THEATRE ARTS AND STUDIES

http://krieger.jhu.edu/theatre-arts

The program offers a comprehensive approach to the arts of acting, directing, playwriting, and theatre history, along with the fundamentals of technical direction, play production, play analysis, and theatre management.

For those students who intend to prepare for a career in the theatre, the courses offered are taught exclusively by established professionals with experience on Broadway, in the best of regional theatres, and in many countries of the world.

For those students not focused on a career in theatre arts, the courses offer a broader perspective, an understanding of societal traditions and culture, and an appreciation for the arts, whether theatrical, literary, musical, or visual. Students pursuing careers in medicine, engineering, law, international relations, science, and others have been challenged and enriched by the school's courses in theatre arts.

For those who seek careers in the arts, the acting and directing workshops, playwriting courses, and independent study opportunities provide rigorous training in acting and other theatre crafts, as well as an appreciation for and an understanding of the history of dramatic arts, its cultural significance, and the industries it has produced.

Located in the program's home, the historic Merrick Barn, The Johns Hopkins University Theatre provides a vehicle for the fulfillment of student lab requirements. The University Theatre produces several plays each year in the John Astin Theatre and occasionally in the Meyerhoff Auditorium at the Baltimore Museum of Art, which adjoins the Homewood campus. Classes are also held in the Barn.

Programs

- Theatre Arts and Studies, Minor (https://e-catalogue.jhu.edu/arts-sciences/full-time-residential-programs/degree-programs/theatre-arts-studies/theatre-arts-studies-minor/)

For current course information and registration go to https://sis.jhu.edu/classes/

Courses

AS.225.100. Introduction to Theatre. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the drama: how and why the theatre came into being; its role in human history; and how changing social structures in different regions and epochs have shaped different kinds of theatre, plays and performance. Also: how theatre "works" for us and on us, and the major plays of world drama.

AS.225.101. Acting I. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the fundamentals of acting through exercises and improvisations based on the teachings of Stanislavsky and Sanford Meisner. This course also includes a brief survey of major modern American playwrights. Plays will be read and employed in scene work.

AS.225.201. Acting II. 3 Credits.
As in Workshop I, the principal classroom activities will consist of scene work, exercises, lectures, and discussion. Some rehearsal will also take place during school hours. It is expected that substantial out-of-class time be spent on rehearsals and exercises. Recommended Course Background: AS.225.301

AS.225.212. Voice and Speech for the Actor. 3 Credits.
It has been said that 90% of what an actor does onstage is dependent on being effortlessly heard and understood by their audiences. This course is designed to establish the tools for the actor to begin to create this foundation. Using a combination of both the benchmark texts by Edith Skinner and Kristin Linklater, along with in-class exercises and monologues, we will begin the process of exploring both vocal power through breathing and breath control, and the fundamental tools of clarity in the speaking of a dramatic text onstage.

AS.225.215. Performing Musical Theatre. 3 Credits.
Effective performance in musical theatre demands a committed analysis of the musical and dramatic values of the song and the libretto from which it springs, in order to develop a fresh, organic interpretation. This course will provide you with the training to both analyze and interpret musical theatre scenes and songs and to make the most of them in performance. Instructor Permission Only.

AS.225.218. Angels in America (The Play) The Millennium Shift in American Culture and Politics. 3 Credits.
Tony Kushner’s epoch-making play weaves together astonishingly diverse sides of America in a broad tapestry: a modern work that emerged at the end of the 20th Century, now being revived world wide: it provides keys to understanding the American zeitgeist and the coming transformations of the culture. In one pivotal work we find the emergence of LGBT rights, the Mormon Church, the AIDS epidemic, the new “spirituality,” the Reagan-era transformation of both government and business, and the looming figure of Roy Cohn whose influence in American politics “behind the scenes” ranged from the Rosenberg trial to his work as counsel for the McCarthy Committee in the 1950s: and even his legacy in the 2016 as primary political and business mentor of the current President of the United States.

AS.225.300. Contemporary Theatre & Film. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the performing arts, including an overview of theatre history, acting styles and the interaction of art and society. A personal view from inside.

