

# Theater and Dance

*Chair:* Laura Hope

*Director of Dance:* Renée Archibald

Aaron Chvatal

Peter de Grasse

Alex Higgin-Houser

Christopher Petit (on sabbatical, 2023-24)

Daniel Schindler

Nathan Tomsheck

Courses and productions at the Harper Joy Theater provide students with rigorous training in the practical skills, historical context, and cultural background of the dramatic arts. The skills they acquire will allow them to succeed in many diverse areas of Theater and dance. All classes without stated prerequisite or an indicated level of difficulty are recommended to any student, regardless of class standing.

## **Mission Statement**

The Department of Theater and Dance at Whitman College is a diverse community of empathetic artists and scholars. We engage critically and artistically to explore the canons of live performance in its many facets. Our students work collaboratively with the faculty and guest artists to investigate the process of art-making and challenge us to expand our capacity for, and ideas of, creative expression.

**Learning Goals:** Upon graduation, a student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of Theater and dance as a collaborative artistic discipline.
- Demonstrate knowledge of ways in which Theater and dance histories, contexts, and canons are relevant and manifest in contemporary works of performance.
- Demonstrate the practical and intellectual skills necessary to articulate oneself in a performance context.
- Critically analyze artistic work.

## **The Theater major:**

- 36 Credits
- Required Courses
  - THDN 125 or 130; and 490
  - Two courses in production methods
    - THDN 246 and 245 or 277
  - Four courses of practice from THDN 248, 332, or 348
    - At least two must be 248 or 348
  - One course in theater design from THDN 345, 360, 366, or 378
  - Four courses in history/literature, theory, and culture from THDN 210, 235, 357, 372, 373, 377
- Other notes
  - Students majoring or minoring in Theater and minoring in Dance may not use the same courses to fulfill requirements
  - No courses may be taken P-D-F
- Senior Requirements
  - THDN 490
    - Either a project in production or written research project
  - Oral thesis defense on the senior project
- Honors
  - Students submit a Honors in Major Study Application to their department
  - Students must submit a proposal for their thesis or project

- Must be submitted within the first six weeks of the two-semester period in which student is eligible
- Accumulated at least 87 credits
- Completed two semesters of residency at Whitman.
- Cumulative GPA of at least 3.300 on all credits earned at Whitman College
- Major GPA of at least 3.500
- Complete a written thesis or research project prepared exclusively for the satisfaction of this program
- Earn a grade of at least A- on the honors thesis or project and the honors thesis course.
- Pass the senior assessment with distinction
- The department will submit the Honors applications to the Registrar's Office of students pursuing Honors by the specified deadline
- The department submit "Senior Assessment/Major Study Certificate" to the Registrar's Office no later the Reading Day
- An acceptable digital copy of the Honors Thesis must be submitted to Penrose Library no later than Reading Day

#### **The Theater minor:**

- 20 Credits
- Required Courses
  - One course in introductory studies from THDN 125 or 130
  - One course in production methods from THDN 245, 246, or 277
  - Three courses in history/literature, theory, and culture from THDN 210, 235, 357, 372, 373, 377
  - Four courses of practice from THDN 248, 332, or 348
    - at least 2 of these courses must be from 248 or 348
- Other notes
  - Students minoring in Theater and minoring in Dance may not use the same courses to fulfill requirements
  - No courses may be taken P-D-F

#### **The Dance minor:**

- 15 Credits
- Required Courses
  - Two courses in history and theory from:
    - THDN 118
    - THDN 232 with associated practicum 130 or 230 or 325
    - THDN 233 with associated practicum 131 or 231 or 325
    - THDN 250 with associated practicum 251
    - THDN 357
  - One course in Dance composition THDN 234
  - One course in performance THDN 332
  - Additional credits from THDN 218, 230, 231, 245, 246, 248, 325, 332, or 345
- Other notes
  - Students minoring in Dance and minoring in Theater may not use the same courses to fulfill requirements
  - No courses may be taken P-D-F

### **107 Introduction to the Theater**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**3 credits**

Theater is a global revolutionary force with roots buried deeper than our recorded history. This class will expose students to the many diverse modes in which performance takes place around the world and examine them in the historic context of Theater and the evolving ideas of art and human experience. We will explore how the directors, actors, designers, and technicians who work in this medium generate their work. Students will create their own live

performance projects. Using the Harper Joy Theater production season as a laboratory, students will see the plays from backstage and front, and critically evaluate the work. Open to all students.

