The senior thesis project will be, for most of you, the largest and most ambitious work you have done so far in your time at Harvard; plan early, set aside time, and save your energy so as to get the most out of it. Meet regularly with your advisor(s) throughout the months you are engaged in your research, writing, and rehearsing. Seek advice from anyone interested in what you are doing, but make the work your own.

**TIMELINE**

**Junior Year**
- **December:** Mandatory information session on the project prospectus.
- **February:** Second mandatory working session on the project prospectus.
- **Thursday before Spring Break by 5:00 pm:** Thesis prospectus due via email to tdm@fas.harvard.edu
- **Late March/Early April (April 6, 2020):** Students receive prospectus feedback from faculty
- **Late April (April 15, 2020):** Final revised prospectus due
- **April 26, 2020:** Students receive final thesis notification

**Senior Year**
- **Day After Fall Course Registration Deadline:** One-page summary of thesis progress due to DUS
- **December 1:** Student, advisor, and evaluator progress conference completed
- **Monday of the Second Week of Spring Classes:** Venue and dates for Spring Productions due.
- **Thursday before Spring Break by 5pm:** Critical theses due
- **April 12, 2021, 12:00pm:** Critical reflections on Spring Creative Theses due.

**FARKAS HALL THESIS FESTIVAL**

New in AY 2020-2021: This year three production-based creative thesis projects will be performed in repertory as part of TDM’s Farkas Hall Thesis Festival. The Festival performance dates are Thursday, April 1-Sunday April 4, 2021. Projects will be selected for the festival based on their compatibility with the Festival/Repertory structure — that is, they must 1.) be non-site specific, 2.) be able to share space and technical resources, and 3.) be designed to facilitate a quick turnaround of the theater between shows.

Production based thesis projects that are not part of this repertory structure will be performed at alternative venues on Spring dates that may coincide with the Festival, but may also be more freely determined by thesis students.

Students producing playwriting theses, and design students holding design presentations or lecture demonstrations, may also elect to hold their capstone events as part of this festival.

**THESIS PROSPECTUS GUIDELINES**

**Critical Thesis:** Writing a senior thesis proposal is the first and perhaps the most important step in formulating your senior thesis project. The proposal should define carefully the parameters of your field of exploration and inquiry and should consist of three parts: 1) a tentative thesis title; 2) a prose description of approximately 750 words outlining your proposed topic; and 3) an annotated bibliography listing at least five-ten works that are relative to your topic.

**Creative Thesis:** Some students may choose to present a performance or design-based thesis project. Pursuing a thesis in this area also requires a proposal which should similarly define the parameters of your field of exploration and inquiry and should consist of five parts: 1) a tentative thesis title; 2) a prose description of approximately 750 words outlining your proposed topic; 3) an annotated bibliography listing at least five-ten works that are relative to your topic. It should be drawn up in full consultation with the thesis advisor; 4) a performance project outline including production team members and a tentative production calendar; and 5) an estimated budget.
For any thesis in TDM, the following criteria must be met:

**Feasibility:** The proposed project should responsibly account for how the work will be created and produced in the allotted time period, and the way in which the work will be scalable, given the available administrative, financial, and technical support and resources.

**Precision and specificity:** The conceptual framework of the proposal should be clear and reflect knowledge of and research in the genre/discipline/mode of practice or scholarship.

**Progress in the concentration:** The committee will take the proposer’s experience, and history in the concentration, into account inclusive of: classes taken in TDM or in allied fields, success in coursework, professionalism, and capacity for generous collaboration.

**Relevance:** Recognition of the personal stake in the work, how the project fits in a greater social context, and its prospective audiences.

### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A THESIS PROSPECTUS

#### READ AND REFLECT:

It can be difficult at the outset to decide the focus of your thesis work, so take time to think about what most interests you. You may wish to reflect on past projects and papers. What texts/scripts have you found most provocative and engaging over the past three years? Which courses have served as your intellectual touchstones? Re-read works you already know well; read the plays and books that you’ve been meaning to read for years but haven’t, if they tie in to your field of interest. Look back at critical and theoretical texts that have opened up new fields of inquiry for you. Finally, talk with faculty members about your interests and ideas. Use them to help you formulate your thoughts, define an area of study, and determine interesting texts to consider for your project.

#### ASK A QUESTION:

One of the most productive ways to formulate a thesis project is to ask a question and then attempt to answer it. Sometimes the simplest questions are the most productive. Tease out the various implications and ramifications of the question. Try it out on different texts/plays. You do not need to know the answer to the question, or even have a working hypothesis, at the outset of the project. But make sure you find the question interesting, and rich and provocative enough to sustain you through seven months of reading, thinking, and writing.

#### BE SPECIFIC:

Your proposal should specify which works you intend to examine in your thesis. There is no set or recommended limit to the number of works to analyze or engage. The important thing to remember is that you should read closely whatever work(s) you choose to investigate and analyze. Engage your works carefully as a means of answering the questions you have asked.

### THESIS ADVISEMENT

Student will work closely with their advisor throughout the process. An advisor will offer feedback and assess a student’s ability to develop material throughout the entire creative or scholarly process, including the iterative and generative stages, editing processes, and the final versions of their thesis project. The advisor will submit a grade and comments about the students work and process upon completion of the final presentation.

### CRITICAL THESIS DETAILS

TDM students may write a substantial analytical essay that offers an interpretive, historical, or theoretical perspective on any topic in theater, dance, media, or performance broadly construed. Work on the thesis includes reading widely in relevant primary and secondary sources so as to develop an argument in close dialogue with other scholarship. Most theses consist of two or three chapters, with a significant introduction, a brief conclusion, and a bibliography.

Critical theses will normally be in the range of 12,000-15,000 words, not including appendices, footnotes, bibliography, etc. Please proofread your entire document.

Three copies of your thesis are due in the TDM Administrator’s office on the Thursday before Spring Break. Each copy of the thesis should be submitted in a folder without staples, clips, or any other...
The goal is to have the director take concrete steps forward in directing the work to convey the world the director is trying to create. The overall visceral impact of the use of set, lights, sound, costumes, staging; the storytelling; and how all of these elements are used to evaluators the aesthetic/style the director plans to pursue. Some of the elements to be assessed by faculty drama, comedy, non

director's abilities in the directorial areas of most interest to the student (i.e., imagistic theater, “straight” A directing thesis

Guidelines for playwright, in consultation with the TDM Artistic Producer, is responsible for engaging actors and a they will assess will include the language, characters, structure, and theatricality of the play. The significant changes to the script. Faculty evaluators must att

the beginning of the second semester, revised drafts, a workshop reading, and a final reading open to the public or invited guests. A workshop reading should be scheduled before the beginning of the second semester in order to give playwrights the opportunity to hear their scripts aloud, engage in dialogue about the play with faculty members and students, and subsequently make significant changes to the script. Faculty evaluators must attend the final reading. Some of the aspects they will assess will include the language, characters, structure, and theatricality of the play. The playwright, in consultation with the TDM Artistic Producer, is responsible for engaging actors and a director for the workshop and final readings.

Guidelines for Directors

A directing thesis culminates in a performance event conceived of by the director that stretches the director's abilities in the directorial areas of most interest to the student (i.e., imagistic theater, “straight” drama, comedy, non-verbal movement theater, high-tech stage language, etc.). Prior to the beginning of rehearsal, the work should include a written description (accompanied by visual and aural examples) of the aesthetic/style the director plans to pursue. Some of the elements to be assessed by faculty evaluators of the performance event itself will include: the performance values of the actors/dancers; the use of set, lights, sound, costumes, staging; the storytelling; and how all of these elements are used to convey the world the director is trying to create. The overall visceral impact of the performance event will also be assessed. The goal is to have the director take concrete steps forward in directing the work to

