. 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.
Taught by: Ferguson, Malague, Mazer, Schlatter and O’Harra
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisite: Thar 120
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Required of all Theatre Arts Majors

THAR 125 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.
Taught by: Malague and Schlatter
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ENGL 056
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 130 Introduction to Light, Set, and Costume Design
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.
Taught by: Whinnery
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 131 Concepts of Lighting
In this course we will cover the basic concepts of the art and craft of Stage 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.
Taught by: Whinnery
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 132 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.
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 133 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 Scope 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.
Taught by: Whinnery
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
THAR 170 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 students develop and distinguish their own authentic voice. They will learn how to support and extend their voice in a healthy way, with a view to longevity, spontaneity and flexibility of use. In this course, students will study voice as a means of self-expression and how it relates to other aspects of their craft. They will also learn about the vocal mechanisms and how to use them effectively. Taught by: Doherty
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisites: THAR 120 or equivalent.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 171 Movement for the Actor
This course is designed to help the actor understand the relationship between the body and the voice, and how to use the body as a tool for expression. It focuses on 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 theaters to the contemporary dance and theater, including mime, modern dance, post modern dance, physical theater, film, and performance art. Taught by: Fischbeck
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Primarily for majors. Non-majors need permission of the instructor

THAR 214 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 analyze 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.
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 154
Prerequisite: Thar 114 - Playwriting Workshop or Permit of the instructor.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 236 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 Shakespeare’s language and the conventions of Shakespeare’s 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.
Taught by: Mazer
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 236
Prerequisite: THAR 120 or 121 or their equivalent or Permission of Instructor
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: This course is not open to freshmen. Instructor permission is required.

THAR 240 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.
Taught by: Mazer
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 276
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: This course is the next level up from Thar 140 - Topics in Theatre History.

THAR 250 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.
Taught by: Various Theatre Professionals
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 276
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Cross-listings are contingent upon topics offered. For the current topics contact the Theatre Arts office.
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.

Taught by: Fox
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 271, ENGL 274
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

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’Neill, 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.

Taught by: Schlatter and Malague
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 273, ENGL 067
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

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.

Taught by: Mazer
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 356, GSWS 279
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

Notes: This course, which may with different topics, be repeated for credit, will examine a specific aspect of theatrical practice. Recent topics have included performance art, Jacques Lecoq technique, improvisation, and puppetry.

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

Taught by: Fox, Ferguson, Malague, Mazer, O’Harra & Schlatter
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: CIMS 225, ENGL 276, HIST 247, URBS 274
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

Notes: This course, which may with different topics, be repeated for credit, will examine a specific aspect of theatrical practice. Recent topics have included performance art, Jacques Lecoq technique, improvisation, and puppetry.

Theatre began as a form that excluded women entirely. The plays of ancient Greece and Elizabethan England were written and performed only by men, beginning a long tradition of theatre that represented women only from male perspectives. Has that tradition been so dominant for so long that women’s voices on stage are still a novelty? This course focuses on a wide range of plays and performances by and about women; the work we read (and view) will evidence artistic attempts to represent women’s lives, experiences and perspectives on the stage. Among the issues encountered and examined in these works are the roles of love, sexuality, friendship, career, community, marriage, motherhood, family, and feminism in women’s lives - as well as the economic and political position(s) of women in society. The course will also offer contextual background on feminist theatre history, theory, and literature, as well as the diverse (and divergent) creative efforts of female artists to use use live performance as a means of creating social and political change.

Taught by: Malague
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 356, GSWS 279
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

Notes: This is a topics class which include: Dangerous Women and Provocative Performance.
THAR 320 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.
Taught by: Malague
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisites: Thar 120, Thar 220
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 321 Acting & Directing Lab
Taught by: O'Harrar
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

THAR 350 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.
Taught by: Ferguson, Fox, Malague, Mazer and Schlatter
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: ENGL 256
Activity: Studio
1 Course Unit

THAR 579 Provocative Performance
Taught by: Malague
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: ENGL 456, GSWS 579
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

THAR 999 Graduate Level Independent Study
Course offered summer, fall and spring terms
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit