Requisite Courses with Descriptions

**Aesthetic Inquiry 1: Towards Perception**

This is an introduction to Aesthetic Inquiry. In this course you will become familiar with the work of Maxine Greene and other philosophers and critics who have analyzed the role of art and art making in society.

Maxine says that Aesthetic Inquiry is “an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. When this happens, new connections are made in experience: new patterns are formed, new vistas are opened.

You will learn to see, interpret and engage in critical discussion about art and artistic practice across many media (including, painting and drawing, film, poetry, music, dance and theater).

**Aesthetic Inquiry 2: Wide Awake**

This course continues the conversation about Aesthetic Inquiry. In this course you will become familiar with the work of Maxine Greene and other philosophers and critics who have analyzed the role of art and art making in society.

Maxine says, “when imagining – active learning, meaning-making, critical questioning, storytelling – occurs with regard to particular works – painting, film, dance, drama, fiction – understanding and the ability to notice, can only be enhanced.”

You will learn to see, interpret and engage in critical discussion about art and artistic practice across many media (including, painting and drawing, film, poetry, music, dance and theater).

**Collaborative Theater Practices 1: Building the Ensemble**

How do you create an atmosphere of safety and play so that everyone is inspired to take risks? What constitutes true and organic collaboration in a theater ensemble? What do the concepts of devised theater and site specific theater mean? What are the historic and current practices employed to create and develop collaborative-based and ensemble-based pieces? Through a series of exercises, this course will break down the barriers between the traditional theater disciplines (and each other), explore techniques for building ensembles of theater artists, teach narrative from multiple points of view, and discover the inspirational potential of non-traditional theater settings. The course will culminate in presentations of group-developed theater pieces.
Collaborative Theater Practices 2: Exploring Theater Through Discipline

This course explores techniques for collaboration between the traditional theater disciplines of playwriting, acting, directing. What are the protocols of collaboration in rehearsal? What are the elements each discipline contributes to the development of a new text and performance? You'll experience what this feels like from the “inside,” and experience the collaborative process in its entirety. You’ll be introduced to some of the questions that each discipline asks of a piece and the language that each discipline uses when coming together to tell a story.

As the course progresses, you will focus on your own discipline and longer pieces will be developed with the goal of working on full scenes by the end of the semester. We’ll explore how actors, directors and writers talk to one another during rehearsals, how conflicts are resolved, and what professional behavior really means.

One of the most important skills you will develop in this class is active listening. Active listening is concentration, akin to one of the first tenets of theatre: the importance of being completely present. It requires close attention to a scene whether you’re hearing it for the first or third time as you figure out why it is or isn’t working. It also means that you are ready at any point to share your ideas in class discussion, to jot down your insights in your notebook, or to enter a scene as a writer, actor or director if the piece needs to be reworked.

Creative Technologies

The course looks at the character of different media forms, the relationship between forms, and guidelines for choosing which combination is best for a given communications or performative project. The course will interweave principles of Graphic and Media Design concepts into production projects using industry standard software tools and techniques for still image editing, production for print and web. Concentrating on design thinking, it offers an experiential tour of the creative toolset and critical precepts of creative technologies. Class sessions will be supplemented by regular screenings and professional examples.

This course provides a broad orientation for understanding both traditional and emerging media forms and practices in communication design, and explores their application in the theater, and performative practice.

The trajectory of this course is designed to bring students from basic elements of design, through narrative photography, into film and new media (web 2.0) and finally to the convergence of film and performative practice. The content of this class relates to the content and activity in both the Aesthetic Inquiry, and Writing & Orality classes.
 Directed Research

In this required two semester course sequence, you will prepare yourself to assume challenging roles in which performative practice can be applied to a variety of positions inside the theater field and beyond it. As is consistent with a culminating experience, the two courses will draw upon and test technique, skills and learning developed in previous courses - work in Foundations courses, Writing, Aesthetic Inquiry, History of Theater, Collaborative Research Studio, Collaborative Theater Practices among others – and in Performance.

You will also be required to apply insights afforded by your electives and demonstrate an awareness of prominent challenges in your primary discipline. On your path towards the completion of a capstone project, you will employ and refine your evolving skills of research, analysis, explanation, persuasion, and presentation – in multiple media within the Dramatic Arts field.

 Foundations in Acting

The actor practices the basic acting techniques and disciplines that form the foundation of acting training; the goal of which is to become comfortable creating an organic truth on stage. Physical actions, working with props, environment and text are addressed. The semester will include emphasis on relaxation; sensory exercises designed to develop imagination, focus, concentration and emotional openness; exercises for physical and vocal freedom, and listening exercises in order to create an organic moment to moment reality. You will discover how to make compelling, informed choices and how to take actions and choose behaviors that both illustrate and illuminate the human condition.

