



PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE  
12180 PARK AVENUE SOUTH  
TACOMA, WA 98447

P 253.535.7772

[www.plu.edu/theatre-dance](http://www.plu.edu/theatre-dance)

## Season Selection and Academic Freedom

### Spotlight Season Productions as credit-bearing opportunities

To support traditional classroom instruction, the Department of Theatre and Dance affirms the vital importance of productions and production activity as necessary components of theatre and dance education. As such, we embed teaching and mentorship to all students involved in our Spotlight (faculty-directed) productions.

In recognition of this teaching and mentorship, students in Spotlight productions may register for THEA 225: Running Crew I, DANC 240: Dance Concert Ensemble, THEA 400: Rehearsal and Performance, THEA 425: Running Crew II, DANC 440: Dance Concert Choreography, DANC 491: Independent Study and/or THEA 491: Independent Study and receive academic credit for their work in these shows.

Productions by student organizations hold a different purpose: to provide leadership and creative opportunities to students as a means to help them develop their skills and craft. Academic credit cannot be earned for work on these productions because they have no faculty involvement aside from advising.

### Season Selection Process

Production titles and content for the Spotlight Season are identified by faculty directors and choreographers in conversation with faculty designers and technicians. The criteria generally consists of the following considerations:

1. Is there academic merit to the piece in addition to its entertainment value?
2. Is the show producible given our resources of time, personnel and funding?
3. Is there a potential population of students who could fill the roles without violating our licensing contract and/or infringing copyright?

Specific productions may be desirable to be included in our Spotlight season but are not ultimately chosen due to a variety of factors, such as:

- Rights are not available, even though they may be available to other schools
- Production costs exceed our allotted budget
- The production's elements—cast and/or design requirements—exceed our ability given the time or personnel required

Because the number and demographics of auditioners, director/choreographers and designers vary each semester due to academic, work and family obligations, PLU Theatre and Dance does not select productions to highlight a specific student nor does it require students to participate in its production season unless they are registered for the Running Crew classes.



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## Challenging Content and Academic Freedom

The Spotlight Season may include characters or subject matter that is challenging, that some find offensive, and/or that make audiences uncomfortable. The Department never selects pieces *primarily* because they are challenging; however, we recognize that an institution of higher education should not shy away from uncomfortable content as long as it has academic merit. Often, the very nature of the discomfort is the primary reason the piece encourages intellectual engagement. Engaging with difficult or controversial topics also helps students advance their sense of self and purpose in the world.

In Spring 2022, the PLU Board of Regents released a policy on Academic Freedom intended to support faculty and students in their pursuit of knowledge:

“The Board of Regents of Pacific Lutheran University reaffirms the bedrock principles of freedom of inquiry and freedom to pursue methods of inquiry — specific to a particular discipline or interaction between disciplines — as integral to learning without fear or repercussion or reprisal, and affirms the foundational principles of critical questioning, freedom of expression, and learning in community that are hallmarks of Lutheran higher education and that are essential to realizing equity and justice.”

Productions and classroom work that present different perspectives and viewpoints are essential to higher education, even if those viewpoints are distasteful or upsetting. Theatre and Dance affirms that the campus community can learn and grow as much from productions that challenge and provoke as by those that comfort and reinforce beliefs.

When particularly challenging content is presented—such as characters or ideas that are disturbing for historically-oppressed people or that demonstrate sexual violence—the department will take additional measures to communicate this to audiences and will ensure that student company members are informed and provided an opportunity to withdraw from participation without repercussion.

The Department of Theatre and Dance’s mission is to support students in reaching their professional and academic goals through providing meaningful educational and production experiences, fostering leadership, promoting community, and nurturing passionate, responsible, and caring artists. We evidence this in our classes and in our Spotlight Season. We acknowledge there may be a difference between what feels comfortable and what has meaningful educational merit, and we strive to provide a full range of subject matter and performance styles while providing care and resources for our students.

May 31, 2022