

Dramaturgy at Columbia

{ MFA informational webinar

{ Presented by Christian Parker, Theatre Program Chair

- ⌘ Dramaturgy is the making of theatrical events.
- ⌘ It is a way of seeing, witnessing and shaping the collaborative process.
- ⌘ It is a skill set and sits at the intersection of all of the theatrical disciplines. It is not a “job” per se. It is expressed in many jobs and roles within the theatre and other storytelling media.
- ⌘ In practice, it is generative, not just responsive. It requires ambition, diplomacy, insight, and leadership.

What is dramaturgy?

- ⌘ We place a great emphasis on collaboration.
- ⌘ We define the professional applications of studying Dramaturgy broadly.
- ⌘ We have a world class faculty within a major research university.
- ⌘ New York City is more than a backdrop. It is our largest classroom.
- ⌘ We offer a unique balance of practical experience and academic rigor.
- ⌘ We have unparalleled professional development opportunities through Shubert Internships, theatre partnerships, international connections/exchanges, and career guidance.

Why Columbia?

What do I study?

⌘ **Fall Semester – Year 1:**

- ⌘ Introduction to Dramaturgy – Christian Parker
- ⌘ Fundamentals of Directing – Leigh Silverman
- ⌘ History & Theory of Theatre – Arnold Aronson
- ⌘ Creating a Play – Leslie Ayvazian
- ⌘ Elective*

⌘ **Spring Semester – Year 1:**

- ⌘ Contemporary American Plays – Lisa Timmel
- ⌘ Collaboration – Anne Bogart
- ⌘ Critical Writing for Theatre - Linda Winer
- ⌘ Creating a Play - Leslie Ayvazian

Year One

⌘ **Fall Semester – Year 2:**

- ⌘ Development Process – Barry Grove
- ⌘ Collaboration 2 - Anne Bogart, David Henry Hwang & Christian Parker
- ⌘ Dramaturgy II (Shakespeare) – John Dias
- ⌘ Playwright-Dramaturg Workshop – Morgan Jenness
- ⌘ Topics in Theatre History and Theory – Arnold Aronson

⌘ **Spring Semester – Year 2:**

- ⌘ Dramaturgy Practicum – Christian Parker
- ⌘ Advanced Drama Criticism Seminar – Morgan Jenness
- ⌘ Storytelling and Drama - Gregory Mosher
- ⌘ Planning a Theatrical Season - Christian Parker
- ⌘ Elective*

Year Two

- ↳ ***Recommended Electives** include Directing III, Shakespeare in Performance, TV as a Dramatic Medium, Viewpoints, Fundraising and Marketing, Budgeting and Reporting, Press, Publicity and Audience Development, Toward a New Theatre, Television Writing, Silent Cinema, Fundamentals of Acting, Visiting Directors, and courses in the English department.

- ↳ **Additional Requirements** include one production assignment, Collaboration Weekend Workshop, two professional internships and a Foreign Language requirement.

- ↳ **Dramaturgy Thesis Project:** MFA dramaturgy students complete a written thesis based on production work, scholarly research, translations, or other projects approved by their advisor.

- ⌘ 60 credits over the course of two full time years of study.
- ⌘ Faculty approved thesis project
- ⌘ 2 professional internships/apprenticeships

What are the requirements?

What do people do for
their thesis projects?

Widest possible range of options.

All projects must have a significant component of critical writing.

Examples:

- ⌘ Translations/Adaptations
- ⌘ Research-based essays about the state of the field and critical issues.
- ⌘ Creations of theatre companies/original productions
- ⌘ Original plays combined with process analysis, research context
- ⌘ Traditional academic papers
- ⌘ Collaborative work with MFA directors and playwrights

- ⌘ The study of dramaturgy and dramaturgy students are central to the ethos and production work of the program.
- ⌘ Collaboration between disciplines, and multi-disciplinarity are core values.
- ⌘ Opportunities to develop a cohort among 6 different disciplines of instruction.
- ⌘ Advantages of being in a School of the Arts versus a Drama School.

