

**Department of Theatre and Dance**  
**M.A. in Theatre with a Specialization in Performance as Public Practice**  
**Curriculum Guide**

**Revised Fall 2021**

## **M.A. in Theatre with a Specialization in Performance as Public Practice Curriculum Guide**

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### **Field of Study**

The M.A. in Theatre (Performance as Public Practice) is generally considered a preparatory degree. The two-year program prepares you to move on to a Ph.D. degree program and for a variety of professional, artistic, organizational and academic work. The M.A. degree requires 36 credit hours and culminates in a significant, written thesis project.

The University of Texas at Austin's M.A. in Theatre (Performance as Public Practice) permits considerable latitude. The Program focuses on the historical development, cultural and theoretical contexts and artistic significance of theatre and dance disciplines and institutions, as well the interrelationships of theatre arts and the role of performance in public spheres. The Program is highly influenced by interdisciplinary work in performance studies, defining performance in varied and wide cultural contexts. Students are expected to give primary attention to an area of expertise of their choice, while training in the broader theoretical, critical and historical contexts of the field.

Our faculty defines "public practice" as activities that include:

- Creating and/or producing performance
- Working as an academic (a professor who melds theory and practice in their teaching, scholarship, production and service)
- Producing and distributing research and scholarship
- Writing performance criticism
- Working as a dramaturg and outreach director
- Arts administration
- Working in public programming with foundations and non-profits
- Establishing public policy

- Writing grants
- Using applied theatre methods and theories
- Teaching in universities, colleges, high schools and community centers
- Using performance as a tool for understanding communities and difference
- Theorizing performance as a site of civic engagement and often dissent
- Redefining and recontextualizing the role of performance in culture
- Promoting arts-based civic dialogue
- Case-making and agenda-setting for public culture

Graduates will contribute to the public practice of performance through:

- Creating performance
- Writing
- Public speaking
- Teaching
- Publishing
- Arts programming and curation
- Arts-based public policy making
- Arts-based community development, aka “Creative Placemaking”
- Consulting

The Performance as Public Practice specialization offers students a broad spectrum of approaches, methods and disciplines. It prepares graduates to:

- Make clear and cogent arguments
- Manage and complete complex projects
- Integrate performance history, theory and practice
- Address a range of audiences from scholarly to popular
- Research performance histories, theories, practices, criticism and literature
- Forge connections among performance, communications, media, television and film studies, anthropology, cultural studies, popular culture, literary studies, gender and queer studies and other fields and subfields
- Analyze written texts and live performance
- Work as a production dramaturg and outreach director, collaborating with playwrights, directors, production teams and audiences
- Interpret and develop performance as a public practice in variety of contexts, including commercial theatre, activist theatre, theatre of the oppressed, physical theatre or dance
- Teach courses ranging from large introductory lectures to specialized courses at the community college level and in community settings
- Create and implement outreach strategies that expand the meanings of performance to various audiences
- Develop research and teaching specialties within the field, such as:
  - African-American performance
  - Applied theatre practices
  - Arts criticism
  - Arts writing
  - Community-based theatre
  - Contemporary performance

- Cultural policy
- Dance studies
- Feminist theories and performance
- Historiography
- Latinx performance
- Musical theatre
- Performance ethnography
- Performance of the Americas
- Queer theatre and performance
- Text into performance
- Theories of pedagogy

### **Organization of Graduate Studies in the Department of Theatre and Dance**

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), consisting of the tenure-track and tenured faculty in the department, establishes the policies and requirements for all graduate programs offered by the department. They have delegated to the Graduate Studies Executive Committee (XCOM) the administration of those policies.

Graduate students in PPP will primarily communicate with PPP faculty and their academic (and later thesis) advisor when they need guidance. Students will also work with the Department Graduate Advisor, who signs off on student paperwork, and the Graduate Coordinator, who can answer questions about enrollment status and registration and can provide students with the Program of Study form (all faculty also have access to the POS; the form is also posted on Canvas).

