

THEATRE ARTS AND STUDIES

<http://krieger.jhu.edu/theatre-arts> (<http://krieger.jhu.edu/theatre-arts/>)

JHU Theatre offers a conservatory-style approach to the study of acting, directing, playwriting, and theatre history, along with the fundamentals of technical direction, play production, play analysis, and theatre management.

Courses are taught by theatre professionals with practical experience in the best professional and regional theatres. Coursework is complimented by regular performance opportunities in the John Astin Theatre in Merrick Barn. Our mainstage productions each fall and spring are professionally directed and designed. Each season also includes experimental performances and readings, as well as student-created performances as part of The Playshop series.

For those students who seek a career in the theatre, the minor in Theatre Arts and Studies offers an introductory acting sequence, advanced classes in acting, courses in design and technical theatre, directing workshops, courses in theatre history and theory, playwriting, and independent study opportunities. Our conservatory-style approach, with its personal attention and focus on practical training, as well as numerous opportunities for high-level performance, will provide rigorous preparation for a professional career.

For those students who love theatre but are not focused on a career, JHU Theatre is an ideal component of the liberal arts. Coursework builds broad perspectives on performance and literary traditions, and it deepens an appreciation for the arts, whether theatrical, literary, musical, or visual. Play-making in Merrick Barn, whether as an actor or as part of the production team, advances skills in communication and collaboration, and brings creativity to other endeavors. Students pursuing careers in medicine, engineering, law, science, and many other areas, have been challenged and enriched by their time with JHU Theatre.

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

AS.225.201. Acting II. 3 Credits.

As in Acting 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.225.101

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

AS.225.220. Script and Stage. 3 Credits.

An exploration of the complex relationship between the text of a play and its full realization as a production. We will go to see several plays in the Baltimore and DC area. Based on these, we will develop case studies, first examining the play as text and its historical and theoretical contexts, and then experiencing it as performance. Writing Intensive. This course can fulfill the Theatre Minor requirement for an Introductory Theatre Course.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

AS.225.308. Shakespeare in Performance. 3 Credits.

Students will work with a selection of Shakespeare's plays --- COMEDY OF ERRORS, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, and HAMLET--- 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).

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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 Sibbles Drury (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: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

AS.225.322. Performance II. 3 Credits.

The Performance Class will feature students doing rehearsed readings (open to the public) of four plays during the term. Plays will include DANCE NATION by Clare Barron, EXTREMITIES by William Mastrosimone, and two others TBA. Each student will participate in the process, and perform in one or two of the plays. Open to All. "Some" Acting experience or an Acting class preferable.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

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: Humanities

Writing Intensive

AS.225.327. The Art of the Dramaturg. 3 Credits.

This upper-level seminar is designed for students with some background in theatre or in dramatic literature, with aspirations to do further work in the art form. Students will gain an understanding of the theory and practice of working with dramatic texts in preparation for a theatre production. This will involve reading and discussing influential theorists who explore dramatic structures and styles and theatre practices. Additionally, there will be a practical component. Students will select and work on a couple of scripts, once classic and once contemporary, and create a "model book" for whichever becomes the student's primary project, including the script, notes, research, and visual samples for a hypothetical production: or possibly a real one.

Area: Humanities

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, Witkiewicz, and Mrozek.

Area: Humanities
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.

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.

Area: Humanities

AS.225.340. Devising Theatre: Moment Work. 3 Credits.

By cultivating a sense of play and active engagement, students will learn how to create theatre without a script. We will overthrow the tyranny of the text and the suffocation of the director’s vision to find equal footing in creation, and focus on the sweet spot where content and form come together to make a work that highlights the art of theatre. A perfect complement to standard acting classes, students will use the principles of Tectonic Theatre Company’s Moment Work to devise an original piece for public performance. Aspiring actors, directors, technical designers, and playwrights are welcome. Some theatre experience required.

Area: Humanities

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: Humanities
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.

Area: Humanities

AS.225.501. Independent Study. 1 - 3 Credits.

Permission only.

Prerequisite(s): 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.

Prerequisite(s): 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.362.140. Blackstorytelling: Public Health in the Black World. 3 Credits.**

What about performance offers a unique opportunity to learn from and with communities? How might dramatic performance be used to share information while learning from an audience? This course examines the work and research of young artists from Liberia, West Africa who used street theatre to teach best practices for prevention during the Ebola crisis and considers how their use of dialogical performance contributed to critical knowledge which iteratively informed interventions throughout their awareness campaign. This community engaged course connects public health education efforts in Africa to community health education in Baltimore through the Blackstorytelling tradition with local expert Janice the Griot. Course co-educator and artist Janice the Griot Green will share her firsthand experiences and guide the class through the principles of Blackstorytelling for community change. Students will design public performance projects around local-global community-based concerns using the tools they have learned. In partnership with the Great National Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, students will develop performance-based public health messaging drawing on their collection to support community outreach curricular materials development.

This performance work will be created collaboratively in workshops during class and in team meetings. Public health researchers who are looking for innovative ways to share their data will gain insights into this experimental ethnographic method and practitioners who want to offer their communities ways to connect best practices to lived experience will develop new pedagogical tools. This is a Community Engagement course in partnership with the Center for Social Concern.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

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.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

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.

Area: Humanities

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.

Area: Humanities

For current faculty and contact information go to <http://krieger.jhu.edu/theatre-arts/people/>