

THEATER

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From the ancient past to the digital present, theater is one of the most profound ways human beings have represented themselves to themselves. The Department of Theater at St. Olaf provides students with opportunities to make and study theater, in historical and contemporary contexts, and to develop creative and collaborative skills relevant to the world today. Courses in acting, directing, history, theory and design are seen through the lens of theatrical production, and the interdisciplinary process of creating live theater is at the heart of everything we teach. Building on these foundations, the St. Olaf Theater stages four productions a year which are integral to the campus and community and are our working labs in the development of the creative artist.

The St. Olaf College Theater Department is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Theater (NAST).

Overview of the Major

The theater major requires nine courses plus four 0.25 lab credits. The major includes an introductory course in theater texts and performances as well as coursework in acting, directing, design, production, and history of theater, plus two upper-level electives. The requirements for the major are designed to provide a well-rounded course of study in the theater discipline. The co-curricular theater production program serves as a lab for our courses and offers extended learning and experience for St. Olaf students.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major

Special Programs

Students have the opportunity to study theater in London during January term as part of a regular course taught by theater faculty. Students can set up internship experiences through the department or the Piper Center with theaters and other arts organizations in the Twin Cities and surrounding areas. Guest artists often visit the courses in the department to talk about and demonstrate their work and occasionally collaborate in the production work for our season of plays.

St. Olaf's Theater Education program has been discontinued. Students interested in obtaining a K-12 Theater teaching license are encouraged to complete an undergraduate major in theater and then apply to a graduate program that offers a Master's degree combined with teaching certification in theater.

Recommendations for Graduate and Professional Study

Students planning on graduate study in theater should take the graduation major and additional courses for a total not to exceed 14.00 credits. Students should work closely with a faculty member in the area of their interest to plan their program. Students who are considering professional work in the theater or related arts should

work together with faculty to develop appropriate resume or portfolio documents prior to graduation.

Requirements

Requirements for the Major

Completion of an equivalent course at another institution should be approved by the department chair in advance to ensure credit toward the major requirement.

Only one full-course equivalent (1.00-credit course) taken S/U may count toward the minimum requirements for the major.

Code	Title	Credits
THEAT 130	Introduction to Acting	1.00
THEAT 140	Introduction to Design for Performance	1.00
THEAT 180	Text and Performance	1.00
THEAT 232	Stage Direction	1.00
THEAT 240	Scenery and Costume Design and Production	1.00
or THEAT 250	Lighting and Sound-Design and Production	
THEAT 270	History of Theater up to 1700	1.00
THEAT 271	History of Theater since 1700	1.00
Select two of the following:		2.00
THEAT 338	Directing and Producing Theater	
THEAT 379	Topics in Interpretation and Theater	
THEAT 380	Top: Who Owns the Arts: Censorship, Sponsorship, and Artistic Freedom	
THEAT 394	Academic Internship	
THEAT 398	Independent Research	
Four lab classes: ¹		1.0
THEAT 233	Theater Lab: Acting, Directing, Dramaturgy (0.00 or 0.25)	
THEAT 253	Theater Lab: Design, Technical Production (0.00 or 0.25)	
Total Credits		10

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At least one must be THEAT 233 and at least two must be THEAT 253; the fourth lab class is a choice of either THEAT 233 or THEAT 253.

**By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

Courses

THEAT 110: Introduction to Theater

A broad-based introduction to the art and craft of theater, this course focuses on the roles of actor, director, playwright, and designer, as well as aspects of theater history, performance, and literature. Students examine theater as a culturally diverse art form, with emphasis on the ways ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation inform theater in the United States. Students attend performances on campus and in the Twin Cities and integrate them with readings, lectures, and discussions. Offered each semester.