AS.225.303. Acting III. 3 Credits.
Special attention is given to the development of spontaneity and emotional freedom using the principles of Workshops I and II. Hands on work with John Astin’s “The Process” and the second Silverberg workbook are employed, along with the Uta Hagen text. Boleslavsky and Michael Chekhov are introduced. The Clurman, Meisner, Stanislavsky and Strasberg approaches are included. Substantial out of class time is required. Recommended Course Background: Two acting courses.

AS.225.305. A History of Black Performance and Drama. 3 Credits.
A survey of the history of the Black Performer and Performance. In exploring the art of storytelling from ancient African civilizations, students will critically engage and discuss the origins, aesthetics, characteristics, and practices of Black performers, and their often-unacknowledged contributions and influence upon mainstream performance throughout the history of the world.

AS.225.308. Shakespeare in Performance. 3 Credits.
Students will work with a selection of Shakespeare's plays — CYMBELINE, RICHARD III, CORIOLANUS— in exploring specific ways in which the power of the lines can be translated dynamically and immediately into vocal and physical performance. This course can be repeated for credit, because it covers different topics. (Some background in the acting sequence is encouraged).

AS.225.310. Stagecraft. 3 Credits.
A hands-on approach to the technical and theoretical elements of production. Meets in the Merrick Barn Scene Shop. Permission Required.
AS.225.311. Scene Study. 3 Credits.
An introduction to the principles of analyzing text in a playscript and using the intrinsic demands of language to create character in a scene. Gradually, the student learns to define an ACTION through given circumstances and develop the arc of performance in a particular setting.

AS.225.314. Theatre: Tech Direction. 3 Credits.
An introduction to Technical Direction including pre-production and production with an overview of materials, tools, rigging and safety, together with design and its implementation.

AS.225.315. Scene Study 2. 3 Credits.
Classes and scenes tailored to the needs of the actors. Some rehearsal will take place during school hours. It is expected that substantial out-of-class time be spent on rehearsals and exercises.

AS.225.318. 21st Century Female Playwrights. 3 Credits.
This is a writing intensive class exploring the current wealth of women playwrights, including Pulitzer Prize winners: Wendy Wasserstein, Paula Vogel, Lynn Nottage, and Jackie Sibbiles Dury (2019 Prize for FAIRVIEW). We will discuss Script Analysis and read (and see) plays by numerous writers including Claire Barron, Kia Corthron, Theresa Rebeck, Sarah Ruhl, Danai Gurira, Caleen Sinnette Jennings, and Hansol Jung. This class will include a mid-term and a Final Paper.
Area: Writing Intensive

AS.225.320. Performance. 3 Credits.
The student is given specific acting assignments, and develops them as special projects for public performance under the direct supervision of the instructor. A professional level performance is the goal. Audition Required. Out of class rehearsal time required. Permission only, signature required.

AS.225.321. The Lab - The Actor/Director/Playwright Lab. 3 Credits.
Student actors, directors, and playwrights will explore their respective crafts with emphasis on process and individual artistic growth. Participants in the class will also collaborate on the creation of new material for the stage. Recommended Course Background: one course in Acting, Directing, or Playwriting.

AS.225.323. Design for the Stage. 3 Credits.
The fundamentals of stage design, with an emphasis on process, including script analysis, research, conceptualization, and implementation, from the first reading of the play to opening night, along with an overview of theatre architecture from the Greeks to the current day and into our imagined future.

AS.225.324. Adaptation for the Stage. 3 Credits.
For aspiring playwrights, dramaturgs, and literary translators, this course is a workshop opportunity in learning to adapt both dramatic and non-dramatic works into fresh versions for the stage. Students with ability in foreign languages and literatures are encouraged to explore translation of drama as well as adaptation of foreign language fiction in English. Fiction, classical dramas, folk and fairy tales, independent interviews, or versions of plays from foreign languages are covered.
Area: Writing Intensive

AS.225.328. The Existential Drama: Philosophy and Theatre of the Absurd. 3 Credits.
Existentialism, a powerful movement in modern drama and theatre, has had a profound influence on contemporary political thought, ethics, and psychology, and has transformed our very notion of how to stage a play. Selected readings and lectures on the philosophy of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus and Sartre – and discussion of works for the stage by Sartre, Ionesco, Genet, Beckett, Albee, Pinter, Athol Fugard (with Nkani & Nshone), Heiner Müller and the late plays of Caryl Churchill. Opportunities for projects on Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Havel, Wiktiewicz, and Mrozek.
Area: Writing Intensive