CREATIVE THESIS DETAILS

TDM students may propose to write a play, direct a play, create a devised piece, design for a play or devised work, choreograph a dance, act in a play or a devised solo work, or develop a dance performance to demonstrate accumulated knowledge in Theater, Dance & Media. (See guidelines below on each option). TDM concentrators may also petition to collaborate in a piece produced together; in these cases, collaborators must make it clear to their advisors and evaluators their specific contributions to the performance event. Each collaborator will have his or her own faculty advisor, but frequent meetings among all contributors will be expected. Depending on the date of performance, concentrators and advisors will create a concrete calendar by which specific goals will be completed.

Students presenting a creative thesis must also submit a critical reflection. This essay models the form of a critical essay. It can be framed as a series of interconnected remarks, but should develop a clear and coherent argument. It should be informed by an appropriate level of research and a relevant critical vocabulary. The essay reflects the student's understanding of both the topic/genre they have chosen to explore and the specific nature of the performing art form in which they work. Please see the appendix for more details on the essay.

Prerequisites: Students must have taken more than one course in any given practice-based subject area in order to pursue a creative thesis in any of the following fields.

Guidelines for Playwrights

A playwriting thesis culminates in the writing and reading of a full-length play that the student develops and revises over the course of the academic year. Students should work closely with their advisors to create a detailed schedule that includes deadlines for outlines, scene or act submissions, a first draft of the play (due no later than the beginning of the second semester), revised drafts, a workshop reading, and a final reading open to the public or invited guests. A workshop reading should be scheduled before the beginning of the second semester in order to give playwrights the opportunity to hear their scripts aloud, engage in dialogue about the play with faculty members and students, and subsequently make significant changes to the script. Faculty evaluators must attend the final reading. Some of the aspects they will assess will include the language, characters, structure, and theatricality of the play. The playwright, in consultation with the TDM Artistic Producer, is responsible for engaging actors and a director for the workshop and final readings.

Guidelines for Directors

A directing thesis culminates in a performance event conceived of by the director that stretches the director's abilities in the directorial areas of most interest to the student (i.e., imagistic theater, “straight” drama, comedy, non-verbal movement theater, high-tech stage language, etc.). Prior to the beginning of rehearsal, the work should include a written description (accompanied by visual and aural examples) of the aesthetic/style the director plans to pursue. Some of the elements to be assessed by faculty evaluators of the performance event itself will include: the performance values of the actors/dancers; the use of set, lights, sound, costumes, staging; the storytelling; and how all of these elements are used to convey the world the director is trying to create. The overall visceral impact of the performance event will also be assessed. The goal is to have the director take concrete steps forward in directing the work to
Guidelines for Designers

A design thesis may encompass set design, costume design, lighting design, sound design, video design and projection and installation design. A portfolio of the work, and other relevant documentation, must be submitted as a part of the thesis submission.

*These guidelines are under review and subject to revision.

Guidelines for Actors

An acting thesis will culminate in a performed event that explores and pushes the specific skills of the actor. The work should be aligned in both content and style with the actor's interests, and the execution of it should provide a rigorous challenge. Some of the elements assessed for the performance event created by the actor will include the use of voice, movement, physical command of the piece, explication of the text, depth of emotional range, believability, degree of specificity, and overall visceral impact of the performance. The goal is to have the actor take concrete steps forward in performance in an effort to create a piece as close to a professional level as possible. In addition to this primary component of performance.