How does Dramaturgy fit within the Theatre program?

- ⌘ International cultural capital.
- ⌘ Free tickets almost daily to theatre and other performance and art events.
- ⌘ Able to draw on the very best faculty in their fields, and all of their networks.
- ⌘ Unparalleled opportunities for professional connection, apprenticeships.

New York



Manhattanville Campus (coming soon)

- ↳ Liz Engelman '96, Artistic Director of Tofte Lake Center, MN, professor at UT Austin
- ↳ Julie Felise Dubiner '97, Associate Director, American Revolutions Project, Oregon Shakespeare Festival
- ↳ Elizabeth Whitaker '99, Associate Artistic Director, Signature Theatre Company
- ↳ Lisa Timmel '99, Director of New Work, Huntington Theatre Company
- ↳ Brian Flanagan '02, Television producer
- ↳ Mary Elizabeth Peters' 05, Director of Scheduling and Programming, Showtime Networks
- ↳ Abigail Katz ' 08, Director of New Play Development, Atlantic Theater Company
- ↳ Brendan Padgett ' 09, Chief Press Representative, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
- ↳ Miguel Ian Raya '10, Television writer/producer
- ↳ Ian Klein ' 12, Digital Storytelling consultant
- ↳ Annah Feinberg '13, Television writer/producer
- ↳ Ashley Melone '14 Artistic Director, Vineyard Arts Project
- ↳ Adrian Silver '14, Dramaturg, Writer, Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company
- ↳ Anika Chapin '14, Literary Manager & Dramaturg, Two River Theatre

Our Alumni

“As we move into an era of challenging performance - multimedia, site specific, etc.- a theater professional needs to have a vocabulary that communicates to different people at different levels. It's hard to get past what you already know and work in a totally new milieu. Sharing the common experience of an MFA program is not unlike sharing the common experience of boot camp. It prepares you for what's ahead and reinforces friendships and networks that can be invaluable later on.”

Patricia McLaughlin, '92. President of Beacon Artists Agency.

“Practically speaking, my MFA was invaluable - I am now the literary manager at a theater whose artistic director was a Columbia professor of mine! But more generally speaking, my time at Columbia exposed me to many different perspectives on how to make theater, and taught me to sharpen my own instincts about theater and how I want to help theater happen. “

Anika Chapin, '14. Literary Manager at Two River Theater

Words from our Alumni

“There's no obvious career path at the end, and it's an expensive way to spend three years. But, if you know what you're hoping to gain from it, the gaps in your knowledge you want to fill, the people you want to meet, the skills you want to acquire, or even the questions you want to pursue, then go for it. It's an amazing thing, but is an experience that requires you to be self-motivated and focused.”

Lynn Spector, '15.

“While the MFA curriculum is both rich and full, I would try to branch out in to at least one co-related area to increase my understanding of the professional opportunities for dramaturgs. Dramaturgy provides one of the firmest foundations on which to build a career in theatre. It is possible to take the skills and apply to many different creative areas and allows an early-career professional to forge unique paths.”

Christopher Burney, '94. Associate Artistic Director / Curator at Second Stage Theatre

“In my studies at Columbia I learned the fundamentals of fundraising and development and applied those skills almost immediately upon graduating. Dramaturgy training also aligns with marketing and branding, and the critical thinking skills growth was also invaluable for me. In producing and developing plays during my MFA I also learned how to manage teams to streamline and communicate visions and ideas, which has helped me manage and lead projects. ”

Emily Long, 2006. Director of Communications and Development at The LAMP (Media literacy education)

“If you're sure about being unsure, then that may very well be a good thing when considering an MFA in dramaturgy. If you like to explore, wonder, try, and continuously learn, then this is the degree for you.”

Ian Klein, '12. Founder/Creative Director,
Vizir Productions

Q&A