Theater Major

Major Description

The theater major is an integrated program of study, one that provides a solid knowledge of the different areas of expertise that are involved in stage production and criticism. Gateway courses provide an introduction to theater techniques, principles, literatures, and discourses. Advanced courses prepare students to articulate their visions of theater both on stage and in writing. Honors theses, essays, and creative endeavors present majors with the opportunity to engage in in-depth scholarly and/or artistic research.

Students with strong interest in both theater and other fields of study may wish to pursue a double major. The option offers attractive possibilities for maximizing the benefits of Wesleyan’s broad curriculum. Such an option is not uncommon but requires careful and early planning.

Declaration to become a major is usually made in the second semester of the sophomore year. The department embraces a broad definition of theater and believes in embodied learning: process, performance, and critical perspectives are equally stressed. Our majors focus on two or more aspects of theater and learn to articulate their artistic vision both on stage and in writing. The department welcomes analysis, criticism, artistic innovation, and theater inquiry of all sorts.

Beginning fall 2018, the Theater Department has adopted revisions to the major requirements, implemented as an option for the classes of 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Students in the class of 2023 that declare the theater major will be required to select a major plan upon declaration.

Admission to the Major

One of the areas revised within the theater major includes expansion of the Gateway Course options. By creating category requirements, rather than specific courses, the Theater Department has opened up options for students to begin their path through the study of theater in areas other than acting, such as playwriting, design, or performance practice.

Gateway courses for students electing to follow the non-revised major plan (only applicable for the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEA105</td>
<td>Production Laboratory (One 0.5 credit in the technical aspects of scenic/lighting or costumes)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>THEA203</td>
<td>Playing in the Theater Archive: An Introduction to Theater and Performance Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>THEA245</td>
<td>Acting I</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Beginning with the class of 2023:

**Gateway Courses** *(mandatory beginning class of 2023)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Theater (0.5 CR)</td>
<td>THEA105 (One 0.5 credit in the technical aspects of scenic/lighting or costumes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theater Arts (1.0 CR)</td>
<td>This includes courses in the areas of design, acting, playwriting, advanced technical theater, and performance practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater Methods (1.0 CR)</td>
<td>This includes courses in the areas of dramatic literature, theater history, criticism, visual literacy and applied theater</td>
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Course Category Designations: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oDC0xl_8KTW9NIN977wuQAapQzamUh/view?usp=sharing

Major Requirements

**Note:** These requirements are in addition to the Gateway courses.

Students will be required to select a major plan upon declaration.

Requirements for students electing to follow the non-revised major plan (only applicable for the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022):

- One course in scenic, costume, or lighting design.
- THEA302. Please note that certain courses in departments may fulfill one of two theater history prerequisites (the gateway THEA203 or THEA302) only if approved by the theater faculty. Please consult the section “Courses cross-listed with other Wesleyan departments, colleges, and programs” in the Theater Handbook.
- Two courses in dramatic literature, visual literacy, theory, criticism, and/or service learning. One of them may be an FYS course. Specialty courses in other departments may fulfill one of the two requirements only if approved by the theater faculty. Please consult the section “Courses cross-listed with other Wesleyan departments, colleges, and programs” in the Theater Handbook.
- One credit of THEA329/THEA331 (earned in .25- and .5-credit increments).
- One credit of THEA427/THEA431/THEA433/THEA435/THEA437.

Total major program requirements: 2.5 credits (Gateways) + 6 credits = 8.5 credits

Requirements for students electing to follow the revised major plan (applicable for the classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022, and mandatory beginning with the class of 2023):

- Three (3) credits in **Theater Arts** courses, which must include one design course (THEA359 - set design, THEA383 - costume design, THEA 360 - media design or THEA305 - lighting design). One credit (and only one credit) of Performance Practice (THEA427/THEA431/THEA433/THEA435/THEA437) is also required for this category.
- Two (2) credits in **Theater Methods** courses. Only one course may be 100-level.
- One (1) credit of **Technical Theater** (THEA329/THEA331) earned in .25- and .5-credit increments through participation in department production related positions.
• One (1) credit in the **Expanded Field of Theater**, which includes, but is not limited to, performance studies, practice-based research and service learning course.

**Total major program requirements:** 2.5 credits (Gateways) + 7 credits = 9.5 credits

For course category designations, please consult the categorization list on the Theater Department website (here) [https://www.wesleyan.edu/theater/about/Theater%20Course%20Categorization%20Chart%202019.pdf](https://www.wesleyan.edu/theater/about/) and posted in the lobby of the Theater building.

**GENERAL EDUCATION**

Completion of Stage 1 and 2 of General Education Expectations is a prerequisite for high honors in theater.

**STUDY ABROAD**

Students are encouraged to spend a semester at Wesleyan-approved programs abroad or to petition for approval of other programs in countries of their choice. For information, contact the Office of Study Abroad [http://wesleyan.edu/studyabroad](http://wesleyan.edu/studyabroad).

**Wesleyan preapproved programs with focus on theater:**

• British American Drama Academy, London
• Moscow Art Theatre Semester
• CIEE, Buenos Aires
• C.V. STARR, Chile

For Wesleyan policy on the programs not on the approved list, contact the Office of Study Abroad [http://wesleyan.edu/studyabroad](http://wesleyan.edu/studyabroad).

**PRIZES**

**Rachel Henderson Theater Prize:** Awarded annually to the student who, in the estimation of the theater faculty, has contributed most to theater at Wesleyan over the course of his or her undergraduate career.

**Outreach and Community Service Prize:** Awarded to the senior theater major who, through his or her work in the Theater Department, has done a significant service in the community.

**J. Peter Adler ’90 Memorial Fund:** Established in 1997 with gifts from family and friends in memory of J. Peter Adler ’90, the J. Peter Adler Memorial Fund provides two awards per year to support a student theater production: one in the fall and one in the spring semester. An avid theater lover, J.P. participated in Second Stage while at Wesleyan as a non-theater major. He died suddenly in 1995. The Adler Fund is awarded with preference to first-time directors of Second Stage productions and, whenever possible, to non-theater majors. The fund may also support student theater productions associated with the Theater Department or other entities, such as senior thesis productions.

**HONORS**

Preliminary honors proposals with a bibliography are due one week after the end of spring break in the junior year. Students can submit proposals for either critical or creative honors theses.

Preliminary proposals will be judged based on clearly expressed objectives and evidence of research and preparation. Judgments will be based equally on preliminary research, clarity of the objectives of the process, and rationale for staging a given production. Please consult the section “Application Guidelines for Honors in Theater” in the handbook.

The Honors Committee will award honors on the basis of the readers’ evaluations. All departmental readers must recommend honors for a candidate to be successful. Students are entitled to copies of the readers’ comments. The honors tutor is responsible for assigning a grade for the courses THEA409 and THEA410; this grade need not reflect the decision of the Honors Committee to award or deny departmental honors.

High honors in theater is by invitation only and requires an oral exam conducted by the Honors Committee. The Honors Committee will invite qualified students according to the following criteria: consideration of the readers’ evaluations, originality of research and thesis topic, the student’s performance in courses as reflected in his or her transcript, compliance with the General Education Expectations, and the extent to which the student’s educational experience reflects the philosophy, goals, and diversity of the department.

Please see wesleyan.edu/theater for details on prerequisites for applying for honors theses.