### **118 Dance in Popular Media**

**Fall** **Archibald** **3 credits**

What rhetorics, possibilities, and complexities are produced through the spectacles of dancing bodies on film and in popular media? This course will be taught from the perspective of dance studies to examine the mass appeal of dance in film and popular media and the questions these media elicit about authorship and ownership, circulations and communities, embodiment, gaze, appropriation, and the capacities of choreography. Content includes early Hollywood Backstage Musicals, contemporary American blockbuster movies, Bollywood movies, music videos, viral videos, and more. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor.

### **125 Beginning Acting I**

**Fall, Spring** **Fall: Hope; Spring: Higgin-Houser** **3 credits**

Designed to help the student to realize his/her potential as an actor and to help him/her find a systematic way of approaching a role. Emphasis on concentration, imagination, movement, working in terms of objectives and responding to others. Students engage in acting exercises, scene work and assigned reading. Open only to first-year students and sophomores.

### **126 Beginning Acting II**

**Spring** **Hope** **3 credits**

A continuation of Theater 125. Students build on the acting fundamentals they learned in Beginning Acting I. Includes additional scene work, acting exercises, and assigned reading. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 125.

### **130 Beginning Modern Dance Practicum**

**Fall, Spring** **de Grasse** **2 credits**

This course will focus on dance as an art form whose primary medium, and source, is the human body. Generally, class will begin with a warm-up to stretch, strengthen, and engage one's center and progress to longer combinations that emphasize relationships to gravity, falling, and movement of the spine. Open to all students. *Pre- or corequisite:* THDN 232.

### **131 Beginning Ballet Practicum**

**Fall** **Fall: de Grasse; Spring: Archibald** **2 credits**

In this dance course, students will develop basic ballet skills, with emphasis on dynamic postural alignment, anatomical functionality, and building movement vocabulary. Open to all students. *Pre- or corequisite:* THDN 233.

### **210 World Theater**

**Spring** **Schindler** **4 credits**

This course explores the rich diversity of performative traditions found throughout the non-western world. It examines a wide range of theatrical experiences within distinct cultural and geographical contexts and connects those performances to specific social and historical aspects of each society. Students will gain a much broader understanding of Theater and how it can be used to enhance the cultural narrative of different cultures.

### **211 Stage Electronics**

**Not offered 2023-24** **3 credits**

This course will introduce students to the basics of lighting and sound technology in the world of performance. It will cover: basic lighting and sound equipment for stage, electrical theory, common terminology, electrical safety and wiring, dimming, patching, hanging & focus of lights instrument, sound system setup for performance; including speaker and microphone placement, board programming & operation, and reading technical paperwork. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major.

**215 Stage Management****Not offered 2023-24****3 credits**

This course will introduce students to the basic skills of a stage manager. These include communication, organization, collaboration, and Theater & personnel management. Most importantly, students will learn the responsibilities that a stage manager takes on when guiding a show through all of the various phases of production. Students will learn skills relating to the creation of paperwork for all phases of a production, how to build and maintain a prompt book, how to read technical drawings, proper audition and rehearsal processes, proper show calling techniques, and how to manage schedules and production communication. They will learn to effectively aid in communication within the production team, organize the production process from auditions through closing, and archive the show.

