Theatre & Dance

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Academic Programs

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The courses offered by the Theatre and Dance Department provide students with well-balanced programs of study, integrating practical production work with classes that examine the principles, theoretical aspects, and historical development of theatre and dance.

A full range of studio dance courses are offered that include ballet, modern, jazz, and ballroom. Composition and dance production are available, as well as courses designed for future teachers of dance. The department also provides general education and breadth courses in the areas of dance history and dance appreciation.

The department acts as a cultural focus for the campus and community. An annual dance concert is presented under the auspices of the Orchesis Dance Company and every spring a student-directed dance concert is produced. Each quarter the department presents three main-stage theatre productions. Recent titles include: Our Town, The Last Five Years, Lysistrata, Stop Kiss, The Tempest, Smash, Arabian Nights, Blood Wedding (Bodas de sangre), Animal Farm, Falsettos, 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, and Stupid F@%king Bird. In addition, the department also produces original works; sponsors guest lecturers and specialized workshops; and manages a program of student-directed works, field trips, and internships.

Undergraduate Programs

BA Theatre Arts

Students who major in Theatre at Cal Poly participate in a comprehensive, hands-on training program that gives them a balanced and enriched knowledge of theatre arts: acting, directing, design, playwriting, technical theatre, script analysis, and theatre history. Participation in main-stage productions, as actors and members of the artistic/production crew, is a key component of each student’s education. As a small program, the Theatre Arts B.A. allows for faculty to get to know students’ abilities and needs as individuals; promoting the selection of special projects, electives, and interests that mesh with their career ambitions. The Department’s curriculum also offers courses as part of the University’s General Education Program: Introduction to Theatre, Theatre History I & II, Theatre in the United States, Global Theatre and Performance, and Topics in Diversity on the American Stage.

Dance Minor

The Dance Minor consists of 24 units designed to provide the student with a well-balanced program in the art and education of dance. The curriculum integrates critical thinking; creative investigation; scientific foundations; and significant historical and philosophical constructs of dance training, performance and pedagogy. Admission to the minor is contingent upon prior dance experience, a departmental interview and review. Students must have more than a 2.0 Cal Poly GPA.

Theatre Minor

The Theatre Minor is designed to provide a foundation of 12 required units in three major aspects of theatre: introduction/appreciation, design/production, and diversity. On top of that, the inclusion of 16 additional elective units allows for a degree of specialization in an area of the student’s choice. Students should discuss their interests with department faculty.

Admission to the minor is contingent upon a departmental interview and review. Students must have more than a 2.0 GPA.

DANC Courses

DANC 130. Pilates and Conditioning Fundamentals. 2 units  
Introduction to the Pilates method and conditioning fundamentals. Exploration and practice of physical fitness, and the maintenance of a uniformly developed body. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 131. Beginning Ballet. 2 units  
Fundamentals of ballet technique stressing alignment, turnout, basic positions and terminology. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 132. Beginning Modern Dance. 2 units  
Fundamentals of modern technique stressing alignment, off-centered use of torso, floorwork, movement phrases, and improvisation exercises. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 133. Beginning Jazz Dance. 2 units  
Introduction of jazz dance techniques stressing a variety of styles, alignment, isolation, polyrhythms, syncopation, improvisation and technical presentation of dance phrases. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 134. Beginning Ballroom Dance. 2 units  
Focus on one or more selected ballroom dances including Cha-Cha, Foxtrot, Merengue, Rhumba, Samba, Swing, Tango, and/or Line Dances. Emphasis on alignment, etiquette, leading and following, history, performance techniques and presentation of dance phrases. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 135. International Folk Dance. 2 units  
Introduction to international folk dances including round, longway, and square sets. Study of various dance steps, formation, positions, historical and cultural background. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.
DANC 210. Active Wellness. 4 units
2019-20 or later catalog: GE Area E
2017-19 or earlier catalog: GE Area D4
Investigation of health and wellness ideologies and techniques for dancers and non-dancers through active participation in fitness circuits and lecture. Elements of fitness, injury prevention, somatic methodologies, anatomy, and body image will be presented and discussed to help students maintain and cultivate optimum health now and in the future. 3 lectures, 1 activity. Fulfills GE Area E (GE Area D4 for students on the 2017-19 or earlier catalogs).