AS.225.330. Playwriting Strategies. 3 Credits.
A seminar and workshop in playwriting with Dr. Joe Martin, playwright and dramaturge. Student writers, developing their plays, will learn how to open up to the creative process, “brainstorm,” refine their work, and shape it toward an act of artistic communication. Writer’s techniques, such as attending to plot or “story” delineation of character, creating effective “dialog,” even overcoming “writer’s block,” will be addressed. This course is designed to be complementary to – not a replacement for – playwriting classes in the Writing Seminars.
Area: Writing Intensive

AS.225.333. Scene Study 3. 3 Credits.
Classes and scenes tailored to the needs of the actors. Some rehearsal will take place during school hours. It is expected that substantial out-of-class time be spent on rehearsals and exercises.

AS.225.345. History of Modern Theatre & Drama. 3 Credits.
Designed to impart a deepened appreciation and understanding of today’s theatre by surveying the major playwrights, historical movements, and theatre practices of the 20th century. The course also seeks to help students understand theatre’s relationship to the societal and political power structure of each era and to introduce students to great dynamic literature in its intended form, which is performance.
Area: Writing Intensive

AS.225.346. Creative Improvisation: For Theatre and for Life. 3 Credits.
An exploration of the imagination and the senses using basic techniques of improvisation: exercises, conflict resolution, ensemble building, and theatre games. Texts: Spolin, Johnstone, LaBan and Feldencreis. Open to all students.

AS.225.374. Acting IV. 3 Credits.
Work is tailored to individual students, using the principles of Workshops I and II and other previous experience. Students work with John Astin’s “The Process”, along with the texts of Uta Hagen, Boleslavsky and Michael Chekhov. The Clurman, Meisner, Stanislavsky and Strasberg approaches are further explored. Substantial out of class time is required. Recommended Course Background: Two acting courses. Permission Required.

AS.225.501. Independent Study. 1 - 3 Credits.
Permission only.
You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration > Online Forms.

AS.225.502. Independent Study. 1 - 3 Credits.
You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration > Online Forms.
Cross Listed Courses
Center for Africana Studies
AS.362.309. Performing the Archive 2022: 200 Years of US-Liberia Migration. 3 Credits.
This seminar will explore some of the pivotal historical and contemporary connections between the US and Liberia since the first Black American settlers arrived in West Africa with the American Colonization Society in 1822. This course asks: What are implications of these stories of migration and reception for how we make sense of global anti-Blackness in the contemporary moment? How does performance provoke new questions about shared histories of those impacted by colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade? Why is a more in-depth understanding of 19th century Black political thought and the precolonial West African indigenous category necessary for developing theory on the political economy of race today? Through the lens of performance studies, students will analyze the documents in the American Colonization Society archive, to reimagine these early encounters as informed by historical documentation including folklore and pan-Africanist theory. Through exploring a range of historical and contemporary materials that center the problematic “indigenous/settler” binary, students will engage in a dramaturgical process which presents powerful possibilities for unlearning historical misrepresentations. In particular, students will develop theater-based projects that interrogate the spatio-temporal connections between the stories of both, free Blacks and those who were enslaved in Maryland and manumitted to go to Liberia, and the contemporary politics of Liberia-US migration.

First Year Seminars
AS.001.162. FYS: From Shakespeare to Baltimore. 3 Credits.
This First-Year Seminar is designed around what is on stage in Baltimore this fall. We will attend several plays, both professional productions at theatres in the city and student productions at JHU. We will pay attention to the interpretation of plays on the page, and to the ways that scripts materialize as performances on the stage. We will place these performances in the context of larger theatre histories, studying great plays from the age of Shakespeare to contemporary American theatre. No acting required – just the desire to explore the theatre of today.

Modern Languages and Literatures
AS.210.308. Acting French: learning about French language and culture through theater. 3 Credits.
This course proposes to enhance students’ verbal (pronunciation, intonation, syntax, vocabulary) and nonverbal skills (body language, vocal projection, spatial awareness) by performing excerpts from French and Francophone plays ranging from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. A closer analysis of these excerpts will lead us to consider how theater uses the physicality and immediacy of human experience to create a more universal form of connectivity with the world. Recommended course background: AS.210.301.