Guidelines for Choreographers

A choreographic thesis is the authorship of an original, full-evening choreographic work (up to 60 minutes) culminating in a public presentation on campus. The final presentation of the work/works could take many forms. For example, it could be a proscenium-based piece (either a single work or a mixed program of several different pieces); an immersive site-specific work or dance installation; or a film that features choreographic discipline. The work should demonstrate strong compositional research and structure, thematic and dramaturgical development, and stage and/or site-specific design with a focus on purpose, form, and content. The work/works must demonstrate a clear vision, intention, and direction for costume, lighting, sound and program designs. The choreographic thesis must also cultivate artistic discernment, convey a storyline, and/or curate a cohesive set of figurative ideas; create a unified design for sound, costume, and performance environment; demonstrate effective dramaturgical development; select a fitting cast, artistic staff, designers and technical crew; and successfully direct and coach the cast. Students will be responsible for managing a consistent schedule of rehearsals conducive to the rigor involved in making a fully-realized choreographic work/works, and will be assessed on the extent to which they are able to actualize their choreographic vision.

Guidelines for Dancers

A dancer thesis is the presentation of a performance up to 30 minutes in length. This could be a single choreographic work, or a mixed program comprised of shorter works, that present a rigorous challenge for the dancer and demonstrate a command of a range and comprehension of techniques and styles as well as artistic interpretive ability. The program could involve several dancers, however it should feature the student who is submitting this as their thesis. Students can choreograph their own work for this thesis, though they will be assessed solely on their dancing. The final presentation of the work/works could take many forms. For example, it could be a proscenium-based program, an immersive site-specific work or dance installation, or a film that features the student's dancing. The work/works must demonstrate substantive rehearsal preparation, overall clear vision, intention, and precise reasoning for the selection of the work/works. The program should be designed as a cohesive whole, be it a single work or a group of pieces with a storyline, or work/works that create poetic or thematic continuity. The thesis should demonstrate the student's ability to cultivate artistic discernment; to make clear a specific narrative if the piece/pieces have a storyline or state of being in non-linear work/works; depth and nuance in technique and interpretative skills; objectively select work that demonstrates a substantive range of proficiency in dancing; where needed, successfully direct and coach the cast, and timely procurement of any choreographic or music licensing rights. Students will be responsible for managing a consistent schedule of rehearsals conducive to the rigor involved in making a fully-realized performance, showing or film program, and will be assessed on the extent to which they are able to actualize their vision which best highlights their dancing. For example, a student might select several works which collectively demonstrate distinctive musicality, qualitative and temporal scope, spoken text, and a legible range of artistic interpretation, techniques, and styles.
Appendix A
Critical Reflection Guidelines for Creative Thesis Projects

ESSAY (15-20 pages)
A creative senior thesis essay models the form of a critical essay. It can be framed as a series of interconnected remarks, but should develop a clear and coherent argument. It should be informed by an appropriate level of research and a relevant critical vocabulary. All quotations must be properly cited and all photos must be identified by source and credited.

The essay reflects the student's understanding of both the topic/genre they have chosen to explore and the specific nature of the performing art form in which they work. It should provide a rationale for aesthetic, dramaturgical, and interpretive choices, while shedding light on what the specific demands of this performance are conceptually, historically and artistically. In other words, the essay helps the reader-spectator situate the production:

Thematically
What are the dominant issues reflected in the themes and/or structure of the play/performance? The production should be considered as a site of questions pertaining to broader subject areas. Students are encouraged to consider the multiplicity of interpretive angles as well as to work with notions from other fields (e.g., philosophy, aesthetics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, gender studies, postcolonial and critical race theory, architecture, etc.).

Historically
What are the relevant parts of the historical context, sociopolitical parameters, and artistic background used in the play (at the time of its first production) and significant for the development of the project (today)? Are there a production history and/or a critical debate surrounding the work of the author, or this genre of performance? What do we want to be able to say in this production today?

Formally
What performance styles have made a significant impact on the creative process? How do they influence your work? Which visual and sound imagery orient the production? Which type of relationships (spatial, affective, reflective, ethical) have you tried to establish between the audience and the characters, between the audience and the performers, between the audience and the action?

CODA (2-4 pages)
A post-show reflection, including self-assessment.
How did your initial ideas find their way into the creative process, and how did the creative process displace and/or reconfigure your initial ideas? To which extent have the conceptual and practical frameworks coalesced? What are the limitations of the production and what adjustments do you think could be made?