THEAT 115: Acting for the Non Major

This studio course is designed as an overview of the acting process for the non-major and includes basic acting theories, rehearsal techniques, improvisation, history, and styles. Students explore and practice exercises, scene work, and audition material. The course requires trips to professional theaters in the Twin Cities. A ticket fee is required. This course does not fulfill the acting requirement for the major. Counts toward musical theater concentration.

THEAT 120: Public Speaking

Students learn and apply principles of speech composition and analyze speeches to understand effective methods. They demonstrate their knowledge in classroom speeches.

THEAT 130: Introduction to Acting

This studio course is centered on training the actor's instrument and developing basic acting skills including characterization, vocal production, physical and emotional connection, motivation and ensemble work. Students learn history of actor training from Stanislavski to present. Exercises, improvisation, monologue and scene work are all explored. This course requires trips to professional theaters in the Twin Cities. A ticket fee is required. Offered each semester.

THEAT 131: Musical Theater

This studio course focuses on the techniques of acting and singing for the musical theater. Students learn the basics of voice, movement, improvisation, and characterization in class exercises, prepared scenes, solos and duets. Course culminates in a public showcase of students' work. Offered periodically.

THEAT 133: Producing Theater: Introductory

This course studies theater performance through the full-scale mounting of a production during the month of January, with public performances at the end of January Term or the beginning of spring semester. Students enroll in the class through either an acting audition or a production position interview held in late October or early November. No previous experience is necessary. Selected participants are notified prior to January Term registration. Details about the audition/interview are available online at the Theater Department website. Scripts are available in the Theater Department office. P/N only. Offered during January Term.

THEAT 140: Introduction to Design for Performance

The attributes of the things we see and hear in the performances that we attend contribute strongly to our experience as an audience. This course considers the elements and principles of design and their application to performance work. Students study the performance space, scenery elements, costuming, lighting and shadow, and the aural experience that the audience encounters during a performance. Problem-solving, collaboration, and design development are included in project work. Also counts toward musical theater concentration.

THEAT 180: Text and Performance

Play texts are the raw material for our classes in acting, directing, design, and historical studies. This introductory course for theater majors introduces students to canonical texts and performances that have helped to define our field. Primary emphasis is on the text as a blueprint for production focusing on analysis, variety of interpretation, the changing nature of theater space, and our growing awareness of the changing nature of performance. Students are expected to communicate clarity of understanding both orally and in writing. Non-majors are invited to take this course, though its primary focus is a comprehensive preparation for further theater studies. Offered each semester.

THEAT 230: Intermediate Acting

A studio course for the student with previous acting experience. Through scene and monologue work students explore text and character analysis as well as the requirements of major theatrical period styles. Students perform regularly throughout the semester. The course requires trips to professional theaters in the Twin Cities. A ticket fee is required. Offered annually in the spring semester.

Prerequisites: THEAT 110 or THEAT 180, and THEAT 130 or THEAT 131 or permission of the instructor.

THEAT 232: Stage Direction

This studio course focuses on the fundamentals of stage direction. Students develop skills of play selection, audience analysis, text interpretation, working with actors, stage picturization and blocking, design considerations, and the process of casting and rehearsals. A primary focus is on developing a point of view about theater and directing by the study of other directors and theories of theater. Offered annually in the fall semester.

Prerequisites: THEAT 110 or THEAT 180, and THEAT 115 or THEAT 130 or THEAT 131, and THEAT 140.

THEAT 233: Theater Lab: Acting, Directing, Dramaturgy (0.00 or 0.25)

This theater lab involves the student in the conceptual and practical processes of artistic creation and performance production in theater. Students study current theory and practice as well as historical approaches to performance problems. Lab sessions include creative projects and practical problem-solving in assistant directing, acting, or dramaturgy as part of the St. Olaf theater season. P/N only. First-year students are encouraged to enroll. May be repeated. Registration is by audition or interview only. Offered each semester.

