

**Department of Drama
The Catholic University of America**

**BA DRAMA
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

2025-2026

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Welcome

The B.A. in Drama provides students with courses and experiences that foster intellectual growth and cultural enrichment. It incorporates academic rigor and top-notch theatrical productions, giving students both excellent training in the theatrical field and a scholarly foundation in the liberal arts. The degree's liberal arts approach differentiates it from specialized conservatory training. By addressing imagination, intellect, emotion, faith, and morality with compelling immediacy, the program strives to train skilled theatre artists who synthesize a liberal arts education with their craft. The faculty provide both challenging theatrical productions and rigorous academic programs with the conviction that each enriches the other.

The skills developed in the theatre support excellence in any academic field or career, and the department encourages B.A. students to select an additional major or minor that supports their career goals.

Opportunities for performance and technical work accompany each season's productions and the numerous laboratory productions every year. B.A. Drama students are required to audition for mainstage productions, though they are not required to perform in them. B.A. Drama majors are required to earn four crew credits by working on departmental productions.

How to Use This Handbook

This publication is intended to function as a guide to departmental resources, policies, procedures, and requirements. It is no substitute, however, for regular contact with the department itself, especially with your adviser.

You should familiarize yourself with the contents of this handbook and with the contents of other Catholic University academic publications (see below), but you should also:

- Monitor the departmental website for announcements and policy changes.
- Read all email messages sent to you by the department's Academic Coordinator or faculty members and respond promptly. *Faculty and staff of this department will use only your official Catholic University email address*; check it often.
- Make *and keep* appointments with your adviser(s). This includes meeting your undergraduate adviser at least once per semester for course selection, and more frequently as needed to address adding and dropping courses, study abroad, and other academic issues.

According to departmental policy, the contents of this handbook should be considered binding unless they conflict with the Catholic University Undergraduate Announcements, the Advising Handbook of the College of Arts and Sciences, or the departmental website, in which case the policies listed in the latter three take precedence. All Catholic University students are also bound by the body of university policies, <http://policies.catholic.edu>.

Academic Program

The B.A. is offered through the Department of Drama in the Rome School of Performing Arts within the College of Arts and Sciences. B.A. Drama students must complete ten required courses and four electives in the Department of Drama. This handbook lists the majors' required courses and electives under the heading Academic Program: Requirements. It is recommended that students follow the sequence of courses listed under that heading. Electives with numbers 100 and up may be taken at any time. Those with numbers over 300 should be reserved for the third and fourth years of the program. Exceptions may be made when appropriate. There is no guaranteed scheduling of these classes, so they should be taken when available. Students must meet with their advisers at the beginning of each semester to select their courses.

Students must also complete 240 crew hours to graduate. The total hours are normally completed through 4 crews, 1 for each year a student is in the department, and each crew consists of 60 hours of work on productions.

The department encourages B.A. students to select an additional major or minor and participate in one of the University's study-abroad programs when possible.

Academic Program: Requirements

BA in Drama			
Required: 10 Courses = 30 Credits			
Course #	Course Title	Credits	
DR 101	Theatre I	3	
DR 104	Theatre II	3	
DR 201	Survey of Theatre History	3	
DR 202	Theatre Topics	3	
DR 206	Fundamentals of Acting I	3	
DR 207	Introduction to Design	3	
DR 305	Theatre Topics III	3	
DR 306	Theatre Production	3	
DR 312	Directing I	3	
DR 494 / DR 451	Independent Project / Senior Seminar	3	
DR 498	Undergraduate Comprehensive Exam	0	
	Total:	30	
Electives: Choose 4 Courses = 12 Credits			
Course #	Course Title	Credits	
DR 375	Arts Administration	3	
DR 386	History of Musical Theatre, 1935 - Present	3	
DR 425	Intermediate Acting: Improvisation	3	
DR 466	Screenwriting	3	
DR 467	Playwriting I	3	
DR 459	History of 20th Century Directing	3	
DR 495	Theatre Internship	3	
DR XXX	An elective in Drama not listed above, with Department consent	3	
	Total:	12	
	PROGRAM TOTAL (10 Required Courses and 4 Electives)	42	

Audition and Role Acceptance Policies

Audition Policy

All full-time Drama students in residence are required to audition for each main-stage production in the regular season, even if they are not able to (or choose not to) participate in each show. The faculty in the department believe that the audition process is integral to the training of professional theatre artists. The auditions and productions allow the faculty to evaluate each student's strengths and weaknesses each semester. All shows will be cast from these auditions.

