

Monday, 3:30-6:30pm
Spring 2025
Theater Management
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Penn, Theater Management and Producing, Spring Semester 2025

Thanks for taking this class! Throughout this semester, we are going to focus on three main objectives:

- Learning about the regional theater movement in the US; how non-profit regional theaters function today, looking specifically at the way different departments of a theater (production, artistic, marketing, fundraising, education, community engagement) work together
- Learning about new plays by up-and-coming playwrights
- Learning about theater producing, both in the context of an organization and as an independent artist. What goes into creating a “season” of plays for your audience and for your community? What are interesting projects you could cook up as an independent artist? What does it mean to freelance?

You will be graded on the following five tasks:

- Your **Big Presentation** in April, on a topic of your choosing (topic suggestions listed at the end of this document); this is your Final *(25% of grade)*
- Completion of the **Season Planning Assignment** *(this is your midterm, 25% of your grade)*
- Participation in class discussion/attendance *(20% of your grade)*
- Completion of one “**new play of the week analysis**” paper *(15% of your grade)*
- Completion of one “**Get to Know a Theater!**” assignment *(15% of your grade)*

The Big Presentation topics and the Season Planning rubric are included with this syllabus, and rubrics for the “new play analysis” paper and the “Get to Know a Theater” assignment are below...

The “New Play of the Week analysis” paper rubric is as follows:

- 750 words minimum
- Must outline the basic plot and characters of the play
- Should detail perceived strengths and weaknesses of the play, looking specifically at: structure, language, character, plot
- Be prepared to give a ten minute discussion on the play

The “Get to Know a Theater” assignment:

- Pick a theater
- Tell us all about it! Where is it located, what kind of work does it produce, who is the audience base, what is their mission and vision?
- It’ll be an oral presentation but useful to have a slide or powerpoint

A BREAKDOWN OF WHAT WE’RE GONNA DO EACH DAY

Wednesday 1/15 -- First Day + Overview

- Intros and Getting to Know you
- What do you hope to get out of this class
- Go thru syllabus
- Get To Know A Theater, New Play, Midterm, Finals explanation
- Brief Overview of History of Regional Theater in the US
- Outline of different departments we're going to cover/how regional theaters work
- Mission/vision
- Questions and responses

Monday 1/27 -- Fundraising and Assignments

- Solicitations
- Working with board
- Grant Writing
- Corporate giving
- Earned vs Contributed Income
- What it means to be a non-profit
- Raising money as an individual artist/producer
- Assignments: Get to Know a Theater, New Play, etc

Monday 2/3 -- Education

- how education departments became integral to regional theaters
- What kinds of education programs are popular
- Get to know a theater #1
- Play of the Week # 1

Monday 2/10 -- Community Engagement

- Consensus Organizing
- Relationship Building and Community Partnering
- Why is community engagement so important?
- Play of the Week #2
- Get to Know a Theater #2

Monday 2/17 -- Marketing

- Advertising single plays versus a season
- Developing a marketing plan for each show
- Web, print, TV, social
- Marketing a project as an individual artist
- Get to Know a Theater #3!
- Play of the Week #3

Monday 2/24 -- Production Management

- Budgeting the season
- Sets, costumes, props, electrics, projections
- Get to Know a Theater #4
- Play of the Week #4

Monday 3/3 -- Season Planning & Casting

- What are the factors that go into building a season?
- How do you cast?
- What plays do you want to produce?
- Get to Know a Theater #5
- Play of the Week # 5
- Prep and Answer Questions about Season Planning Assignment

Monday 3/10 Spring Break

Monday 3/17 Season Planning Presentations

- Season Planning presentation (full class)

Monday 3/23 -- New Play Development

- What does new play development look like
- Commissions, workshops, readings Oh my!
- Get to Know a Theater #6!
- Play of the Week #6

Monday 3/31 -- Independent Producing

- Finding a project
- Finding funding
- Finding a space

- Get to Know a Theater #7!
- Play of the Week #7

Monday 4/7 –

- Overview of class, prep individual presentations
- Get to Know a Theater #8
- Get to Know a Theater #8

Monday 4/14 -- Individual Final Presentations

Monday 4/21 – Individual Final Presentations

Monday 4/28 -- Individual Final Presentations (last class)

Season Planning assignment:

Please pick a theater of your choice (either local, national or international) and program a season of plays or events for them. Make sure to look at the mission of the organization, and do some research about who their audience base is. Who are their community partners? What kind of work do they normally produce (classics? New plays? musicals?), and how would you honor or expand on that? Does your season have a “theme” that unites the plays?