**218 Embodied Art Practice: An Introduction to Somatics****Fall****Archibald****2 credits**

Somatics are methods for being in the world with enhanced bodily awareness. For artists and performers alike, knowing oneself from the inside out fosters the imagination and one's ability to be spontaneous and self-reflective. Through guided movement, writing, drawing, and performance exercises, this class surveys practices of embodiment and their relationship to the creative process. Lessons are tailored toward students of dance, Theater, and visual arts, but open to students across campus. Outside reading and writing assignments are included. No dance experience is necessary.

**225 Acting: Styles****Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

How do we prepare and perform roles from plays set outside of our own time? Embracing research as a central tenant of our work, we will become familiar with acting in plays from different historical periods. By employing a variety of approaches to acting aimed at unlocking the meaning and power in verse and prose, we will become increasingly adept at memorizing and preparing on our own before entering the rehearsal room. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 126 or consent of instructor.

**230 Intermediate Modern Dance Practicum****Spring****de Grasse****2 credits**

This course builds on foundational experiences in modern dance technique using an eclectic approach. Classes will begin with a warm-up using verbal and visual imagery, as well as anatomical directives. Students will then move developmentally to strengthen and explore the architecture of their bodies. Students will apply anatomical clarity, varying energies, and varying ways of inhabiting their bodies in combinations that move through space while investigating performance presence and expressiveness. *Pre- or corequisite:* THDN 232 and consent from the instructor.

**231 Intermediate Ballet Practicum****Spring****Archibald****2 credits**

This course builds on foundational experiences in ballet technique. The course focuses on improving anatomical clarity and kinesthetic precision as well as developing presence and expressiveness for performance. May be repeated for credit. *Pre- or corequisite:* THDN 233.

**232 Modern Dance Lecture: Critical Moves****Fall, Spring****de Grasse****1 credit**

This companion lecture course for modern dance practicums engages modern dance's complex history which embraces resistance and diasporic form yet draws heavily from orientalist practices and has been complicit in state propaganda. The course will engage modern dance as a radical solo practice, including tensions between narrative and abstraction throughout the twentieth century. Artists covered may include Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman, Martha Graham, Katherine Dunham, José Limón, Alvin Ailey, Merce Cunningham, and Judson Dance Theater, as



have a basic understanding of the skills involved in theatrical design, the ability analyze a design with a critical and artistic eye, and an understanding of the collaborative process which occurs during a theatrical production.

**248 Production Practicum**

**Fall, Spring**

**Chvatal, Tomshek**

**1 -2 credit**

Practical application of Theater production including, but not limited to, activities related to scenery, lighting, costumes, props and sound. Graded credit/no credit. Open to all students. May be repeated for credit. Course exempted from 18-credit per semester enrollment limitation. Activity credit limitation applies. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor

**249 Stage Properties: Design & Construction**

**Spring**

**Tomshek**

**3 credits**

This project-based course will explore the processes a Properties Master goes through when researching and acquiring properties for use in theatrical production. The course will also explore methods for creating stage properties including sculpting, carving and casting techniques. When appropriate, the course will include practical assignments related to the semester's production(s).

**250 Hip Hop Culture**

**Spring**

**de Grasse**

**3 credits**

Hip Hop Culture is taught from a dance perspective, and includes the context of West Coast street styles and their concomitant sub-cultures, including Popping, Animation, Krump, C-walk, and others. The course covers some basics of U.S. History/African American U.S. History, focusing on sharecropping and the Great Migration, as well as on conditions which contributed to the formation of "ghettos" in The South Bronx of New York City, and the Watts and Compton neighborhoods of Los Angeles. The course traces Hip Hop culture to African-diasporic traditions, practices, and forms which persisted throughout that history. Students will engage with the contemporary expression of those traditions and practices in the contrasting landscapes of Hip Hop culture and Hip Hop cultural production. *Co-requisite:* Theater and Dance 251 if offered.

**251 Hip Hop Culture Practicum**

**Spring**

**de Grasse**

**1 credit**

This course builds on foundational experiences in Hip Hop Culture. *Co-requisite:* Theater and Dance 250.