Students who are pre-assigned as production staff for a particular show or have been approved for conflicting off-campus work (by completing the "Off-Campus Engagement Worksheet") are exempt from auditions. Any student wishing to be exempted from auditions for any other reason must email a request to the current area head of their program to be considered for exemption.

Any student who fails to attend main-stage auditions and does not receive permission to miss them will not be considered for other main-stage or secondary productions for the semester missed and the following fall or spring semester.

Crew Policies

All undergraduate BA Drama students, BFA Theatre, Film, and Television students, BFA Musical Theatre students, and Vocal Performance students must complete 240 crew hours of production work to graduate.

The total hours are normally completed through 4 crews, 1 for each year a student is in the department. Each crew consists of 60 hours of work on productions or in the shops in support of productions.

All majors in the Department of Drama are required to complete one crew assignment (60 hours) for each year they are in the department (for a total of 240 hours). Transfer students must complete one crew assignment (60 hours) for each year they are enrolled in the Department of Drama. Similarly, students who switch from another major at The Catholic University of America into a program in Drama must complete one crew assignment (60 hours) for each year (or partial year) they study in the department.

Students may complete the 60 hours by working as running crew or by working in the scene or costume shops. Stage Managing and Assistant Stage Managing crew positions offer approximately double the time of the usual crew positions, and such assignments equal roughly 120 hours. Other positions, such as front-of-house operations, assistant musical director, assistant director, assistant choreographer, or dramaturg do not count for crew credit. All students serving a crew credit must participate in strike. Failure to be at strike will result in loss of the crew hours earned for that production.

It is the student's responsibility to sign up for each crew just as one registers for classes. To inquire about crew positions, please contact the Production Staff that administers crew assignments and express your interest and availability. A student may request a specific crew position, but positions will be filled as deemed appropriate by the Production Staff that administers crew assignments. If crew positions have not been filled, a student may be assigned by the Production Staff with the support of a supervising faculty member. The Production Staff that administers crew assignments finalizes each position.

After a student has been assigned to work a crew position, the student will be contacted by the Production Staff to verify the commitment on that production. The student will verify by signing a contract (see the link for forms) for that production. Once the student has signed and submitted the form, he/she is required to work on that production and to be available for ALL calls listed on the production schedule. If at any time a student cannot fulfill their obligation, they are responsible for finding a replacement before the start of the contract. Failure to do so will result in the requirement of additional crew hours. Extenuating circumstances and personal hardships will be evaluated by the Production Staff that administers crew assignments in consultation with the faculty and staff on a case-by-case basis.

Priority will be given:

1. to students in their final two semesters who require crew credits;
2. to those needing the hours to keep pace with 60 hours per year;
3. in the order that students sign up for crew positions.

All hours will be tracked by the supervising crew chief, Shop Manager, Stage Manager, or the Production Staff who administers crew assignments.

Upon the completion of a crew contract, the contract will be placed in the student's electronic academic file by the Production Staff who administers crew assignments, confirming the completion of assigned crew hours.

Students will not receive credit if they fail to show up for work or do not perform satisfactorily on a crew as evaluated by the faculty member and the Production Staff who administers crew assignments. Students should fulfill at least one crew position each academic year to avoid having too many crews to complete in one academic year. When the student consults with his/her adviser for course registration, the student must check with the adviser to ensure that the necessary documentation from the previous year's production credit is in his/her electronic academic file.

Guidelines for Professional Behavior and Physical Contact

Introduction / Background

In our mission statement, The Rome School of Performing Arts commits to the “development of imaginative, disciplined expression in the arts”. We value the shared goals of “uplifting the human spirit” and providing “practical skills in arts production. Artistic expression - be it in the classroom, a rehearsal space, or in individual lessons - can require physical contact between willing participants. Artistic expression in the theatre demands the exploration of the full range of emotions and actions that happen between and among people in the course of living.

While The Rome School encourages artistic development and the expansion of boundaries, each student must be cognizant of what is and is not appropriate as it relates to physical contact on and off stage. Each student has the inherent right to question any exercise, rehearsal process and/or instruction and each journey a student takes is an individual one, to which s/he has the right. It is thus the work of student theatre artists to expand known ways of behaving in character within the world of a play.

