Theater and Performance Studies

The master's program in Theater and Performance Studies at Washington University in St. Louis is one of the strongest programs of its kind. Students are offered rigorous scholarly training, opportunities to meet and work with visiting scholars and artists, and support in developing their own independent research projects, all within a collaborative, collegial environment that prizes critical thinking and creative practice.

Our students enroll in small, intensive seminars in theater history and performance theory as well as studio courses in directing, playwriting and theatre for social change. There are ample opportunities for interdisciplinary study, and we have strong relationships with affiliate faculty in allied departments and programs, including Film and Media Studies, English, Music, Comparative Literature, African and African-American Studies, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Our faculty has been recognized with numerous accolades for both their artistic and scholarly work, and the small size of each admitted class allows for individual attention and one-on-one mentorship. We routinely place our graduates in top PhD programs in the field, including those at Brown, Stanford, Northwestern, University of California San Diego, and University of Minnesota. Other graduates have pursued careers in the arts, social justice work and education. We invite students who have studied theater and performance as undergraduates as well as students who are following new paths in their scholarship to learn more about our program.

Contact: Paige McGinley
Phone: 314-935-6106
Email: pmcginley@wustl.edu
Website: http://pad.artsci.wustl.edu/graduate

Faculty

Professors

Robert Henke
PhD, University of California, Berkeley
Ancient and Renaissance Theater and Performance, Comparative Literature, Dramatic Theory

Henry I. Schvey
PhD, Indiana University
Modern American and European Drama, Shakespeare in Production, Expressionism and the Arts, Tennessee Williams

Associate Professors

Pannill Camp
PhD, Brown University
18th-Century French Theater, Dramatic Theory, Theater Architecture

Paige McGinley
PhD, Brown University
20th-Century Theater and Performance; Race, Ethnicity and Performance; American Studies

Julia Walker
PhD, Duke University
Theatrical Modernism, Performance Theory, History of Acting

Assistant Professors

Joanna Dee Das (on sabbatical 2019-20)
PhD, Columbia University
Global Dance History & Theory, Politics of Performance, African Diasporic Dance, Musical Theater, Cultural Policy

Rhaisa Williams
PhD, Northwestern University
Performance theory; African-American studies; gender; archival studies

Teaching Professors

Robert Mark Morgan
MFA, San Diego State University
Scenic Design

Andrea Urice
MFA, University of Virginia
Directing, Acting, Creative Studies

Professors of Practice

Christine Knoblauch-O’Neal
PhD, Texas Women's University
Ballet, Applied Anatomy, Musical Theater, Performance Studies

David Marchant
MFA, University of Iowa
Modern Dance, Composition, Improvisation, Alexander Technique, Somatic Studies

Jeffery Matthews
MFA, Virginia Commonwealth University
Acting, Directing, Voice and Speech
I. Required courses: 15 units (5 courses)

1. L15 Drama 5101, Introduction to Graduate Study. A general introduction to advanced scholarship in theater and performance studies, this course is designed to familiarize first-year graduate students with expectations for advanced research and professional writing. It is also intended to provide an overview of theater and performances studies, focusing on the relationship between the two scholarly domains, major works of scholarship that have defined the field, and current debates redrawing its contours.

2. L15 Drama 449, Seminar in Dramatic Theory. An in-depth exploration of core works of dramatic theory from the ancient world to the present, this course focuses on texts that enunciate what theater is, has been and should be. Readings address theater’s role in society, the anti-theatrical prejudice, the aesthetic pleasures of drama and theater, theater as a means of educating the citizen, and the relationship between dramatic form and social and political revolution.

3. L15 Drama 497, Performance Theory. This course introduces students to contemporary theories of performance, with “performance” understood as both metaphor and event. From a multidisciplinary perspective, students will consider how cultures produce meanings — and, indeed, perform those meanings — to create and/or disrupt their own social coherence. Theorists studied include J.L. Austin, Victor Turner, Erving Goffman and Judith Butler.

4. Theater/Performance History. One 400- or 500-level historically-based seminar from a list of approved courses taught within the Performing Arts Department. (Topics vary by semester.)

5. Theater Practice. At least one (but no more than three) 400- or 500-level course(s) in theater practice: dramaturgy, directing, playwriting or design. Students may meet this requirement with L15 Drama 506 Problems in Contemporary Arts Practice Research.

II. Electives: 18 units (6 courses)

Students are invited to develop a broad-based or a specialized curriculum in theater and performance studies, choosing courses from within the Performing Arts Department (including Dance) or as many as four courses (12 units) from without. The program works closely with faculty affiliates in other departments, including Anthropology; Classics; English (and non-Anglophone languages and literatures); Film and Media Studies; Music; Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; and the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Art.

III. Master’s Research (3 units)

The capstone to the master’s degree is the completion of an essay of publishable length (typically 25 double-spaced pages) and quality. This essay is based on a seminar paper written during the student’s first three semesters in the program, and it
is extensively revised and expanded under the guidance of an adviser. After the revised seminar paper has been submitted to and approved by the director of graduate studies, the student will meet with a committee of three faculty members for an oral exam.

**Accelerated Master of Arts in Theater and Performance Studies**

This program allows qualified Washington University undergraduates to complete a Master of Arts (AM) degree in a one-year accelerated program after earning the Bachelor of Arts (AB) degree in drama. The undergraduate and graduate degrees are awarded sequentially, if approved, with admission to the Accelerated AM program occurring during the fall semester after completion of the AB degree during the preceding December, May or August. Applications may be submitted at any time during the student’s senior year through August 1, and GRE tests are not required. The program is available only to senior students and only for continuous enrollment the next year. There is no option for deferred admission.

The requirements for the Accelerated AM are identical to those for the traditional AM, as detailed above. To complete the AM in one year, students may apply five undergraduate courses at the 400 level or above (a maximum of 16 units) toward the master’s degree. Undergraduate courses must be acceptable to the Director of Graduate Studies, and they must be completed with a final grade of B or higher.

Interested students should contact the Director of Graduate Studies, Paige McGinley (pmcginley@wustl.edu), during their sophomore or junior year for additional information and application instructions.