

## **DANCE THESIS GUIDELINES, DEPARTMENT OF THEATER AND DANCE**

"The traditional senior thesis involves one or two semesters of original research and writing, culminating in a substantial paper on a research topic of the student's design. Such an effort requires that the student possess an excellent understanding of the *subject area, its theoretical underpinnings, and its research methodology*. The student must also be able to think critically and comprehensively about the topic, and must be able to advance a well-formulated argument. Conducting a senior thesis not only draws on a student's past academic experience, it also requires considerable independent thinking and creativity, self-discipline, and effective time management." "Some departments and programs offer or require thesis work that includes theatrical or musical performance, video production, curriculum development, or studio art work and exhibition." <http://www.bates.edu/academics/programs-resources/senior-thesis/>

**Dance Thesis Option 1. Choreographic Project and supporting academic paper.**

**Dance Thesis Option 2. Written thesis of theoretical, historical, or contextual research and an accompanying portfolio of creative experience.**

**Dance Thesis Option 3. Performance Project and supporting academic paper.**

### **Dance Thesis Option 3: Performance Project and Paper**

The Performance Project option allows students to delve deeply into the creative process of performance. Required coursework: participation in two Full Rep experiences (DANC 253) during your Freshman-Junior years; or, participation in five faculty/guest artist works during your Freshman-Junior years. There are three options for the performance track: 1. Take Full Rep, Fall semester, using this platform to explore your research topic/questions with participation in multiple pieces with guest artists; 2. Take Rep lite, participation in one work with a guest artist, plus an additional, student designed performance research experience with another artist in a solo/duet work; 3. A substantive performance research project that rests outside of the Fall Repertory course, with performance in either Fall or Spring. Options 2 and 3 might include grant writing for college funds to support the research and commission a work to be performed. For option 3---engaging in an alternate project that rests outside of the Full Rep course, it is expected that the student will register for the Fall Repertory Styles to engage with visiting artists in the classroom during their senior year and support their research. Supporting this core performance experience, the thesis also includes a substantive paper examining contemporary theories in performance, culture, history, and reflections on the embodied research as a performer.

1. **PROPOSAL:** 3-4 page proposal due Spring of Junior Year: 1.5 spacing, 12 point standard font. Proposals should include a heading (name, year, thesis type), and take the form of 4 sections, noted below:

1. **WHAT & WHEN** In one-two sentences, note whether you are proposing a choreographic, performance, or written thesis; and when (1 or 2 semester thesis; Fall or Winter).
2. **WHAT, HOW, WHERE** In one to two sentences, provide a brief description that explains what you hope to explore in your research, your research methodology (how), and where you hope to present, with why this venue for your research if proposing an alternative space/venue. For a written thesis, include any other elements of your research that are pertinent to your work. (eg surveys/interviews, informal showings or workshops, embodied research). For a choreographic or performance thesis, please include preliminary details of the work or process. One-two sentence examples:
  - "I hope to choreograph a small group work that explores first, second, and third wave feminism to be performed in the Fall Dance Concert;"
  - "I hope to make a mediated performance solo installation in blackbox. I don't know what it will be about yet;"
  - "I hope to do a written thesis exploring the influence of west African dances on western modern dance techniques and performance in the U.S."
  - "I propose a performance thesis that explores the intersection of improvisation and set material. I hope to work with a professional artist in this research and plan to perform the work in the Fall dance concert."
3. **NARRATIVE** This section is the body of your proposal and should be 2-3 pages in length, written in an essay format that includes all components noted below.
  1. 1-3 creative/scholarly research questions;

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2. Methodology: how do you plan to research your topic? Identify the methods you will use in your performance research and your approach to the rehearsal process and performance; and, outline the research methods you will employ for the scholarly, written component;
3. Explain the historical and contextual context for your research. This might include supporting lines of inquiry, interdisciplinary threads to explore, other artists and scholars, embodied research, etc.;
4. Outline the timeline of your proposed research and any resources needed. Resources might include: cast size, technical theatre and design, interviews, research materials, grant writing, anticipated workshops, travel, etc.;
5. Suggested criteria for assessment and advisor interaction including proposed visits to rehearsals, writing meetings, your proposed method for advisor response to progress in both the studio and written work.