Learning to explore these emotions and actions needs to be in a safe and structured environment. It is the responsibility of the Rome School not only to foster a structured and safe environment, but to prepare our students for professional success in all of our disciplines. This document uses recognized industry standards and sets forth a pattern for physical contact that is recommended for use in all areas of The Rome School of Performing Arts. We have developed these Guidelines to aid students, faculty, staff, and guest artists as they navigate this essential aspect of our collective work.

All who create art for The Rome School are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the tools created by the “Not In Our House” movements and the Intimacy Directors International.

[Not In Our House](#)

[Intimacy Directors Resource Guide](#)

Overarching Framework

The exercises that occur in a classroom or rehearsal may involve physical contact such as touching of a student’s body by an instructor for the purpose of example, instruction and/or adjustment. In response to real needs within our industries, the Intimacy Directors International created a clear and concise framework that is both easily remembered and necessarily complex. The core pillars are:

- Context
- Consent
- Communication
- Choreography
- Closure

The Rome School fully encourages the use of this framework. In classroom exercises and individual lessons, the CONTEXT as to why physical contact is necessary should be clearly stated by the instructor/artist. CONSENT must be given by the student artist. COMMUNICATION must be an active part for all consenting persons. In ANY rehearsal - be it for coursework between students or for productions between artist's and student artist's - ALL of the core pillars should be followed. The need for physical contact must be given the proper CONTEXT as it relates to furthering the drama/storytelling. CONSENT by all participants must be obtained. COMMUNICATION should be open and continuous through the entire process from the first rehearsal through the last performance and should flow in every direction. The CHOREOGRAPHY of the physical contact must be carefully planned and, once set, not altered without working through the established framework. When that part of the rehearsal/performance is concluded, it is imperative that CLOSURE be acknowledged. The performers leave the world of the story and re-enter their own life's boundaries.

It is through parameters such as these that students can learn to discuss, question and create emotional and physical intimacy and/or violence in a professional manner which can serve them and their theatrical working relationship throughout their careers.

Patterns of Behavior for Exercises

The acquisition of vocal, physical, emotional and mental awareness on the part of a student requires various kinds of exercises which involve the physical contact of one's own or another person's body. Primary points of contact between an instructor and a student include the head, neck, back, face, shoulders, collar, arms, torso, hips, legs, hands, and feet. Such physical contact will be made with the utmost respect for every student and informed by the aforementioned PILLARS (The 5 Cs). If a student feels conflicted, this should be thoroughly and honestly COMMUNICATED during the CONTEXT AND CONSENT phases.

Should an exercise require specific kinds of intimate and/or violent behavior, that information must be made available to the students as soon as is plausible.

These discussions will include:

The rationale for the exercises,

A methodology including verbalized definitions of the kind of touching involved,

Verbalized ways to ask permission to touch,

Verbalized ways to give permission to touch,

Verbalized reactions to the way the instructor/student/actor is touching,

Verbalized reactions to the way the instructor/student/actor is being touched.

Patterns of Behavior for Rehearsals: In-Class, Out-of-Class, in Productions, and Costume Fittings

The rehearsing of scenes in the classroom, for classroom presentation, and/or for a production may require the need for costume fittings, hugging, kissing, and other forms of physical contact.

Using the framework set for herein, the instructor/director will discuss professional ways to approach such work in-class as well as out-of-class rehearsals which will enable the students to talk with one another. This will encourage students to figure out how they want to create the intimacy, as the characters, before actually touching one another. If/when students must rehearse physical contact for in class performances, they are encouraged to have a non-performing colleague present to facilitate adherence to the established framework. In productions, stage management will be present.

The skills which need to be learned for any kind of stage intimacy require a great deal of trust between / among the actors involved in the scene. The instructor/student, faculty, and/or guest director will first discuss the justification for the use of the specific form of intimacy within the context of the class, rehearsal or production. Then the development of the “actions” of the intimacy can be staged “by the numbers” in slow motion and then rehearsed until the specific form of intimacy is at the tempo and with the physical and emotional life needed for the scene or production.

The above delineated pattern is also used to learn any kind of stage fighting, with the development of trust between/among actors being an important part of the work. Again, the instructor / fight choreographer / dance choreographer / director will first discuss the rationale for the use of this kind of fight within the context of the class, rehearsal or production. Most often, then the “fight” is staged “by the numbers” in slow motion and then, little by little, rehearsed until the “fight” is at the tempo and with the physical and emotional life needed for the scene or production.