The season planning assignment will be both written and at least a ten minute presentation in front of the class. Be ready to defend your choices.

Final Presentation topics:

Please pick on of the topics below. You will give a presentation in front of the class toward the end of the semester. Your presentation should be between 15 and 20 minutes. If there’s another topic you’d like to work on, please let me know!

Marketing 101

Pretend you are a marketing director at a theater or organization of your choosing. Using a specific production, create a marketing plan that involves web, social media, print, patron engagement and community partners. Think about what audience you are hoping to attract, and who already attends your shows. If you want, you can create a marketing plan for a whole season (though that might be harder to get your arms around..)

We Can Be Heroes

Please do a presentation on someone in the theater world (an actor, a writer, a director, an artistic director) who is and remains an inspiration to you as an artist and as a person. Bonus points if it's a local artist/director/producer.

Build Your Own Acting Company

If you were hired by the board to be the artistic director of a theater, with a mandate to keep or create an acting company, what would your company look like? Would there be term limits? What kinds of professional development would you institute? How many actors? Explain how they would be used throughout the year, if they would be contracted show-by-show or salaried workers, whether they would perform other functions for the theater in addition to acting in the shows. Please be specific about what actors you'd include and why, as well as a sketch of a 7 show season.

Love and Hate: Pitch a play you love and pitch a play you hate

The purpose of this exercise is to practice pitching not only a play you love, but also finding your way into a play you initially despise. How do you take a play you don't like and find it artistically fulfilling? How do you get not only a producer or artistic director excited about the show, but also yourself? Moreover, this will hopefully hone your pitching skills to the point that the class will not be able to tell which play you originally loved and which one you initially loathed.

KinderCare

One particular topic that has come up repeatedly over the years is the question of on-site babysitting at the theater, both for patrons as well as the artists and administrators who work there. How would you go about creating a program like this so that it's fiscally sound? So that it's an officially licensed baby-sitting program?

The Other Kind of Tech

Technology is increasingly becoming intertwined in American culture. What are some ways theater can use technology and the internet, both in terms of artistic production (think Edward Snowden appearing in *Privacy*) as well as institutional outreach (think, like, building an app for the subscribers). Please come up with three ways tech is able to positively influence the theater industry.

So You Want to Run a Theater...

Using the essay questions given to artistic director candidates by a search firm, please demonstrate why you should be chosen to be the artistic director of a particular theater. (Essay questions will be given out later on.)

New Play Development

You are an artistic director of a theater with some financial resources, and a new mandate: starting next season, all plays in your season have to be world premieres. What kinds of programs and policies would you implement in order to create the best possible environment for new play development? Looking at theaters like A.R.T., Berkeley Rep or the Public, who specialize in new work, what are some of their similarities? Differences?

Grant Writing

Using the Doris Duke Building Demand Implementation Grant guidelines, create a program to fulfill the requirements of the grant, then develop a thorough grant application.

Off-Site Producing

A local theater has hired you as their Off-Site Producer. The building is going to go under extreme renovations, and the theater won't be able to use either theater for the whole season. Find seven distinct locations in Providence/Rhode Island to produce seven shows. Which shows will you produce? Where will each show end up being produced?

Independent Producing

Create a theater/art project for Rhode Island as an individual artist (or working as a team). What kind of project would you like to make? Would it be a play, or would it be something a bit more immersive and dare I say interesting? What organizations would you partner with? How much would it cost? How would you get the money?

Virtual Programming

Virtual programming has become a big part of producing these days. What kind of virtual or online programming would you create? Make something to share with the class, and feel free to be as inventive as possible.