DANC 221. Dance Appreciation. 4 units
2020-21 or later catalog: GE Area C1
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C3
Introductory survey of major experiments in dance. Examination of history, philosophy, aesthetics, cultural context and criticism of diverse dance genres. Focus on major western dance artists from the 19th century to the present. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

DANC 231. Intermediate Ballet. 2 units
Prerequisite: Intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Continuation of training in basic technical skills in ballet stressing phrasing, performance, and more complex step patterns. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 232. Intermediate Modern Dance. 2 units
Prerequisite: Intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Continuing study of DANC 132 with emphasis on various movement styles, phrasing, more complex step patterns, and performance. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 233. Intermediate Jazz Dance. 2 units
Prerequisite: Intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Continuation of DANC 133 with emphasis on more extensive movement vocabulary. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 234. Intermediate Ballroom Dance. 2 units
Prerequisite: DANC 134 or intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Continuation of DANC 134. Selected ballroom dances: cha cha, foxtrot, merengue, rumba, swing, tango, hustle, paso doble, polka and samba. Emphasis on variations, styles, and performance skill. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 270. Selected Topics. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Open to undergraduate students and consent of instructor.
Directed group study of selected topics. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 to 4 lectures.

DANC 280. Body Awareness and Expression. 4 units
Directed group study of movement techniques and exercises to facilitate expressive physical performance. Body effectiveness, alignment and conditioning practice integrated with creative exploration and movement analysis of effort, spatial awareness and detailed body usage. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as DANC/TH 280.

DANC 321. Cultural Influence on Dance in America. 4 units
2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4
USCP
Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and completion of GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).
Multicultural approach to history of dance in America, with emphasis on American Indian, West African, Caribbean, Mexican, European, and Asian contributions and influences. Explores culture through dance. Purchase of concert ticket(s) required. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and USCP.

DANC 331. Advanced Ballet and Repertory. 2 units
Prerequisite: DANC 231 or intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Advanced ballet technique and reconstruction of historical ballet repertories from the romantic, classical, neoclassical, and modern periods. Participation in dance performance of selected repertory. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 332. Contemporary Dance Repertory. 2 units
Prerequisite: Intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Intermediate to advanced dance skills learned through the study and performance of selected contemporary dance repertory. Explores concepts in advanced performance technique through formal and informal presentation in performance situations. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 activities.

DANC 340. Dance Composition. 4 units
Prerequisite: Intermediate level experience as determined by instructor at first class meeting.
Principles of dance composition. Exploration of creative potential and development of movement motifs through choreographic studies. Preparation for informal public presentation of student generated choreographic works. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 lecture, 1 laboratory, 2 activities.

DANC 341. Dance Concert Practicum. 2 units
Prerequisite: consent of instructor.
Advanced practical application of choreography and dance concert production. Production of the student-generated Spring Dance Concert will be developed and executed. Investigation of complete choreographic work via peer and faculty review. Total credit limited to 8 units. 2 laboratories.
DANC 345. Choreography/Workshop in Dance Concert Preparation. 4 units
Prerequisite: By audition only.
Workshop in concert preparation for major public dance production. Exploration and process of concert dance choreography. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 16 units. 2 activities, 2 laboratories.

DANC 346. Dance Production. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: One of the following: DANC 332, DANC 331, or DANC 345.
Directed production of annual Orchesis Dance Company Concert and other public performances. Attendance of professional dance concert(s) required. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. Total credit limited to 16 units. 1-4 laboratories.

DANC 381. Dance Teaching Methods for Dance Minors. 4 units
Prerequisite: Dance Minor.
Dance skills and techniques. Experience in selected dance forms. Rhythmic structure and analysis of dance steps. Includes introduction to dance pedagogy, curricular materials and evaluative procedures. Purchase of concert ticket(s) may be required. 2 lectures, 2 activities.

DANC 400. Special Problems. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Consent of instructor and department head.
Individual investigation, research and studies or survey of selected problems in dance and related areas. Total credit limited to 8 units with a maximum of 4 units per quarter.

DANC 430. Advanced Selected Techniques. 2 units
Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.
Directed study of selected topics for advanced dance students. Focus on advanced level technique, style, concepts and choreography of classical and contemporary dance forms. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 2 activities.

DANC 470. Selected Advanced Topics. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.
Directed study of selected topics for advanced dance students. The Class Schedule will list topics selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 to 4 lectures.

DANC 471. Selected Advanced Laboratory. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.
Directed group laboratory study of selected topics for dance students. The Class Schedule will list topics selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 to 4 laboratories.

