

# **THEATRE UAF DIRECTING THESIS GUIDELINES**

## **I. Preparation**

- A. Students should ideally meet with an advisor at the beginning of their junior year to plan for the course and production requirements that serve as preparation for the directing thesis.
- B. All students proposing to complete a thesis project in directing must have a declared concentration in Theatre and must have completed FLPA 332 Stage Directing I prior to beginning actual production work on the thesis project.
- C. Students should have also functioned as an Assistant Director or Stage Manager on at least one faculty-directed main-stage production prior to the submission of a directing thesis proposal.
- D. Students should also direct a show for the Student Drama Association as part of Winter Shorts (or a similar event).
- E. Students' production experience will be strongly weighed by the faculty when considering proposals. Students should plan to be actively involved in Theatre UAF shows throughout their time at UAF.
- F. Students are reminded that they must register for FLPA 499, the three-credit capstone thesis course. Thesis projects are graded, and students must meet the thesis course guidelines as indicated below.

## **II. Proposal Process**

- A. For all directing thesis projects, the student should propose 1 option for both one-act and full-length scripts (a total of 2 proposals) which can be effectively cast, designed, rehearsed, staged, produced, and presented in a relatively simple manner.
- B. Each proposal should be assembled with the guidance of the student's faculty mentor and should include the following elements:
  1. Title and author of the proposed selection;
  2. Description of the style and genre of the play;
  3. Description of cast size and gender distribution;
  4. Brief synopsis of the plot, as well as a description of primary characters and themes found in the work;
  5. Listing of technical challenges (lighting, scenic, costume or prop needs) AND a description of how you plan to address them;
  6. Concept and design statement relating to HOW you will produce this show within the parameters of the project guidelines;
  7. Justification for WHY this play is a valid and appropriate choice for YOU as a director and for Theatre UAF as a whole.
  8. A full copy of the script under consideration. (This can be provided electronically.)
- C. Directing thesis proposals will be evaluated by the Theatre UAF faculty on the following:
  1. the student's previously-completed coursework;
  2. practical production history (especially as a director) at UAF;
  3. the merit of the written proposal;
  4. compatibility with departmental season goals and schedules;
  5. the availability of support staff;
  6. production experiences outside the department.

## **III. Production Expectations**

- A. More than one directing thesis project may be scheduled during the same evening. If this occurs, directors are expected to work collaboratively together as they plan and develop technical specifications which will work for each production.
- B. Each directing project will be presented for a public audience and scheduled by the faculty, so

- as to ensure presentation dates and times that best fit time and space considerations.
- C. Student directors (with consultation from their faculty advisor) are responsible for coordinating and planning all aspects of the project, including the acquisition of necessary actors, staff, designers, technical personnel, and publicists.
  - D. Ideally, thesis projects are designed and built by faculty and staff, though this is not possible in all circumstances.
  - E. The Department of Theatre and Film does not guarantee access to workstudy or practicum students, or to departmental staff in the shop areas – although it is our intent to help you fully produce your realized production.
  - F. The faculty may set limits on who the director may choose to hire and/or cast if the faculty believe those choices are not in the student’s or the department’s best interest.
  - G. The faculty advisor must approve the final cast before any of the actors are notified.
  - H. Students should think carefully about technical and design expectations as they make their proposal, and the faculty expect that those expectations set forth in the proposal are followed. To that end:
    - 1. Students should have regular production meetings at which all designers and the stage manager can be present. At minimum, the student’s faculty advisor should also regularly attend, and other faculty members should be invited to attend as well.
    - 2. The faculty (in consultation with the student’s project advisor) must approve all production/staging elements of the production.
    - 3. After obtaining permission from the project advisor and faculty members in the design and technical production areas, directors or approved members of the production team may pull essential scenic, costume, and properties from department storage.
    - 4. Any production which violates the time or staging requirements as set forth in the proposal approved by faculty will be assessed a lower grade by the project advisor, or in extreme cases, the production may be cancelled or pulled from the season.
  - I. Student directors will have access to a minimal budget (as determined by the faculty and department chair), which is to cover ALL production-related costs (including script purchase and royalties). All purchases are to be approved by the faculty advisor prior to the purchase being made and must be purchased using a ProCard.
  - J. Students who do not completely “strike” their technical elements after the project is completed will not be assigned a passing grade for the process portion of the project.

