Theatre Arts and Performance Studies

The Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies (TAPS) is the intellectual and artistic center for the aesthetic, historical, literary, practical, and theoretical explorations of performance in global perspective—drama, dance, speech, time-based art, and even performative “roles” in everyday life. The TAPS concentration offers three tracks with many points of overlap among them: Performance Studies, Theatre Arts, and Writing for Performance. Concentrators gain exposure to a broad spectrum of performance modes and methods—acting, directing, dance, and writing, and choose an avenue of focus among them. In addition, TAPS concentrators with an interest in socially engaged performance that tackles complex social issues may pursue the Engaged Scholars Program (https://www.brown.edu/academics/theatre-arts-performance-studies/undergraduate-program/engaged-scholars-program). Everyone graduates having studied craft, gained familiarity with history, and investigated the role of performance arts in culture.

Students who declared their concentration prior to fall 2019 can find their concentration requirements here: https://bulletin.brown.edu/archive/2018-19/the-college/concentrations/taps/

Theatre Arts Track

This concentration combines the study of dramatic literature, theatre history, performance theory, and studio work in the various theatre arts. All concentrators in Theatre Arts will gain practical experience through the study of acting and directing as well as in the technical production of plays, preparing students in the practical study of a cross-section of the vital aspects of theatre craft, including one class in either dance or speech. An essential aim of the concentration track is the engagement of students in performance procedures (acting, dancing, directing, choreography, design, playwriting, dramaturgy, etc.) in order to experience the inter-relationships among social contexts, dramatic texts and theatrical enactments. Along with practical study in craft, concentrators will graduate having studied theatre history and performance theory in global perspective. The study of theatre history provides a Theatre Arts concentrator with the necessary background to understand a variety of dramatic and theatrical forms. The study of performance theory enhances a student’s ability to ask fundamental questions about the role of theatre in social, political, cultural and cross-cultural arenas.

Students wishing to enroll as concentrators in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and take the Theatre Arts track should see the undergraduate concentration advisor. Participation in practical classes in modes of performance is also required.

Performance Studies Track

The Performance Studies track in the Theatre Arts and Performance Studies concentration offers a base for students interested in a variety of performance forms, performance media, or in intermedial art. A concentrator in this track will study the multiple modes in which live performance articulates culture, negotiates difference, constructs identity, and transmits collective historical traditions and memories. Because Performance Studies is not primarily invested in one performance mode over another (such as theatre or dance), a concentrator will gain exposure to a broad spectrum of performance modes. Studying ritual, play, game, festival, spectacle and a broad spectrum of “performance behaviors” under the umbrella of Performance Studies, a concentrator will graduate having investigated the role of performance in culture, including performative acts in everyday life, political enactment, ritual behavior, aesthetic or representational practices, and social role or the performance of subjectivity. The history of aesthetic performance practices (such as the histories of theatre and/or dance) will be an important part of this track, serving to ground inquiry into the broader spectrum of performance study. Students will draft their electives in this track from a wide selection of courses both within the Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and across the university. The study of performance behavior across mediums such as dance, theatre, ritual, and orature allows for geographic and historical flexibility as not all cultures parse theatre from dance, nor, historically, genres of religious or political ritual from genres of entertainment, play, or game. At least one of the ten required classes must show geographic or cultural breadth, and be approved as such by the undergraduate concentration advisor. Participation in practical classes in modes of performance is also required.

Students wishing to enroll as concentrators in Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and take the Performance Studies track should see the undergraduate Performance Studies track advisor, in order to discuss options that will best serve their interests.

TAPS 0700 Introduction to Theatre, Dance and Performance 1

Three of the following courses:

TAPS 1230 Global Theatre and Performance: Paleolithic to the Threshold of Modernity 3
TAPS 1240 Performance Historiography and Theatre History 3
TAPS 1250 Twentieth-Century Western Theatre and Performance 3
TAPS 1280Y Issues in Performance Studies 3

Two primarily academic courses from within the Department with Performance Studies content to be selected with your advisor, such as (but not limited to):

TAPS 0210 Dancing the African Diaspora 2
TAPS 0350 Black Performance Theory 2
TAPS 1280N New Theories for a Baroque Stage 2
TAPS 1380 Mise en Scene 2
TAPS 1425 Queer Performance 2
TAPS 1630 Performativity and the Body: Staging Gender, Staging Race 2
TAPS 1640 Theatre and Conquest in Greater Mexico: From Cortes to NAFTA 2
TAPS 1690 Performance, Art, and Everyday Life 2
TAPS 2120 Revolution as a Work of Art 2

Two full-credit courses based in performance craft in either Dance, Acting, Directing, Playwriting, Speech, Design, Literary Arts, Visual Arts, Music, or Africana Studies approved by the concentration advisor.

Two additional courses in the academic study of performance and performance culture(s) from either within TAPS or throughout the University in consultation with the advisor.

