

TRACY C. DAVIS

## MENTORING PHILOSOPHY

Theatre and performance scholars work across numerous research and analytical traditions, which greatly enriches the scope and appeal of our work, yet this plethora makes research design especially challenging. My research has been far-ranging in terms of disciplinary engagements, temporality, and theoretical inspiration. I have also completed numerous large-scale historical projects with exceptionally deep archival exploration. I draw on these experiences – as well as thirty years as a doctoral mentor – to help students recognize and solve problems that arise in their own research. I encourage each student to recognize an organic connection between their passionate curiosity and how their topic is amenable to challenging theoretical and historiographic insights in order to articulate a compelling question. The skill of asking questions, tailored to different purposes, is something academics apply in all aspects of our work – course design, discussion, and research – which I model through both oral interaction and written analysis. The fundamentals are taught in Theatre and Drama 501: Methodology and reinforced through the mentored experience of prospectus writing, exam preparation, data gathering, analysis, and writing.

A dissertation is the sum of many parts, and I endeavor to help each student to understand how their research utilizes mixed-methods approaches across multiple phases. This has several advantages. Recognizing models for research in other scholars' work, and traditions developed in various fields, enables conscious choices about data gathering and analysis that best suit the problems posed by the research. I mentor each student to understand the range of options for data categories, data gathering, and analysis that suits their topic, inclinations, and training and to build a project with genuine contributions to humanistic scholarship. Making the task of research design transparent enables each student to take charge of their dissertation project while experiencing the satisfaction of day-by-day progress, always perceiving how a given task relates to the whole. When necessary, this also facilitates constructive alterations to a plan.

The transparency of this process is key to progress with the dissertation but also to students' subsequent ability to design and carry out independent research. I believe in mentoring students to achieve short-term goals as well as life-long satisfaction in intensive teaching and learning environments. While I emphasize the indispensability of rigorous scholarly practice, I also help students to determine adaptations that suit their individuality. Achieving balance between conscientious planning and more freeform approaches is carefully calibrated. Students should be able to recognize when they innovate while keeping focused on the big picture: coming back to a central research question can usually keep projects on track.

Everyone's tendencies and curiosities are their own, but it is constructive to build on strengths as well as always work on what challenges us. I believe in helping students at all levels to recognize their skill sets yet also work with them to name the next challenges: this is how intellectuals dynamically evolve while preparing to tackle stimulating problems. I give extensive feedback on content and expect students to help me get insight into their own processes. I am direct, but can also appreciate learning and communication styles that operate more intuitively or circuitously. Mentorship and menteeship are enjoyable when a frank and open exchange can be maintained and when learning is bi-directional. I think of dissertations as collaborative processes in which (in our respectively dedicated ways) I work with students to optimize their research as well as to achieve career goals. At the same time, I am also clear about our respective responsibilities and the kind of dedication and drive that helps us to succeed at this demanding yet rewarding work. To this end, students are encouraged to take full advantage of workshops that demystify academic career tracks, develop transferrable skills for many professional arenas, and

enhance effectiveness as pedagogues. The ability to communicate with many kinds of audiences is vital, so I typically give feedback not only on students' research presentations but also their teaching, dramaturgy, and other pursuits.

Well-articulated research plans are necessary for grant writing. I emphasize the relationship between the prospectus and applications that fund research costs. This has born much fruit. My advisees have won fellowships and grants in support of their dissertation research from many organizations including doctoral fellowships from the SSRC, NSF, Fulbright Foundation, and SSHRC (Canada). Three of my advisees have won the New Scholar's Prize from the International Federation for Theatre Research. Graduates work as faculty in universities across the USA, Canada, and United Kingdom as well as journalists, consultant researchers, and non-profit managers. I am intensely proud of them all. Current and recent students' projects relate to several of my research interests:

The following dissertators are in my "home" programs of Theatre and Drama, Performance Studies, and English as well as History. In addition, I have served on dissertation committees in Musicology, and Rhetoric and have served on dissertations that focus on Panama, Ghana, early modern England, Japan, Romania, Asian American Studies, and many projects about the USA.

To learn more, watch the Hemispherica interview <http://hidvl.nyu.edu/video/003305799.html> or listen to the Fluid States (PSi) interview <http://www.fluidstates.org/article.php?id=80>

Areas of expertise	Current Supervision
<i>Theatre history, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity</i>	Strategic use of Blackface by African American Dramatists Racial/Ethnic Impersonation and Immigrant Identity in American Vaudeville, 1884-1924
<i>Performance theory &amp; aesthetics</i>	Crossplay and Cosplay in Fan Cultures Nondenominational Christian Spectacles Place and Historicism in 21C Roman Fascism Racialized Performances of Femininity in the Segregated South Performance, Ecology, and the Politics of the Present
<i>Transnationalism, economic and socioeconomic dimensions of performance performance</i>	Early 20C Argentine Yiddish theatre and Prostitution Northern Soul as Transnational Phenomenon Cultural Commerce: Making the British World in Australia
<i>Museum and exhibition studies</i>	Commemoration, Education, and Preservation in 19C-20C America