In creating the world of a theatrical production, costumes are an essential element. In the same manner that we individually take care with our personal clothing, the Costume Shop Manager, Costume Designers, and Costume Shop personnel take great care with each and every costume created for or used in the production. Ensuring proper fit, function, and safety with costumes may require a level of personal contact that could be new, unaccustomed and therefore uncomfortable to student artists. At all times the feelings of the actor will be respected, and if intimate touching is necessary, appropriate conversation will precede the fitting on how to maintain the respect and comfort of the actor while accomplishing the necessary fitting of the garment(s). Normal practice is to always have a third person in a fitting. The actor is always asked to talk to those doing their fitting about anything that poses an issue for them personally, relating to both the fitting and the fit of the garment(s).

This document and the framework applies to all appropriate classes and productions and will be shared and discussed at the beginning of classes and productions.

Structures for Reporting unprofessional behavior

To repeat, while The Rome School encourages artistic development and the expansion of boundaries, each student must be aware of what is and is not appropriate for them. **In most cases, it is suggested that the involved parties have an open and productive dialogue about the situation. If you do not feel comfortable discussing the situation with the involved individual, there are several pathways to seek resolution depending upon the environment.**

If you are in immediate danger, contact 911 and/or DPS 202-319-5111.

In an academic environment (classrooms, studios, offices, rehearsal spaces): The following order is suggested. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the individual in a given position, you may advance a level.

Instructor / Academic Advisor / Trusted CUA Faculty or Staff

Area Head / Department Chair

Associate Dean of Undergraduate or Graduate Students

Associate Dean of Academic Services and Productions

Dean of The College of Arts & Sciences

If at any time in this process, the student does not feel the situation has been handled appropriately, or been rectified, they may contact the Title IX Coordinator, Lou Mejia.

Title IX issues should begin at this level. Tel. 202-319-6104

TITLEIX-COORD@CUA.EDU

In a production/ensemble environment:

Stage Manager / Cast Rep / Trusted CUA Faculty or Staff

Director / Choreographer

Production Manager / Producer

Associate Dean of Academic Services and Productions

Dean of The Rome School of Music, Drama, and Art

If at any time in this process, the student does not feel the situation has been handled appropriately, or been rectified, they may contact the Title IX Coordinator, Lou Mejia.

Title IX issues should begin at this level. Tel. 202-319-6104

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Initially created by BettyAnn Leeseberg-Lange, May 10, 2006, based on the Touching Policy of the Cincinnati Conservatory for the Arts, 1996. First written by BettyAnn Leeseberg-Lange; presented to the Drama Department faculty at End-of-Year Meetings, May, 2006.

Rewritten by BettyAnn Leeseberg-Lange and Janet Mudd, CUA Equal Opportunity Office Director, Sept. 2006, incorporating faculty suggestions and legal procedures and language.

Updated by BettyAnn Leeseberg-Lange, Oct. 2006, from suggestions made at a special faculty meeting attended by Marietta Hedges, Jon Klein, Jeffrey Sichel and Gary Sloan, and added comments from the MFA Directing students.

Updated with costume fitting information from Gail Beach, Department Costume Designer, Nov. 2006.

The theater world is constantly building upon itself. In the summer of 2021, a new committee was established to update these Guidelines. That committee was comprised of Eleanor Holdridge, Melissa Flaim, Shanara Gabrielle, Matt Ripa, Pauline Grossman, and James Hampton.

Internships

B.A. Drama Students: DR 495: Theatre Internship (3 credits)

B.A. students may participate in an internship with a professional theatre company or at another institution in a capacity that allows them to develop skills related to their degree program. Advisors may help students identify professional theatres and other appropriate institutions for an internship, but each student is responsible for securing an internship. The department cannot guarantee the availability of such positions.

The BA internship is a three-credit elective. It may be taken for credit once. BA students must register for DR495 the semester immediately following the date they complete their internship. Students must be in their second year or later and have a 3.0 GPA. Prerequisite: Department Consent.

To propose an internship, BA students must develop, in conjunction with the advisor and responsible members of the professional staff at the theatre company or other institution, a detailed plan that includes a description of the responsibilities of the student, the extent of the commitment in terms of time, and the means by which the student will be evaluated at the end of the internship. The student will not receive credit for work off campus until his or her advisor approves an internship proposal. Proposals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the impact on the department's productions, the value of the internship for the student's development, and the student's overall record. Students serving as interns should commit to no other department obligations during the semester in which the work is to be completed. Students should also be aware that an internship may lengthen the time needed to complete their degree program.

