

# Northwestern University

## School of Communication

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*MFA in Theatre Directing  
Graduate Handbook*

**Program Director: Jessica Thebus**

**For the academic year 2016-17  
Last revised: Fall 2016**

Department of Theatre  
MFA in Directing Program  
70 Arts Circle Drive  
Evanston, IL 60208

The MFA in Theatre Directing Graduate Handbook supplements The Graduate School's policies and procedures. For an overview of TSG policies and procedures, please go to <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/index.html>.

The following pages contain information about program-specific policies, procedures, and regulations. Students are subject to the regulations in effect at the time of matriculation. It is your responsibility as a student to be aware of these and The Graduate School's regulations.

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## Personnel

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Todd Rosenthal  
Mary Zimmerman

## **Production Facilities**

The School of Communication's classrooms, rehearsal and production facilities used by the MFA Directing Program are distributed across three buildings on the south end of Northwestern's Evanston campus. The building names and addresses are:

**Ryan Center for the Musical Arts**

70 Arts Circle Drive  
Evanston, IL 60208

**Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts**

1949 Campus Drive  
Evanston, IL 60208

**Fisk Hall**

1845 Campus Drive  
Evanston, IL 60208

The main office for the Department of Theatre is located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of **the Music and Comm Building**. Faculty offices are located on this floor, along with a conference room used by the program.

**Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts** contains multiple rehearsal spaces, the Wallis Theatre, used for 2<sup>nd</sup> year directing projects, and the mainstage Louis and Barber Theatres, used in 3<sup>rd</sup> year productions. Offices for shop heads and Production Management can be found here, as well as the costume, paint, scene, lighting, and props shops. Please note that the building is undergoing renovations throughout this academic year.

**Fisk Hall** contains the dedicated Directing MFA classroom and rehearsal space in Room 115. All first year projects perform in this space, as well as additional rehearsals and program classes. MFA Directors receive a key to this space and should not give it out to anyone outside the program. Fisk can be signed out for MFA Director use by contacting Bernice Powell or booking via 25 Live.

## Advising

Students will have a variety of advisors over the course of the three years, rather than one primary advisor. The Director of the Program (DP) and the Directing Program Mentor (DPM) are available throughout all three years to discuss student progress and work.

In the first year, students will have a guest mentor on their first year classroom projects, which take place in Fisk 115. This person functions as the primary advisor on the project, with support from the DP and DPM as needed.

In the second year, students will be assigned a primary faculty mentor for their second year show. This person will function as an outside eye in occasional rehearsals and during the tech process.

In the third year, students will be assigned a primary faculty mentor for their third year show. This person will fulfill a similar function as the faculty mentor in the second year.

## Required Courses

Courses for the MFA in Directing fall into the following categories:

- Seminars: students take 2 seminars in their first year focusing on the research and development of point of view
- Collaboration: students take a series of 3 classes with their MFA Designer cohort that focus on the research and development of a design process on a given show or shows.
- Storytelling: students take a series of courses designed to focus the attention on key principles of storytelling in different approaches to theatre-making. These include courses such as Adaptation, Toy Theatre, and Devising.
- Master classes: Students will take a variety of classes from core faculty and visiting professors that focus on an area of that faculty's specialty. These may include: Rehearsal Techniques, Narration, Political Theatre, Physical Theatre, etc.
- History and Criticism: Students are required to take 3 History or Lit/Crit classes. These may be assigned, such as History of Directing, or may be taken inside or outside the Department in areas like Performance Studies, English and Art History.
- Additional required classes: Students take additional core classes in areas like Text Analysis, or may be assigned courses such as a New Playwriting Development class with the RTVF faculty in playwriting.
- Electives: Students will have an increasing number of electives available to them over the course of the three years. These may be taken inside or out of the department.
- 590 Thesis classes: Students may use up to three 590 thesis writing courses in their third year. These are no credit classes and you may use up to two in one quarter. You are not required to use all three in your third year.

Guidelines for which courses will count for graduate credit as well as enrollment information can be found here:

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html>

## **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Guidelines for maintaining good academic standing can be found on the Graduate School website at:

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress.html>.