TH 210. Introduction to Theatre. 4 units
2020-21 or later catalog: GE Area C1
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C3
Overview of theatre principles and production practices, including terminology and conventions, methods, dramatic literature and performance, aesthetic appreciation, and technology. Emphasis on theatre as an integral cultural, social, and artistic entity. Attendance at theatre performance(s) required. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

TH 220. Acting Methods. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210.
Contemporary acting techniques focused on character building, objectives and tactics, with a focus on the development and implementation of various interactive methods of vocal work, images and actor resources. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 225. Costume Construction I. 4 units
Basic costume construction techniques used in the entertainment industry. Building of all costumes and special craft projects for main stage theatre productions. May not be taken concurrently with TH 230 or TH 330. 4 laboratories.

TH 227. Theatre History I. 4 units
2020-21 or later catalog: GE Area C1
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C3
Highlights of European theatrical history - Greeks, Romans, Medieval English and French theatre through the 17th century. Production methods, acting styles, playwriting theories and representative plays. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

TH 228. Theatre History II. 4 units
2020-21 or later catalog: GE Area C1
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C3
Highlights of European and American theatrical history from the 18th to 20th century. Production methods, acting styles, playwriting theories and representative plays. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Area C1 (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

TH 230. Stagecraft I. 4 units
Basic stagecraft technique used in the entertainment industry. Construction and painting of scenery, building and gathering properties, hanging and focusing lighting instruments, and acting as running crew for department production each term. May not be taken concurrently with TH 225 or TH 325. 4 laboratories.

TH 240. Improvisational Theatre. 4 units
Objectives and techniques of improvisational theatre. Participation in a series of exercises designed to develop skills in dramatic structure formatting, interactive problem solving, spontaneous scripting, dynamic communications, and applied performance styles. 2 lectures, 2 activities.

TH 245. Introduction to Stage Management. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210.
Basic stage managerial skills for organizing, preparing, and fulfilling theatrical productions from the inception through rehearsal and performance. 4 lectures.
TH 260. Voice and Diction for the Stage. 4 units
Theory and practice in developing command of oral techniques for the stage including breath support, resonance and articulation. 4 lectures.

TH 270. Stage Make-Up. 4 units
Introduction to the art of theatrical make-up design and application. Techniques for producing character, old age, fantasy and special effects make-up. Demonstration and discussion of various design and application styles. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 275. Selected Topics. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Open to undergraduate students and consent of instructor.
Directed group study of selected topics. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 to 4 lectures.

TH 280. Body Awareness and Expression. 4 units
Directed group study of movement techniques and exercises to facilitate expressive physical performance. Body effectiveness, alignment and conditioning practice integrated with creative exploration and movement analysis of effort, spatial awareness and detailed body usage. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as DANC/TH 280.

TH 285. Internship. 1-4 units
CR/NC
Prerequisite: TH 101; TH 210; and consent of instructor.
Part-time, supervised internship experience for Freshmen & Sophomore students in theatre or equivalent professionally related industry. Ability to work independently; strong verbal and written skills. Faculty approval of internship position required. Evaluations by supervisor and written reports by student required. 30 - 120 hours of work experience. Total credit limited to 4 units. Credit/ No credit grading only.

TH 290. Script Analysis. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210, TH 227 or TH 228.
Script analysis taught as an essential applied skill for actors, designers and directors. Students read a variety of plays and learn how to examine their structure, theme and context. 4 seminars.

TH 295. Foundations in Theatrical Design. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210.
Exploration of the fundamental principles and practices of designing for the stage. Emphasis placed upon the creative and collaborative process of theatre; development of the visual world of the play via language, color, drawing, analysis, and peer evaluation. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 305. Topics in Diversity on the American Stage. 4 units
2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4
USCP
Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and TH 210, TH 227, or TH 228 for Theatre majors or completion of GE Area C1 for all other majors (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).
Critical analysis of traditionally underrepresented groups in the American theatre, as writers, practitioners, story subjects. Investigation of dramatic literature and performance trends related to special interest topics. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and USCP.

TH 325. Costume Construction II. 4 units
Prerequisite: Junior standing.
Specialized and advanced costume construction techniques used in the entertainment industry. Building of all costumes and special craft projects for main stage theatre productions. Total credit limited to 8 units. May not be taken concurrently with TH 230 or TH 330. 4 laboratories.

TH 330. Stagecraft II. 4 units
Prerequisite: Junior standing.
Basic stagecraft technique used in the entertainment industry. Students construct and paint scenery, build and gather properties, hang and focus lighting instruments, and act as running crew for department production each term. Total credit limited to 8 units. May not be taken concurrently with TH 225 or TH 325. 4 laboratories.