### 4. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY 5 sources minimum, MLA format.

## **2. PERFORMANCE**

During Fall and/or Spring of Senior Year you will participate in a substantive performance experience (in consultation with your advisor). This is the core content of the thesis. Video documentation services will be provided by the department, however thesis students are responsible for processing video into the appropriate format for submission in final thesis document. Discussion of venue and format of the performance will be decided in collaboration with the department according to the shifting demands on the department technical support resources. There will be \$300 for each thesis project. Requests for additional department funds will need a proposal to the department. Kerry O'Brien in the Dean of Faculty office also has information on other thesis research grants.

## **3. WRITTEN PAPER**

In conjunction with your performance research, your paper should be a fully developed academic explanation of how you addressed your research questions through embodied and literature-based research. It should be written for a reader who has not seen the piece, so it should include detailed description where appropriate. It must include a detailed description of your process as a performer, including research into the sources of those methods, the relationship of those methods to your research questions, and an honest evaluation of the outcomes of those methods. Your paper should also situate your research in the field of performance research: engaging in discussion about your performance project in relation to contemporary discourse in performance. The paper should have the following components in MLA style:

- Title (and standard thesis title page)
- Artists' statement. A short declaration of your aesthetic values, influences, and directions.
- Introduction. State your research questions and briefly situate your performance and literature-based research in aesthetic and historical contexts.
- Academic context. A display of knowledge and understanding of the situation of your work with the field using standard academic writing practices to provide evidence.
  - i. Survey of relevant dance literature. This section should explore how your research questions and methods related to the field of Dance at large. In addition to any major discussions of your topic in dance literature, you must research at least two to three artists/scholars who are working in the field of performance research in Dance.
  - ii. If your research questions are cross-disciplinary, this section should include discussions of relevant literature from outside the field of dance.
- Methodology. Discuss how you explored your research questions. What did you do in the studio to make your piece?
  - i. How did you spend your time in the studio, and how did this relate to your research questions?
  - ii. How did you prepare for studio time, and how did this relate to your research questions including creative stimuli?
  - iii. How did you approach answering your cross-disciplinary or theoretical questions, if you had them?
- Creative Process Reflection. In well supported academic language, give an honest self-evaluation of your creative process in performance.
  - i. This section might include a description of the piece, however descriptions might also be distributed throughout the paper where appropriate.
  - ii. Critical evaluation of your rehearsal and performance process, including collaborative aspects of

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- the creative process.
- iii. Critical evaluation of your performance product.
- iv. Context of your piece in terms of performance intentions, audience relationship
- v. Responses of dancers and audience members, if appropriate.
- vi. What would you change or develop if you could do it over again, and why?
- Conclusion. Draw together ideas and makes suggestions for further research.
- Bibliography of all works cited including videos and performances

### **Guidelines for Performance Thesis Assessment**

Thesis student and advisor will decide together the weight of the two parts (Performance, Paper) and how these two parts will unfold through the semester.

**Performance piece 60%** A substantial engagement in performance in one or multiple works, as determined by the scope of your performance research. Below is a suggested rubric for assessment of your work in performance, to be adjusted/revised in consultation with your advisor.

<b>Rehearsal Process</b>	
<b>Made good use of studio time</b>	
<b>Made good use of performance research time alone</b>	
<b>Made good use of advising</b>	

<b>Performance Product</b>	
<b>Movement and Performance vocabularies and styles explored and developed</b>	
<b>Growth as a performer</b>	

**Written/package 40%** A substantial academic paper of approximately 30 - 50 pages depending on the form that your writing takes in relation to your research, assessing process and final product. Suggested rubric below, to be adjusted/revised in consultation with your advisor.

**Format/ Bibliography/Final Package Submission (10%)**

**Introduction/Conclusion (10%)**

**Artist Statement/Supporting Documentation of Work (10%)**

**Content: Argument (25%)** Articulation of Research Questions, threaded through written work; development of an argument; supporting academic research (scholarship/embodied) to ground the argument.

**Content: Methodology and Creative Process/Product Reflection (25%)** This will be in the form of a brief section in your introduction, outlining your research methodology for the whole thesis, as well as a distinct chapter that articulates your creative process in performance and engages in a critical analysis/reflection of the process and final product/experience.

**Content: Situating in the Field (10%)** Situating your research (process/product) in the field of creative research in dance in performance, with analysis of the work of other artists, exploration of contemporary research in your research topic, etc. While this might yield a separate chapter, this component most likely will be threaded throughout the written work.

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**Development, Synthesis, Cohesion (10%)** This is an assessment of your development with this written work over time. Have you met deadlines? Have you demonstrated forward progress in this work? How have you incorporated advisor feedback in writing and argument development?