Please note that having three incompletes or a GPA of below 3.0 will cause you to be placed on probation. It is the expectation of the Directing Program that you remain attentive to your academic progress. If you are in danger of failing or not completing a class, we expect that you not only work with the professor of that course to attempt to resolve the issue with your work, but that you also notify the Head of the Program and/or your other advisors or faculty as needed.

Satisfactory progress in the program includes successful completion of the coursework, sufficiently mature collaboration on artistic work, a minimum level of productivity, full participation in the program, and respectful and responsible conduct within the department. If the graduate faculty has concerns about your progress, we will bring them to your attention. In cases where a student's performance is egregiously inadequate or does not improve, he or she may be put on probation until there is sufficient improvement or he or she may be asked to leave the program.

## **Teaching Requirements**

In your first year, your Graduate Assistantship is fulfilled by two run crew head assignments for shows in the Mainstage of the Wirtz Center season. These assignments will be made by Dixie Uffleman, Production Manager for the Wirtz Center, in conversation with the Directing Program Mentor.

In the second year, you will assist one of the third year students as a TA for Fundamentals of Directing. In addition, the production of your second year show counts toward your assistantship.

In the third year, students will teach one quarter of Fundamentals of Directing for the undergraduates.

As teachers, students are expected to comply with university policy, including university policy on sexual harassment and misconduct. Northwestern University prohibits all forms of sexual misconduct, including but not limited to, sexual assault, stalking, dating or domestic violence, and sexual harassment. Such conduct violates the community values and principles of our institution and disrupts the living, learning, and working environment for students, faculty, staff and other community members. In furtherance of this policy, Northwestern University has adopted standards of conduct for all members of our community – students, faculty, and staff, as well as University vendors, contractors, visitors, guests, and third parties – with respect to sexual misconduct. These standards apply equally to all regardless of the sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression of any of the individuals involved.

University policies can be found at: <http://policies.northwestern.edu/>. The site for sexual misconduct response and prevention can be found at: <http://www.northwestern.edu/sexual-misconduct/>

## Committee

In the course of their third year of study, students will identify, in consultation with the Director of the Program, a chair for their Thesis Committee. This person should be selected and asked by the end of year three, and must be a member of the full-time Directing Faculty. In addition, students will identify two other members of the Northwestern Faculty to sit on the committee. These need not both be from the Theatre Department, but they must be Northwestern full-time faculty in good standing.

A Committee must be chosen and approved by the DP by September 1 following their third year of course work.

## Thesis Writing and Defense

At the end of each academic year, at a deadline determined by the DP, students will hand in 20 pages of writing about their year, that can serve as raw material for the thesis.

A thesis question and outline is developed in conversation with Committee Chair, and a full draft of the thesis is expected by the September following the completion of coursework. Students have no more than two years to complete and defend the thesis, with the strong expectation that they defend by the end of the calendar year in which they complete their coursework.

Theses are between 60-80 pages, and are expected to address work completed throughout the three years of graduate study.

## **Degree Completion and Graduation**

The Application for Degree must be filed with the Graduate School by students expecting to receive their degree in a given year. As a graduate student at Northwestern, it is your responsibility to read correspondence from the Graduate School and meet such deadlines; you should not rely on the department to remind you of your responsibilities. Deadlines are published on the Graduate School's academic calendar.

In order to receive the Masters of Fine Arts degree, the student must:

- Complete the Application for a Degree form via TGS Forms in [CAESAR](#) by the date specified in the [Academic Calendar](#).
- Complete the Masters Degree Completion form via TGS Forms in [CAESAR](#) and receive program approval of the form by the date specified in the [Academic Calendar](#).
- Complete the required number of credits with at least a B average and no X or Y grades. All grades must be entered and Change of Grade forms submitted by the grade deadline specified by the Office of the Registrar.
- Successfully defend their completed thesis.

## **Overview: Timeline of Program**

In their first year of study, students will take mostly assigned courses, including Seminar in fall and winter, Text Analysis in the fall, Scenic design in the winter, Collaboration: Realism and Naturalism in the spring, and other Master classes and History/Crit classes as assigned, depending on what is being offered.