TH 341. Advanced Acting Studio. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210 and TH 220.
Selected acting techniques with focus on specific advanced modes of training. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 345. Rehearsal and Performance. 4 units
Prerequisite: By audition only.
Preparation of a play for public presentation, including acting, stage management, publicity, or serving as a key member of the artistic team. Total credit limited to 12 units. Major credit limited to 4 units; repeated units are free electives. 4 laboratories.

TH 350. Seminar in Playwriting. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210; TH 290; and completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better.
Examines dramatic structure, techniques of dialogue, and means of characterization in variety of plays. Relates dramatic writing to technical, design, directorial and acting demands. Compositions of monologues, scenes and one-act play; works read and critiqued in class. 4 seminars.
TH 360. Theatre in the United States. 4 units
2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4
Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and TH 210, TH 227, or TH 228 for Theatre majors or completion of GE Area C1 for all other majors (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs). Recommended: TH 210 for all other majors.

Examination of specific American plays, playwrights, organizations and movements, applying them as portraits of the United States' historical, philosophical and cultural make-up. Topical emphasis focuses on the definition and development of an 'American' identity via the context of theatre. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

TH 370. Costume History. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210.

Dress worn in Western society from Ancient Egypt through AD 2000. Silhouette; how, when, and why particular garments were worn; emphasis on social, political, and economic context. 4 lectures.

TH 380. Theatre for Young Audiences. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 210 or upper-division Liberal Studies, Child Development or Psychology course.

Practice of educational drama as applied to multidisciplinary curricula. Collaborate on story-based improvisation in areas that include language arts, social studies, geography and science with additional focus on examining emotional development and creativity. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 390. Global Theatre and Performance. 4 units
2020-21 or later: Upper-Div GE Area C
2019-20 or earlier catalog: GE Area C4
Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A with grades of C- or better; one course in GE Area B4 with a grade of C- or better (GE Area B1 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs); and TH 210, TH 227, or TH 228 for Theatre majors or completion of GE Area C1 for all other majors (GE Area C3 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs). Recommended: TH 210 for all other majors.

Investigation of non-American theatre and dramatic performance; emphasis on plays, playwrights, and movements as portraits of philosophical/national make-up. Topical emphasis focuses on the definition and development of a cultural identity via the context of historical and contemporary theatre practices. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE Upper-Division C (GE Area C4 for students on the 2019-20 or earlier catalogs).

TH 400. Special Problems for Advanced Undergraduates. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Consent of department head.

Individual investigation, research, or project centering around theatre. Total credit limited to 8 units.

TH 430. Scenic Design. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 290 and TH 295.

Scenic design process used in the entertainment industry, including collaboration, concept development, research, sketching, drafting, color rendering using a variety of media, 3D model building, and the presentation of design material. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 432. Costume Design. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 290 and TH 295.

Costume design process used in the entertainment industry, including collaboration, concept development, research, sketching, color rendering using a variety of media, and the presentation of design material. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 434. Lighting Design. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 290 and TH 295.

Lighting design process used in the entertainment industry, including collaboration, concept development, research, functional aspects of lighting equipment, CAD drafting, the development of production paperwork and presentation of design material. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 450. Directing. 4 units
Prerequisite: TH 290 and consent of instructor.

Principles, philosophies, analytical methods, business practices, organizational techniques and interpersonal strategies of directing for the stage. Experiential work includes hands-on, in-class exercises, as well as intensive outside class rehearsals. Culmination in a public production of student-directed one-act plays. 3 lectures, 1 activity.

TH 461. Senior Project Seminar. 3 units
Prerequisite: Senior standing and Theatre majors only.

Focus on post-graduate career planning options in theatre arts, including resume and portfolio building, preparation for professional work, graduate school and internships. A structure by which students design and submit their senior projects. 3 seminars.

TH 470. Selected Advanced Topics. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

Directed group study of selected topics for advanced students. Open to undergraduate and graduate students. The Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 to 4 lectures.

TH 471. Selected Advanced Laboratory. 1-4 units
Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

Directed group laboratory study of selected topics for theatre students. The Class Schedule will list topics selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. 1-4 laboratories.

TH 480. Advanced Internship. 4 units
CR/NC
Prerequisite: Junior standing with a minimum 3.0 GPA and consent of instructor.

Part-time, supervised internship experience in the entertainment or equivalent professional industry. Ability to work independently; strong verbal and written skills. Faculty approval required. Evaluations by internship supervisor and written reports by student required. 120 hours of work experience. Total credit limited to 8 units. Credit/No Credit grading.