

Proposal for Ethics and Integrity Requirements
Master of Fine Arts in Theatre Program
School of Performing Arts

The Master of Fine Arts in Theatre graduate program in the School of Performing Arts will address issues of ethics and integrity through a variety of means, many of which are already well established within our MFA program policies, procedures, requirements, and curriculum.

- We will convey appropriate ethical practices, as well as avenues for reporting alleged misconduct, through instructional experiences and through publicly disseminated documents.
- We will evaluate the individual use of professional conventions and ethical standards in student research, production processes, teaching (both formal and informal), and through professional internship placement and participation in regional and national conferences, seminars, and workshops.

Our program trains young theatre makers for careers in the professional field. Consequently, issues of ethics and integrity in this program must include examination in both scholarship and the professional contexts in order to bridge the two realms. Ethical questions are nothing new to the arts, but in preparing and training future leaders for the field our program addresses and guides our students through the process of finding reasonable and practical approaches to a wide range of ethical issues.

Our practices with regard to the ethical conduct and scholarly integrity in graduate training are informed by our own program's Mission Statement and Statement of Departmental Ethics, Virginia Tech's Principles of Community, Virginia Tech's Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, and the standards of our field as outlined by the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), the Association of Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), and by professional theatre associations and unions.

- 1. Plagiarism and other violations of the Graduate Honor Code**
- 2. Proper use of professional conventions in citation of existing research and scholarship, accurate reporting and ownership of findings, and acknowledgement of contributions to the work**

The MFA in Theatre program will provide graduate students with information on plagiarism and the proper use of professional citation, reporting and acknowledgement of contributions to the work primarily through two instructional experiences:

- Each year, the MFA in Theatre program conducts a new student orientation of incoming MFA students. As of this proposal, this orientation will include
 - A faculty presentation on professional development that will include a section on professional ethics, including definitions of plagiarism and academic misconduct, and direction to relevant university policies concerning plagiarism and academic misconduct.
 - A brief review of ethics and integrity with regard to teaching, both formal and informal, in the classroom, production and management shops, and rehearsal rooms.
 - Dissemination of our program's policy documents, including its Statement of Departmental Ethics and the Graduate Honor Code.
- All MFA in Theatre graduate students take a four-semester sequence called Graduate Seminar (TA 5015). In this sequence several aspects of Ethics and Integrity are currently or will be covered thoroughly in each of the semesters of the sequence.

- Proper citation, ethical use of sources and data, and proper reporting of research findings. Within the Graduate Seminar sequence all four semesters include projects that are tailored around reading and seeing specific scripts and productions. Students write critical responses, prepare presentations, and complete projects that include substantial research. Proper citation, ethical use of sources and data, and reporting of research data are intrinsic to these projects, as is avoidance of plagiarism.
 - In regard to these written and oral presentation student projects students, we discuss in class the fair use and contractual permissions needed to utilize other's work, proper documentation, and standard scholarly citation formats.
 - In the same context of class discussion, plagiarism in its variety of forms (most likely in the unintentional use of materials without acknowledgement) is reviewed.
- Other ethical discussions are elemental to Graduate Seminar course work. For example,
 - Many contemporary plays are based on interviews, stories collected, excerpts from news items and/or other factual materials from resources that are not individually generated. Video or digital imaging may be part of this.
 - Ethical issues raised by the content of the play itself. A play doing verbatim accounts that point out conflicting views of "real" events creates an questions about "legitimate" authorities within the events that make up the play.
 - Also in much so-called "devised" work, the practice of recording interviews or stories needs to consider the issue of ownership by the people whose stories are used but are not officially the playwright who edits, assembles, and enhances them with theatrical frames.
 - Often, the variety and subtlety of these questions are integrated into discussions of reading assignments.

3. Ethical standards in teaching, mentoring, and professional activities

- Teaching, Mentoring, and Supervising. Graduate students work with undergraduate student in many ways and need to be aware of restriction, codes and university policies regarding ethical behavior. In this MFA program, some graduate students teach undergraduate courses. Others teach undergraduates informally in the context of production shops and the management office. Some graduate students are asked to mentor and supervise undergraduate students, in production and rehearsal contexts.
 - The standards of ethics and integrity in these contexts are outlined and reviewed in the appropriate graduation production studios (TA 5415,16, etc.) under the mentoring of each student's primary advisor.
 - We will add an overview of these restrictions, codes, and university policies in a class discussion of Graduate Seminar (TA 5015), with particular reference to the ATHE Ethics Task Force Report section on "Rehearsal/Production, Laboratory Teaching, and Safety Guidelines."
- Professional activities.

- Graduate Seminar (TA 5015) will present class sessions to introduce and discuss realities regarding ethics and ethical behavior in professional production work, such as
 - Artist/creator rights
 - Copyright and infringement
 - Contracts & Protections for employment
 - Insurance & Liabilities
 - True Open Sourcing; Definition and Rights;
 And professional management work, such as,
 - Dealings with sponsors and individual donors
 - Advertising and promotion
 - Contracting for rights to produce work
 These will be framed in a variety of contexts such as
 - Broadway
 - Off Broadway
 - L.O.R.T.
 - Opera
 - Dance
 - Theme Park/Entertainment
- These Graduate Seminar class sessions will draw on the several teachers' depth of experience in the professional sphere, as well as offering reading assignments in books, articles, and internet sources.

4. Available avenues for reporting alleged misconduct

Avenues for reporting alleged professional or ethical misconduct will be provided to students in two ways:

1. We will incorporate information about how to report misconduct through Virginia Tech channels and through appropriate professional theatre associations and unions as part of the instructional sessions on plagiarism and professional ethics in Graduate Seminar that all MFA students are required to take.
2. We will provide this same information in our program's policy documents with which all our students are familiar and to which they have unimpeded access on the School of the Arts graduate program Web site.
3. The professional context?

5. Optional Topics. N/A