To secure and complete an internship, B.A. Drama students must do the following:

1. Submit a proposal to their advisor that includes the following information:
 - Identify a professional theatre company or other institution.
 - Detail the work to be completed.
 - Explain how the different tasks will equal 150 hours of supervised work.
3. The number of hours each student completes each week may be flexible and should be based on the requirements of specific tasks, taking into account the company's schedule and the needs of the student involved in the internship.
4. Students must identify who will supervise their work at the company.
5. Students must submit the Rome School Internship Form and the Office of the General Council's Letter of Agreement with the required signatures.
6. Students must provide their advisors with regular updates concerning their work.
7. Students and their advisers will agree on a plan to assess the student's schedule and work while the student participates in an internship. These meetings should include the on-site supervisor at the company.
8. The student must have no commitments in the department that would conflict with an internship, including, but not limited to, crew credits and productions.

Off-Campus Professional Engagements

Washington, DC has the second largest theatrical community in the nation. The DC theatre community respects CUA as one of the best and most consistent training centers for creative young talent, and many of our students find their first professional roles in the city. The following guidelines are designed to help you balance professional engagements off campus while prioritizing your classroom, studio, and production commitments on campus.

One of the foundational philosophies of the Drama Department's BFA programs is that there is no substitute for professional training or for professional experience. The faculty and staff believe that both are necessary to prepare students for a professional career in the performing arts. The BFA faculty respect and encourage student employment in professional theatrical situations and is why the department requires professional theatrical internships. However, the department's faculty also believe that, while students engage in their intensive training on campus, they must place a priority on their education over professional experience. The students in the department's BFA programs have chosen to be a part of a selective four-year experience designed to prepare them in every aspect of their professional careers. When students graduate they will have the rest of their career to work professionally, and the department requires its students to dedicate themselves to their training during the years that they study in the department.

We hope that these guidelines will help provide you the support that you need to make the best decisions possible for your career, your education, and your professional pursuits.

General Criteria

Freshmen and sophomores will not be permitted to work off-campus during the school year. Some exceptions may be made for summer work that has rehearsals starting in late April of the sophomore year.

(Transfer students who are currently enrolled in Sophomore Workshop are considered "sophomore level" in this regard).

Students will not be permitted to miss any classes or required class/school events for an outside role beyond what is permitted by the syllabus of a particular class. Some exceptions may be made for extraordinary situations such as a role at a LORT level equity house. If you believe that your situation warrants an exception you need to schedule a meeting with the MT program head BEFORE you begin the audition process.

Before You Start Auditioning

If you meet the above criteria and are eligible for outside work, the next step is to complete Part 1 of the Off-Campus Engagement Worksheet and submit it to the Department of Drama. A blank Off-Campus Engagement Worksheet appears as Appendix 2. to this Handbook.

After you have submitted part 1 you may start auditioning and, if offered a role, proceed to fill out Part 2 of the Worksheet.

The information you will need for Part 2 of the worksheet includes:

- Are you on a Rome School of Performing Arts scholarship?
- What is the name of the theatre, the show, and role offered?
- What are the general dates and times of rehearsal?
- What conflicts do you see this having with your required classes and events at CUA?

Remember to work with your advisor to complete the letter from the Office of the General Council regarding internships. That letter is available in the Department of Drama's Google Drive. You must submit the completed letter in your advising folder in the Department of Drama's Google Drive.

Guidelines for Senior Seminar

DR 494 Independent Project/Senior Seminar (3 credits)

This course serves as the capstone research project for BA Drama seniors during the academic year in which they will graduate. This course is equivalent to DR451 Senior Seminar. Students may complete the course in the fall or spring semester of their final year.

The directed study uses selected readings, presentations, and research projects to engage in discussions, write short papers, and develop a longer scholarly essay on a subject the student and faculty member agree upon. The readings, assignments, and final paper synthesize knowledge gained in previous courses, including the liberal arts curriculum and experiences acquired in the field of drama. The course is required for all BA Drama students.

Through the Independent Project, students in the last semester of their BA Drama program will do the following:

1. Examine the works of theatre artists in practical and analytical ways.
2. Strengthen each student's ability to articulate and justify different views, opinions, and creative choices through oral discussion, formal presentations, analytical research, and scholarly papers.
3. Understand the importance of research and dramaturgy in all fields.
4. Identify the artists and performance styles that have impacted contemporary theatrical practices.
5. Understand how political and social forces affect contemporary theatre practice.
6. Identify and understand the most significant scholarly work that informs contemporary theatre practices and criticism.
7. Create a post-graduation plan.