#### IV. Rehearsals

- A. Students are expected to schedule regular rehearsals in a Theatre UAF-controlled space. These rehearsals should be scheduled in advance by reserving the space with the department coordinator. Students are required to keep the rehearsal spaces they use clean and organized at all times.
- B. Faculty Feedback: You are expected to invite the entire faculty to at least 2 runs prior to opening, one of which is a technical or dress rehearsal where the majority of the design elements are in place. You are then expected to set up meetings with each faculty member for feedback.

#### V. Grading

- A. The final grade for the senior thesis will be assigned by the project advisor after consulting with the rest of the faculty.
- B. Your director’s book and thesis defense (see below) will factor into your grade for the thesis.
- C. Advisor Meetings: You are expected to set up and attend bi-weekly meetings with your thesis advisor to discuss your progress on the project. It is your responsibility to set up these

meetings with your advisor, not the advisor's responsibility to track you down.

- D. Director's Book:** Student directors must carefully document ALL aspects of the production process and compile a professional director's book at the completion of the project.
- E. This book MUST include the following elements:**
- 1. Approved directing proposal**
    - a.** A copy of the final version of your accepted proposal.
  - 2. Finalized statement of concept/matrix**
  - 3. Inspirational Photographs demonstrating concept/matrix**
    - a.** A range of between 10-20 photographs, paintings or other images that speak to your concept ("matrix," if you will) for your production OR inspire you to think about aspects of your play.
  - 4. Research on the play and/or its playwright (premiere date and location, reviews of past productions, playwright bio, listing of his/her other works)**
    - a.** You should include both a summary page with the relevant information (dates of productions, listing of playwright's other work) along with copies of any reviews or other source material about the playwright's life or work.
    - b.** You must include a bibliography listing all sources consulted.
  - 5. Script Analysis:** This section is a detailed written analysis of the play based on a thesis which is approved by your thesis advisor(s) and using research you have conducted into the play, playwright, etc.
    - a.** Topics may include style, character, structure, setting, storyline, relationships, etc. Think of this section as a scholarly paper you would write for an English or theatre history course.
    - b.** It should be approximately 7-10 pages double-spaced in length.
    - c.** You should cite your sources throughout. Please use MLA citation style. (For MLA style guidelines, see the Purdue Online Writing Lab site at [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/.](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/))
  - 6. Final Rehearsal schedule**
    - a.** Students will turn in a draft of this to their faculty advisor prior to the start of rehearsals. It should detail how many rehearsals you plan to have along with work and/or goals that you hope to accomplish in each session.
  - 7. Director's Log (with entries for each rehearsal)**
    - a.** Once you begin rehearsals, you should keep a journal of sorts, summarizing events that occur across your rehearsal process. In each entry, focus particularly on the work that is accomplished, the growth and development from previous rehearsals, the work you still feel needs to be accomplished, and a discussion of any problems you see emerging and thoughts on how to solve them.
  - 8. Character dossier of all the MAIN characters**
    - a.** Presumably, you will have a small cast. You should create a bio for each of these characters. These are not first-person acting bios, but rather encyclopedic, third-person style bios written from an external perspective. They should represent both facts you know about the character from the play as well as your interpretation or understanding of who he or she is and his or her importance to the action of the play. In other words, you're writing a description of what each character means to the play you're working on and the production you're creating.
  - 9. A copy of the script broken up into acting/rehearsal units, with titles for each unit.**
  - 10. Director's program notes**
    - a.** This is a 500-800-word summation of your take on the play for the audience to read prior to watching your production. It should whet their appetites for what

they're about to see without explaining your production nor being overly pedantic. You will turn in drafts of this to your advisor; the final version will be published in the program.

**11.** A copy of all marketing and publicity materials, including the program, advertisements, news articles, reviews, etc.

**12.** Final self-assessment

- a.** This is a 2-3 page narrative about your experience directing this production. Some questions to consider: what did you learn (about the play, about working with actors, about yourself) through the course of rehearsals? What mistakes did you make and how did you fix them? What did you succeed at doing? What would you do again the same way AND what would you differently next time and why?
- b.** You should also include some thoughts on your overall trajectory as a director during your time at Theatre UAF. What fundamental experiences have brought you to this point?

## **VI. Thesis Defense**

- A.** You will have a public thesis defense where you will give a presentation on your work on the production and on your written materials. There will also be an opportunity for the audience to ask you questions publicly. It is your responsibility to work with your advisor to ensure that this defense is scheduled. The public defense is usually 30 minutes in length.
- B.** You will have a private thesis defense (immediately following the public defense) with the theatre faculty who will be able to ask you further specific questions about your process, choices, and written materials.