Total Credits 10
Dance Track

The Dance track of the Theatre Arts and Performance Studies concentration engages students in the study of dance, movement, and other forms of kinesthetic performance. Emphasizing dance technique, choreography/composition, and theories and histories of global forms of dance practice, concentrators in this track will study how multiple global dance forms articulate culture, negotiate difference, construct identity, and transmit collective historical traditions. Concentrators will receive instruction in composition and technique, and engage with dance, theatre, and performance production within the department to understand dance within a network of performance practices.

TAPS 0700 Introduction to Theatre, Dance and Performance 1

Critical Topics and Global Perspectives - three courses. Students should work with their advisor to ensure their courses offer theoretical and geographic breadth. Courses could include, for example:

- TAPS 0210 Dancing the African Diaspora
- TAPS 1230 Global Theatre and Performance: Paleolithic to the Threshold of Modernity
- TAPS 1240 Performance Historiography and Theatre History
- TAPS 1250 Twentieth-Century Western Theatre and Performance
- TAPS 1281W Artists and Scientists as Partners
- TAPS 1281Q Introduction to Dance Studies
- TAPS 1330 Dance History: The 20th Century
- TAPS 1425 Queer Performance
- TAPS 1630 Performativity and the Body: Staging Gender, Staging Race

Techniques of the Body - two courses selected in consultation with an advisor, such as the following:

- TAPS 0310 Beginning Modern Dance
- TAPS 0330 Mande Dance, Music and Culture
- TAPS 0930C The Actor’s Instrument: Stage Movement for Actors and Directors
- TAPS 1000 Intermediate Dance
- TAPS 1310 Advanced Modern Dance
- TAPS 1340 Dance Styles
- TAPS 1341 Introduction to Ballet

Directing/Compositional Strategies - two courses selected in consultation with an advisor from courses such as the following:

- TAPS 0320 Dance Composition
- TAPS 0360 Viewpoints Technique: The Moving Body in Relation to Time, Space, and Ensemble
- TAPS 1281E Directing Theory and Practice
- TAPS 1320 Choreography
- TAPS 1350 Dance Performance and Repertory & TAPS 1360 and Dance Performance and Repertory
- TAPS 1370 New Works/World Traditions

Design or Production - one course selected in consultation with an advisor from the following:

- TAPS 0250 Introduction to Technical Theatre and Production
- TAPS 0260 Stage Lighting
- TAPS 1100 Stage Management
- TAPS 1280F Introduction to Set Design
- TAPS 1281A Director/Designer Collaborative Studio
- TAPS 1281M Introduction to Costume Construction
- TAPS 1300 Advanced Set Design

One additional TAPS elective 1

Total Credits 10

For all concentrators, regardless of track:

In cases where dual concentrations are declared, the Department allows two courses to be counted toward both concentrations.

Capstone

Each student will complete a capstone project by the second semester of the senior year. The purpose of this capstone is to synthesize the core tenets of theory and practice in our concentration learning objectives and to reflect on that synthesis. The following projects, completed in semesters 6, 7, and 8, qualify as a capstone:

- A senior slot production and a 5-page capstone reflection
- An honors thesis
- An engaged scholarship project and a 5-page capstone reflection
- Extension of an existing curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular project from the junior year or first semester senior year and a 5-page capstone reflection.
- Revision or expansion of an existing final paper from any prior class and a 5-page capstone reflection.
- Major participation in a non-departmental campus production, performance or academic event (i.e., student produced work at PW, etc., an event at the Granoff, etc.) and a 5-page capstone reflection.

The 5-page reflection will contain the following:

- A brief description of the project completed, including details about who, when, and where the project took place (i.e., which class the paper was originally written for, where the show was produced, how you revised the paper, directed the production, etc.)
- An examination of how you used knowledge acquired in the concentration conceptualize, do, and complete the project with a frank assessment of the project’s success or ways in which it could have been improved. What new skills and research methods were gained and how will they be incorporated into your artistry.
- The DUS will assess the paper, approving it if all of the criteria above are met. While this is not a formal research paper, the reflection will be assessed for clarity, honesty and depth of self-reflection, and reflection on your experience of the TAPS curriculum.

Honors

The standard pattern above, plus an honors thesis course taken in Semester VII (TAPS 1990), the topic of which would be determined before Semester VII. Candidates for the honors program should have an outstanding academic record and must apply to the Department by April 1 of Semester VI. Proposals can be submitted electronically. Honors are awarded for theses in all concentration tracks. All theses are substantive pieces of writing. Some these are strictly academic. Other honors theses may include a creative component (such as the directing of a play, a solo performance piece, the study and performance of a major role, or the design of a production) but the thesis itself will be a critical, written work based in research relative to that artwork. For plays submitted for honors, the essay should accompany the play, reporting on the research and the process of writing, though the play itself counts as the substantive written work. See the Honors Advisor for more information about proposal and thesis guidelines.
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