**259 Voice and Movement for the Actor**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

A physical approach to acting, focusing on the kinesthetic and vocal development of the actor. Through performance techniques including Viewpoints, and Michael Chekhov technique, this course is designed to increase the students' access to their physical instruments, and their ability to articulate themselves on stage. Students create original work devised through the acting process. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 125 or consent of instructor.

**269 Performance Ensemble**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course focuses on the practical application of performance techniques from Theater 259, honing skills toward creating actor-generated material. Through composition, improvisation, and character study, the class will develop a physical approach to the craft of acting, and work as an ensemble to create an original performance. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 259.

**277 Costume Construction Techniques**

**Fall**

**Chvatal**

**3 credits**

An introduction to Theater costume construction through hands-on projects tailored to the student's skill level. Emphasis is placed on the techniques necessary for creating costumes and includes hand sewing and machine sewing from commercial patterns with an introduction to costume design principles.

## **281, 282 Special Topics**

### **1-4 credits**

Designed to permit close study of particular areas of Theater and Dance not covered in the regular curriculum. Any current offerings follow.

### **281 ST: Movement as Culture: Dances from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Diaspora**

**Spring**

**De La Cruz**

**4 credits**

The course examines how various people and groups throughout the world use dance to (re)present highly politicized (gendered, raced, classed, national and transnational, diasporic, subcultural, intersecting, and hybrid) identities. Through an engagement with performance research, arts criticism, films and videos, music, images, and first-person accounts by performers, our course materials address the intersections of dance and performance with gender, religion, and culture in everyday life, where dance is a space to enact, contest, and reimagine how and where bodies are used, interpreted, and located. This course will be of interest to students wanting to read in Dance and Performance Studies, Gender Studies, Anthropology, Post-Colonial/Decolonial Studies and Performance Ethnography focused on dance and music from the Arab world. Some themes explored are Orientalism, authenticity, objectification, the colonial gaze, the “folk” as a construct, danced feminisms, innovation versus tradition, virtuosity in non-western contexts, cultural appropriation, and sexuality in performance. The course comprises a broad survey of dance forms from the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey (MENAT) as well as the diasporic and hybrid forms of these dances found in the US. While we will learn some social dances from the region, as part of their study, no dance experience is required. May be elected as Anthropology 246. Distribution area: cultural pluralism or fine arts or social sciences.

### **300 Acting: Contemporary Scene Study**

**Spring**

**Staff**

**4 credits**

The course will develop the technical skills and the imaginative and intellectual facility required for in depth scene study. The focus of the course will be on issues of characterization, textual analysis, emotional depth, thorough preparation, and creative collaboration. Improvisation and other exercises will be employed in conjunction with scene work. The dramatic texts explored in the course will be drawn from the early 20th century to the present. Students will be expected to have had previous acting or performance experience. *Prerequisite:* one of the following courses: Theater and Dance 225, 259, or 269 or consent of instructor.

### **320 Directing for the Theater**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course explores the preparation and application of the Director’s role in the Theater as both interpreter of dramatic text and generator/devisor of original performance material. This is a practice-based course in which students will work with performers to stage dramatic texts and create devised performance projects. Performance work will be supplemented with readings and discussion on relevant theorists and practitioners. *Prerequisite:* one of the following: Theater and Dance 225, 259, or 269, or consent of instructor.

### **325 Advanced Contemporary Dance Practicum**

**Fall**

**Archibald**

**2 credits**

This dance course uses an eclectic approach to emphasize individual artistry and performance technique. Through destabilizing hierarchies within dance training and investigating aesthetic values of different forms, we will increase the subtlety, generosity, and expansiveness in each individual’s range in regards to phrasing, dynamic shifts, intention, and focus. Students will integrate their skills from various physical practices to find their own ways of inhabiting and elaborating technically challenging contemporary material. *Pre- or corequisite:* THDN 232 or 233 or 250 or consent of the instructor.