THEAT 234: Producing Theater: Advanced

Designed for the student with previous course work and production work in theater, this course studies theater performance through the full-scale mounting of a production during the month of January, with public performances at the end of the January Term or the beginning of spring semester. Students enroll in the course through either an acting audition or a production position interview held in late October or early November. Selected participants are notified prior to January Term registration. Details about the audition/interview are available online at the Theater Department website. Scripts are available in the Theater Department office. P/N only. Offered during January Term.

Prerequisites: THEAT 133 or permission of instructor; concurrent registration in THEAT 233 or THEAT 253 (0 credit option) required.

THEAT 240: Scenery and Costume Design and Production

This course balances the elements of production with the elements of design, focusing on materials, practices, and techniques used to create scenic and costume elements used in live production. The course includes hands-on experience in the scenic and costume studios, and projects in technical drawing, designing, analysis, and research. Open to majors and non-majors. Also counts toward musical theater concentration.

Prerequisite: THEAT 140 is recommended.

THEAT 243: Dress the Part: Costume and Character Design

This course covers the basics of formulating costume designs for performance. Students learn to analyze texts and character, research styles, render drawings, and prepare finished costume designs. Students also learn costume design for performance as a synthesis of text and visuals while exploring introductory sewing and other techniques for realizing costumes in three dimensions.

THEAT 250: *Lighting and Sound-Design and Production*

The design and production of lighting and sound in theater, dance, music, and general presentation work plays a significant role in the experience of these events. This course introduces the production problems of lighting and sound and includes design projects in both lighting and sound. Open to majors and non-majors. Offered annually in the fall semester.

Prerequisite: THEAT 140 is recommended.

THEAT 253: *Theater Lab: Design, Technical Production (0.00 or 0.25)*

This theater lab involves the student in the conceptual and practical processes of stage performance. Class sessions include practical problem-solving and hands-on experiences for productions which are part of the St. Olaf theater season. Experiences in scenery, props, costumes, lighting, sound, and stage management are available. P/N only. First-year students are encouraged to enroll. May be repeated. Registration is by audition or interview only. The theater lab 253A: *Design, Technical Production* is offered each semester.

THEAT 270: *History of Theater up to 1700*

Examines theatrical activities, from theater's origins to 1700, from three interrelated perspectives: 1) theater as social history; 2) theater as dramatic literature; and 3) theater as performance (the result of creative decisions made by playwrights, actors, directors, and designers). Offered in the fall semester.

Prerequisite: THEAT 110 or THEAT 180 or permission of instructor.

THEAT 271: *History of Theater since 1700*

Examines theatrical activities in the period 1700 to the present, from three interrelated perspectives: 1) theater as social history; 2) theater as dramatic literature; and 3) theater as performance (the result of creative decisions made by playwrights, actors, directors, and designers). Offered in the spring semester.

Prerequisite: THEAT 110 or THEAT 180 or permission of instructor.

THEAT 294: *Academic Internships*

See internships in the academic catalog under Academic Regulations and Procedures - Registration and Course Enrollment - Internships.

Prerequisite: at least three previous courses in department.

THEAT 298: *Independent Study*

Prerequisite: at least three previous courses in department.

THEAT 338: *Directing and Producing Theater*

A studio course focusing on the artistic decision-making process of stage direction, script analysis, directorial concepts, production designs and hands-on directing experience building on the skills developed in THEAT 232: *Stage Direction*. Students direct a one-act play as the final project for the course. Offered annually in the spring semester.

Prerequisite: THEAT 232 and THEAT 240 or THEAT 250. THEAT 270 or THEAT 271 recommended.

THEAT 379: *Topics in Interpretation and Theater*

An in-depth investigation of a selected topic through readings, bibliography, reports, and projects. May be repeated if topic is different.

Prerequisite: THEAT 110 or THEAT 180; some topics courses may require additional prerequisites.