Course work will include readings on acting, writing about the craft of acting, observations, in class exercises, written critical analysis of theatre performances, scene work, and the reading of contemporary plays.

 Foundations in Directing

How do you put yourself in a position to direct a play? What are the critical tools for clear and dynamic scene work? The foundation for an effective rehearsal process is rigorous preparation. With planning, comes freedom. Wild hunches, intuitive explorations and dead-ends can become necessary and welcome steps towards staging that transforms and excites. Text analysis, directing exercises and assigned readings will inform scene work that places a strong emphasis on ‘present’ behavior, clear story-telling and visceral intention. A director’s approach is by definition a product of her training, experiences and temperament. This semester places an emphasis on exposing you to an arsenal of directing tools with the expectation that they may fuel you development of your own approach.
BFA in Dramatic Arts
The New School for Drama

Foundations in Playwriting

This class offers you an introduction to the principles of dramatic writing with specific focus on the fundamental dramaturgical elements including character, objective, situation, conflict, dramatic stakes (with particular reference to Aristotle’s “The Poetics”), as well as dialogue and moment-to-moment emotional authenticity. The instructor will lead the class through a series of exercises designed to leverage and sharpen our innate sense of drama, narrative and emotional connection to craft and develop well-constructed scenes. The final project for this course will be an original 10-minute play utilizing the examined dramaturgical components.

History of Theater 1: The Hero and the Highborn

This course examines the history of Western and non-Western theatre and dramatic literature – from Greece in the 5th Century BC to Sanskrit Drama in India, Noh Theater in Japan through Shakespeare, Kabuki and the Spanish Golden Age – through the lens of hero/heroine protagonist.

History of Theater 2: The Common and the Community

This course examines the history of Western and non-Western theater, literature and traditions with particular focus on the influence of folk and community traditions, rituals, dance, and the rise of the “common” or non-highborn protagonist. Examples of work explored include the concept of Methexis in Greece, TheruKoothu from Tamil Nadu, the influence of Ghanaian traditions, the secularized Passion Plays, Shakespeare’s populist strain, through Chekov, Modernism and Naturalism in the West.

Performance 1 & 2

This class is an opportunity for you to synthesize the skills and techniques you have been learning in your requisite foundations courses (Foundations in Acting, Creative Technologies, Foundations in Directing and Foundations in Playwriting). You will have the opportunity to work in small ensembles on new original works written by the MFA Playwriting students. You will present these pieces at the end of the semester. BFA students may submit 10-15 minute plays for performance approval as well.

Performance 3

This class is an opportunity for you to synthesize the skills and techniques you have been learning in your requisite foundations courses (Foundations in Acting, Creative Technologies, Foundations in Directing and Foundations in Playwriting) and your elective courses.

This course is a laboratory for you to work on their Collaborative Theater Practices pieces. In Fall semester the pieces are about devised, consensus driven collaborative work.
Performance 4

This class is an opportunity for you to synthesize the skills and techniques you have been learning in your requisite foundations courses (Foundations in Acting, Creative Technologies, Foundations in Directing and Foundations in Playwriting) and your elective courses.

This course is a laboratory for you to work on their Collaborative Theater Practices pieces. In Spring semester the pieces allow you to explore disciplinary roles in the production of theatrical performance.

Writing and Critique

This class is an intensive seminar for first-year students to help you develop your ideas through reading and writing. Instructors choose literary topics based on their interests and expertise. The topics, which range in scope and approach, are geared toward the work of crafting and revising essays. You will experiment with a variety of expository and creative styles and proceed throughout the semester from familiar writing (the personal essay) to more analytical writing (the critical essay). You will emerge from this course with more confidence in the process of formulating, developing, and expressing your ideas with the written word.

Writing and Orality

This course is an introduction to the intersections of Oral History, Written word and Contemporary Media. The ideas in this class are founded in and across various disciplines. This course will build on the dialogue and critics analyses begun in Writing and Critique. This course contains activities that develop clear and forceful prose style through close reading and consistent writing and revision. This class will prepare you for the challenges of writing across multiple disciplines.

Communication is as old as time. All communication is expressed through media. Too often the media assume the character of transparency, invisibility or inevitability: technological changes, the character of natural phenomena, springing from human creativity. This course aims at a critical analysis of how the media have changed (and are changed by) the social perception of reality, modes of social communications, and power relations, inextricably linked to social structures, life practices, and cultural developments. This course serves as critical engagement of the roles the media (written, oral and visual) play in our individual and collective experience.

This course has a wide variety of readings, discussions, and academic writing assignments. Selected viewing and listening assignments will supplement readings and provide material to work with in class discussions. The content of this class relates to the content and activity in both the Aesthetic Inquiry, and Creative Technologies classes.