### **330 Playwriting/Writing Performance**

**Fall**

**Higgin-Houser**

**4 credits**

This course follows a workshop format, exploring writing for the stage through practice, analysis, and discussion. Students will be introduced to the fundamentals of playwriting, including action, character, structure, and dialogue, as well as the four engines of storytelling, and will put these lessons into immediate use with weekly playwriting assignments. Over the course of the semester, students will generate a portfolio of new works, including short plays and audio dramas, culminating in the creation of a one-act play. In parallel, students will learn best practices in giving and receiving constructive dramaturgical feedback in a supportive, creative environment. Note: enrollment in Playwriting is required for any student wishing to submit a play for consideration in the Spring Student One-Act Festival. Distribution area: fine arts or humanities.

### **332 Rehearsal and Performance**

**Fall, Spring**

**Hope**

**1 credit**

Rehearsal and performance by students in major productions. Course exempted from 18-credit per semester enrollment limitation. Activity credit limitation applies. May be repeated for not more than two credits per semester. Graded credit/no credit. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

### **340 Advanced Technical Production**

**3 credits**

Advanced Technical Production is a rotating topics course that will continue to explore the principles, theories and skills used in technical Theater productions introduced in Theater and Dance 245 and/or Theater and Dance 277. Students will develop their technical design abilities and study advanced construction techniques. May be repeated for credit. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 245, 277 or consent of instructor. Any current offerings follow.

### **345 Lighting Design for the Theater**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

Lighting designers speak with electricity and luminescence. The ability to see performers is merely the beginning. This class will allow students to work with the latest lighting equipment to explore vocabularies of color, angle, intensity, and time. We will investigate how conceptual ideas drawn from the scripted page translate into practical equipment choices, design of lighting rigs, and computer control systems. Working on productions in the Harper Joy Theater, students will gain practical professional level experience. Through projects, they will learn graphic standards and formal methods for communicating technical information to professional crews. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 246.

### **348 Advanced Play Production**

**Fall, Spring**

**Staff**

**1 credit**

This course is designed for students who are engaged on Theater productions that require an advanced level of knowledge, responsibility, and self-direction. These may include, but are not limited to, stage management, theatrical design, wardrobe supervision, props master, master electrician, scenic charge painter, or other positions as designated by the faculty. May be repeated for credit. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 248 or previous experience.

### **357 Theory and Performance**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

What theories have inspired contemporary avant-garde Theater, installation and performance art, tanz-Theater, experimental video/film, and new media? In this interdisciplinary course, we will chart the evolution of performance theory from the writings of Bertolt Brecht to the present day. We will explore how artists have embraced and challenged these emerging forms, and examine seminal works from each genre in their historical, political, and social contexts. Designed to bring students from a variety of disciplines (art, art history, Theater, dance, film, and video, etc.) into a collaborative forum; coursework will include outside readings, in-class screenings, class discussions, and short essays, as well as group and individual projects. May be elected as Art History 237.



### **360 Digital Media Design for Theater**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

The use of digital media technologies has grown exponentially in modern theatrical design in the past decades as have the availability, accessibility, and affordability of these technologies. This course will cover aspects of both sound and projection design used in live performance. It will connect the conceptual, collaborative nature of theatrical design, with the skills of content creation, and the technical knowledge necessary to use these systems. It will introduce students to a variety of hardware and software tools, including emerging technologies, that allow designers to create striking imagery and aural affects which support live performance storytelling in immersive environments. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major or minor. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 246 or consent of instructor.

### **366 Scenic Design for the Theater**

**Spring**

**Schindler**

**4 credits**

Theater scenic designers create sophisticated worlds on their studio table that are enlarged into full-scale environments by armies of carpenters, painters, and fabricators. This class explores how designers formulate ideas based on scripted words and evolve them into three-dimensional landscapes. Students will learn basic drawing techniques and build scale models to express ideas drawn from their own imagination. Offered every third semester. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 246 or consent of instructor.