In spring quarter of the first year, students will direct a classroom project in Fisk 115. This project will be chosen in winter quarter and guidelines for the project will be disseminated in the fall quarter.

In the second year of study, students will take Collaboration: Contemporary Drama in the fall, where they will work on the design process for their second year show. Students will also take Toy Theatre in winter quarter, Collaboration:

Shakespeare in the spring quarter, and other Master classes as assigned. Students will have more electives in year two.

In the winter or spring of year two, students will direct a show in the Wallis Theatre. This show is chosen by August 1 between first and second year, and directing slots are assigned the spring quarter of the first year. Design teams will be assigned by the Design Faculty.

In the third year of study, students will take Master classes and Design Theory classes as assigned. Students may take mostly electives and use their 590s as needed.

In the third year, students will direct a show in the mainstage season of the Wirtz Center. These titles are chosen in conversation with Diane Claussen, Executive Director of the Wirtz Center, by the end of the fall quarter of the second year. Design teams are assigned by the Design Faculty. Show slots are programmed by the Wirtz center. Production deadlines may begin as early as spring quarter of the second year, depending on the slot assigned.

## **Financial Support**

Financial support in the form of production assistantships is given to all students in the MFA programs. Assistantships include a full tuition waiver for all three years and a partial stipend. Students fulfill requirements for assistantships through the work listed under Teaching Requirements above, as well as participating in recruitment weekend for prospective students in late February or early March.

## **Conflict Resolution**

In the event that you find yourself in a dispute with the MFA Directing faculty, and you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue within the department, you should contact the DGS or the department chair to discuss the issues.

If a student wishes to appeal a probation decision, you should contact the DGS or the department chair to discuss the issues. If you do not feel comfortable contacting someone within the department or feel that this route has not produced acceptable results, you may file a petition through the Graduate School's regular petition process.

Students may appeal an exclusion decision to The Graduate School. Students should submit a request in writing to the attention of the Director of Student

Services within ten days of the date of the program's final written determination of exclusion to the student and include any supporting materials at that time. Visit the Graduate School's web site for further information on these appeals processes.

## **Essentials and Resources**

For complete Graduate School Policies and Procedures, please go to:  
<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/index.html>

### **Writing Support**

The Writing Place is a free tutoring service available to Northwestern students and provides assistance to students who need help writing papers. More information can be found here: <http://www.writing.northwestern.edu/>

### **English as a Second Language (ESL)**

Classes and tutoring are available at no fee through Northwestern's ESL department: <http://groups.linguistics.northwestern.edu/esl/index.html>

### **Student Life**

Student Life Resources  
Division of Student Affairs  
601 University Place, Rm 36  
(847) 491-8430  
[www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs](http://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs)

### **Multicultural Student Affairs**

African-American SA; Asian/Asian-American SA; Hispanic/Latino SA; LGBT  
Resource Center  
1936 Sheridan Road  
(847) 467-6200  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/msa/index.html>

### **Graduate Housing**

1915 Maple Ave  
(847) 491-5127  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/gradhousing/>  
Living Off-Campus  
601 University Place, Rm 6  
(847) 491-8430  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/offcampus/>

### **Health Services, Evanston Campus**

633 Emerson Street  
(847) 491-8100

<http://www.nuhs.northwestern.edu/evanston/default.aspx>

**Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)**

CAPS staff are available on both the Evanston and Chicago campuses. CAPS promises confidentiality unless there is a safety concern:

633 Emerson Street  
(847) 491-2151

<http://www.northwestern.edu/counseling/about-us/faqs.html>

**Norris University Center (including WildCard Office)**

1999 Campus Drive  
(847) 491-2300

<http://www.norris.northwestern.edu/>

**Office of Religious Life**

1870 Sheridan Rd  
(847) 491-7256

<http://www.northwestern.edu/religious-life>

**Parking & Transportation** (including Shuttle Service and SafeRide)

1801 Maple Ave, Suite 2300  
(847) 491-7569

<http://www.northwestern.edu/up/parking>