### **Advising**

Each student is assigned an academic advisor from among the faculty who teach in PPP. The academic advisor helps the student select core and elective courses and prepare the Program of Study that guides coursework. At the end of the student's first year of coursework, they propose two to three faculty who would be appropriate to supervise their thesis project. The PPP area faculty consult and select one of these faculty members as supervisor. Faculty supervisors must be members of the Graduate Studies Committee. The academic advisor can help with this transition.

### **Coursework**

The M.A. Degree is completed within two years of study, including coursework, thesis preparation and defense.

### **Program of Study**

By the first week of November during their first semester in residence, students must submit for approval to the Head of the Ph.D. Program a Program of Study. The Program should be

completed on the form provided by the Graduate Coordinator and discussed with the student's faculty advisor in some detail before it is submitted. The M.A. Program requires successful completion of 36 hours of coursework and thesis preparation:

1. Required Courses (18 credits)
2. Electives (12 credits, at least 6 of those outside the department)
3. Thesis Writing and Research Hours (at least 6 credits)

Undergraduate Courses: The Office of Graduate Studies allows M.A. students to include up to nine hours of upper-division undergraduate courses on their Programs of Study; however, since most M.A. students are preparing to pursue a Ph.D., the PPP faculty discourages M.A. students from including undergraduate courses as part of their graduate study. Such courses should only be taken after consultation with a faculty adviser.

**Required Courses:** Core courses offer the student grounding in a range of critical theoretical, methodological, historical, analytical and performance practices.

Core 1: Required Courses (9 credits)

- Proseminar: Theories and Methods in Performance as Public Practice (TD 391)
- Supervised Teaching in Theatre and Dance (TD 398T)
- Research Methods (TD 388)

Core 2: Required Courses (9 credits)

- Topics in Performance Analysis or Dramaturgy (TD 387D)
- Topics in Performance History or Historiography (TD 387D)
- Devising (3 credits)

May include: Performing Research/Researching Performance; Kinetic Storytelling, Devising, Narrative in Physical Performance, Playwriting, Directing, Choreography, Solo Performance, etc.

Some of the courses above are offered on regular rotations:

<b>Fall, even-numbered years (eg “2018”)</b>	<b>Fall, odd-numbered years (eg “2017”)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervised Teaching in Theatre and Dance (TD398T)</li> <li>• Historiography (TD 391)</li> <li>• Performing Research/Researching Performance (TD 387D)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervised Teaching in Theatre and Dance (TD398T)</li> <li>• Research Methods (TD 388)</li> <li>• Topics in Performance Analysis (TD 387D)*</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Spring odd-numbered years</b>	<b>Spring, even-numbered years</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proseminar in Performance as Public Practice (TD 391)</li> <li>• Performance Ethnography (TD 387D)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramaturgy (TD 387D)</li> <li>• Topics in Performance Analysis (TD 387D)*</li> </ul>

*\* A number of courses, offered in the fall and spring of both even- and odd-numbered years, can fulfill the “Performance Analysis” and “Devising” requirements. For example, Narrative in Physical Performance may count as either a “Performance Analysis” or a “Devising” course.*

*To determine whether a course counts as an analysis or a performance credit, consult with your advisor.*

**Electives** (12 credits, at least 6 of those outside the department):

Some electives are offered regularly, while others only occasionally. They vary in content, methodology and approach. Some examples within the Program include The Artist as Entrepreneur, Choreographing Gender/Dancing Desire, Feminist Theory and Performance, Narrative in Physical Performance, Reading the Canon, Staging Black Feminism, etc.

For courses outside the department, students should carefully consider the professor, content and methodology. Many PPP students find relevant courses in departments and programs such as African and African Diasporic Studies, American Studies, Art History, Asian American Studies, English, History, Mexican American and Latino/a Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, etc.