THEAT 380: *Top: Who Owns the Arts: Censorship, Sponsorship, and Artistic Freedom*

An investigation into the relationship between theater and society through study of various issues in theater arts including censorship, funding, arts advocacy and arts education. Issues of contemporary ethical concern will be discussed and analyzed through a variety of historical and contemporary normative perspectives. Also counts toward business and management studies concentration.

Prerequisite: THEAT 110 or THEAT 180.

THEAT 394: *Academic Internship*

Prerequisite: at least five previous courses in department.

THEAT 396: *Directed Undergraduate Research*

This course provides a comprehensive research opportunity, including an introduction to relevant background material, technical instruction, identification of a meaningful project, and data collection. The topic is determined by the faculty member in charge of the course and may relate to their research interests. Offered based on department decision. May be offered as a 1.00 credit course or .50 credit course.

Prerequisite: determined by individual instructor.

THEAT 398: *Independent Research*

Prerequisite: at least five previous courses in the department.

Related Course

ID 258: *Theater in London (study abroad)*

A full immersion in the art of theater, students attend approximately 22 performances at London and Stratford theaters. The course includes the reading of play texts, dramatic criticism, group discussions, and backstage tours. England, a theatrical center of the English-speaking world, enables students to experience a wide variety of theatrical performances ranging from traditional to modern. Excursions to Stratford-upon-Avon and other locations offer additional cultural perspectives. Offered annually during January term. Apply through Smith Center for Global Engagement. Counts toward the theater major in years that a theater faculty or staff member leads the course.

Plan of Study

Theater Major - Plan of Study

This is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements for this major at St. Olaf. This tool is meant as a guide and does not replace working closely with the student's academic advisor.

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
Fall Semester		
FYS 120 or WRIT 120	First-Year Seminar (or Conversation Program) or Writing and Rhetoric	1.00
World Language		1.00
THEAT 130	Introduction to Acting (or THEAT 140 or THEAT 180)	1.00
Credits		3
Spring Semester		
WRIT 120 or FYS 120	Writing and Rhetoric (or Conversation Program) or First-Year Seminar	1.00
World Language		1.00
THEAT 140	Introduction to Design for Performance (or THEAT 130 or THEAT 180)	1.00
Credits		3

Sophomore Year		
Fall Semester		
THEAT 180	Text and Performance (or THEAT 130 or THEAT 140)	1.00
Credits		1
Junior Year		
Fall Semester		
THEAT 232	Stage Direction	1.00
THEAT 240 or THEAT 250	Scenery and Costume Design and Production or Lighting and Sound-Design and Production	1.00
THEAT 270	History of Theater up to 1700	1.00
Credits		3
Spring Semester		
THEAT 271	History of Theater since 1700	1.00
Credits		1
Senior Year		
Fall Semester		
THEAT 3XX Elective Course		1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
THEAT 3XX Elective Course		1.00
Credits		1
Total Credits		13

Megan Riley
Visiting Assistant Professor of Theater; Theater Technical Designer/
Director

Julia Valen
Visiting Instructor of Theater

Labs:
Students must complete four total labs. One .25 credit must be TH 233. Two of the .25 credits must be TH 253. The final .25 credit may be either TH 233 or TH 253.

TH 233 and TH 253 labs are associated exclusively with productions of the St. Olaf Theater. Enrollment in them is offered to students who are cast in productions or invited to serve in design and production crew positions per an application process. Please see the department chair for more information.

Students must successfully complete the equivalent of 35 St. Olaf credits through a combination of full-credit and fractional-credit courses to earn the Bachelor of Arts.

Visit the Theater department webpage for more information.

Faculty

Chair, 2025-2026
Monica Murray
Visiting Professor of Music

Elaigwu Ameh
Karen Peterson Wilson Assistant Professor of Theater

Rebecca J. Bernstein
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Theater; Costume Designer

Peter C. Hansen
Artist in Residence

Niffer Pflager
Assistant Professor of Theater

Sara Pillatzki-Warzeha
Assistant Professor of Theater