### **367 Scenic Painting**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course focuses on developing the basic skills of theatrical rendering and scenic painting including drawing, painting, layout techniques and interpreting scale renderings into full scale scenic art. Previous drawing and painting experience is not required. Offered every sixth semester.

### **372 Theater: Modern Europe**

**Not offered 2023-24**

**4 credits**

This course is a survey of the literature and history of the theater of Modern Europe. Students primarily examine plays through the lens of the following movements: Naturalism, Realism, the Historical Avant-Garde, Modernism, and Postmodernism. Students will become aware of changes in social, political, and religious attitudes and the influence of these changes on the form and content of plays. Students will become aware of technological advances and their effects on theater design and technical practice. We will consider trends in acting, directing, audiences, and theory. We will seek to identify the influence of these movements and developments on contemporary theater practice. Dramatists and theorists to be studied may include Büchner, Zola, Ibsen, Jarry, Strindberg, Chekhov, Stanislavsky, Pirandello, Brecht, Genet, Artaud, Beckett, Esslin, Pinter, Müller, Churchill, Jameson, and Lehmann.

### **373 Theater: United States**

**Fall**

**Hope**

**4 credits**

This is a survey course of the literature and history of the theater of the United States. Students will become aware of social, political, and cultural attitudes and contexts, and the expression of these attitudes in the form and content of plays and play production. Students will become aware of a variety of impulses that have animated American theater in areas of playwriting, performance, and production. Students will seek to imagine the plays in their historical moment as well as in contemporary iterations. Writers may include Boucicault, Glaspell, O'Neill, Treadwell, Williams, Miller, Baraka/Jones, Valdez, Wilson, Hwang, Kushner, Fornés, Deavere Smith, Parks, Brustein.

### **377 Ancient Theater**

**Spring**

**Hope**

**4 credits**

The origin and development of ancient Theater, especially of Greek tragedy, through a close reading of ancient plays in English translation. In addition to ancient plays, we will read modern critical responses to those plays. May be elected as Classics 377. Open to all students. Offered in alternate years.

**378 Costume Design for the Theater****Spring****Chvatal****4 credits**

Through the use of the elements of design, Costume Designers support the production concept and assist the actor in communicating with the audience. We will examine costume design through the process of designing costumes for several scripts, as well as through in class discussions. The course will include an introduction to script analysis, period research, and rendering techniques for the costume designer. *Prerequisite:* Theater and Dance 246.

**381-383 Special Topics****1-4 credits**

Designed to permit close study of particular areas of Theater and Dance not covered in the regular curriculum. Any current offerings follow.

**466 Director in the Theater II****Not offered 2023-24****4 credits**

Based on an apprenticeship model, this course serves as a continuing exploration of the directing process. The requirements include acting as assistant director for a faculty-directed season production from research through performance and completing an independent directing project. The latter might be for Lunchbox Theater, the Student One-Act Play Contest, a high school or community Theater, or another venue approved by the instructor. *Prerequisites:* Theater and Dance 320 and consent of instructor.

**481, 482 Independent Study****Fall, Spring****Staff****1-4 credits**

Readings or a project in Theater or Dance not covered in regular courses. The student must submit a detailed proposal to the instructor in the semester preceding the anticipated study. The student is responsible for any expenses incurred in completing the project. *Prerequisites:* junior or senior standing, and consent of instructor.

**490 Senior Project****Fall, Spring****Staff****3 credits**

Involves the development and execution of a project reflecting the student's primary area of Theater study. The student works closely with a faculty project advisor during the process. The final project is evaluated by that advisor and two other faculty members. This course is limited to and required of all senior Theater majors. *Prerequisites:* previous coursework in the area of study and department approval. May be taken during the first or second semester of the senior year.

**498 Honors Thesis****Fall, Spring****Staff****3 credits**

Preparation of undergraduate thesis. Required of and open only to senior honors candidates in Theater. *Prerequisite:* admission to honors candidacy.