**Thesis Writing and Research Hours** (6 credits)

Candidates for the M.A. degree must complete a thesis project as the major requirement for the degree. The process for designing the project consists of several steps:

- As noted above, at the end of the student's first year of coursework, they propose three faculty who would be appropriate to supervise the thesis project. The PPP area faculty consult and select one of these three faculty members as supervisor. Faculty supervisors must be members of the Graduate Studies Committee
- Prior to the end of the spring semester, the student and supervisor meet to discuss a research agenda for the summer, which will allow the student to spend time delimiting the topic and the contours of the project.
- At the beginning of the fall semester, the student and faculty supervisor meet to finalize the topic and to begin developing the thesis project proposal.

In general, the thesis proposal is a concise, descriptive document that integrates the following elements to a total of about 12 pages:

1. **Introduction:** This section introduces the project and gives the readers a sense of why the work is important. The author states the argument, generally as a question or challenge to the field.
2. **Description of Project and its Significance:** This section narrows the focus of the project, giving the reader a sense of the parameters of the study. It also emphasizes why the work is important and how it makes a contribution to research and scholarship.
3. **Review of Literature:** This section details the precedents of the project, explaining why and states how this thesis will use them. The review of literature also projects how the final document will fit into the larger field. In this section, the author focuses only on the works that contribute to the entire study, not just a chapter or small part of the whole.

4. **Methodology:** This section details how the author will conduct their study and what materials will be used. The methodology details what questions will be asked (to illustrate the thesis and arrive at a conclusion), how materials will be analyzed, how the parts fit together and what criteria facilitate inclusion in the study. In short, this section demonstrates the author's ability to undertake the project.
5. **Chapter Breakdown and Conclusion:** This section shows how work will be divided into chapters and what will comprise each one. The author describes each chapter fully and concludes the proposal.

The thesis proposal will be reviewed and approved by a subcommittee of the PPP faculty. Once it is approved, in consultation with the faculty supervisor, the student will suggest one other member of the Graduate Studies Committee to serve on the thesis project committee.

During the writing and research process, the faculty supervisor will work most closely with the student, although other committee members might be approached for additional guidance. The final draft of the thesis will be presented to the committee by the specified deadline each spring, and an oral defense of the project will be scheduled. The thesis should generally consist of three-25 page chapters on a topic related to the Program of Study.

After successfully passing the oral defense and receiving approval of the project by the committee, the student will submit the final document in accordance with the guidelines of the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **Continuing in the M.A. Program**

Each semester, the PPP faculty and by the Graduate Studies Committee XCOM evaluate student progress. At the end of the academic year (generally before 1 June) the head of the PPP program provides each student with a letter of evaluation via email. Continuing in the Program depends on satisfactory progress, as determined by the Graduate School policies in the most current bulletin. The PPP faculty expects a consistent grade point average of at least 3.0 (though preferably a GPA higher than 3.8), no record of lingering incompletes, positive participation in and a clear commitment to the Program and satisfactory and timely progress toward academic requirements and the degree. Unsatisfactory commitment and progress could result in rescinded financial aid awards and cancelled teaching assistant opportunities, as well as a letter from the Director of Graduate Studies detailing a period of required probation. If the Program does not see satisfactory progress following a period of probation, the student could be dismissed from the Program. See the university's [probation and dismissal policies](#) for more information.

### **Accommodations and Leaves**

#### Accommodations

Students who require accommodations should contact and register with [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (SSD). It is important to discuss approved accommodations with your advisor and professors.

## Leaves of Absence

Leaves of Absence are highly discouraged, and should only be considered if necessary. Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence of no more than two semesters. A student on leave may not use any university facilities nor is the student entitled to receive advice from any member of the faculty. A leave of absence does not alter the time limits for degrees or course work. For information on requesting a Leave of Absence or Readmission refer to the Graduate School: <https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/policies/leaves-of-absence>