

Tracy C. Davis

Mentoring Philosophy

Dissertations are the sum of many parts, and I endeavour to help students to understand their research as multi-phase projects. This has several advantages: it makes transparent the task of research design, enables students to experience the satisfaction of day-by-day progress while always perceiving how a given task relates to the whole, and facilitates constructive alterations to a plan when this proves necessary. I teach research design through a course (Theatre and Drama 501: Methodology) and reinforce principles through the mentored experience of prospectus writing, exam preparation, data gathering, and writing. I encourage students to build an organic connection between their passionate curiosity and how their topic is amenable to challenging theoretical 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. 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. I mentor students to understand the range of options for data, data gathering, and analysis that suits their topic, inclinations, and training and to build challenging projects that make genuine contributions to humanistic scholarship. The transparency of this process is key to students' progress as dissertators but also to their 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.

My research has been particularly 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 twenty years as a doctoral mentor – to help students recognize and solve problems that arise in their own research. 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.

Students who are goal-oriented may find my problem-solving strategies particularly conducive. I give extensive feedback on content and process, and tend to give advice that is task-centric. 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 I think of dissertations as collaborate processes in which (in our respectively dedicated ways) I work with students to optimize their research. 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.

Well-articulated research plans are necessary for grant-writing, and so 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. Two of my advisees have won the New Scholar's Prize from the International Federation for Theatre Research (Lisa Wolford Wylam in 1998 and Adrian Curtin in 2010). Another, Michael McKinnie, received the Distinguished Dissertation Award for 1999–2001 from the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States; his dissertation was revised and published by the University of Toronto Press, garnering the 2008 Ann Saddlemyer Award for most distinguished book in Canadian theatre studies.

Currently, students' projects relate to several of my research interests:

Areas of expertise	Supervising dissertations-in-progress
19C British theatre history	19C pantomime
Theatrical modernism and aesthetics	Acoustic imaginaries in modernism
Economics and socioeconomic dimensions of performance	19C German theatre finance Contemporary French radical performance
Performance theory	German romantic Theology, Philosophy, and Theatre Performance and Truth-telling in Trial Preparation Techniques Contemporary puppet theatre
Gender and theatre	British actresses' philanthropic work, 1800-1914 Stage adaptations and biographies of Nell Gwyn
Museum studies	Nature in zoos and arboreta

I also welcome dissertators in Cold War Studies, musicology, and projects that innovate with research methodologies and inter- or multi-disciplinary approaches. Many students draw upon my expertise in performance theory and methodologies to enhance projects distant from my topical expertise (current projects feature Panama nationalist performance and clowning in Colombia ; in recent years this has also extended to projects on Ghana, early modern England, Japan, Romania, Asian American Studies, Australia, and many projects on the United States).

Recently completed doctoral dissertations supervised by Tracy C. Davis:

- 2000 Michael McKinnie (Sr. Lecturer, Queen Mary University of London, UK); "Worksites: Theatre Work and its Urban Environment in Toronto Since 1967"
- 2001 Peter Glazer (Assoc. Prof., University of California at Berkeley); "Radical Nostalgia: Spanish Civil War Commemoration and the Politics of Desire"
Larry Bogad (Assoc. Prof., University of California at Davis); "Electoral Guerrilla Theatre in Recent Democracies: Speaking Mirth to Power"
Margaret Werry (Asst. Prof., University of Minnesota); "Tourism, Ethnicity, and the Performance of New Zealand Nationalism, 1889–1914"
Karen McLaughlin (Fellow, University of Wisconsin-Madison Women's Research Center); "How Women's Words Fail in the Public Arena and What They Do about It"
- 2004 Natsu Onoda (Lecturer, Georgetown University), for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture, University of Chicago), "Tezuka Osamu: an Intertextual History of Comics in Post-World War II Japan"
- 2005 Amy Partridge (Lecturer in Gender Studies, Northwestern University) "Public Health for the People: the use of Exhibition and Performance to Stage the 'Sanitary Idea' in Victorian Britain"

- Sheila Moeschen (Assoc. Director of Women's Studies, Bentley College), "Benevolent Actors and Charitable 'Objects': Physical Disability and the Theatricality of Charity in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century America"
- 2006 Shelly Scott (Administrator, Indiana University- Bloomington), "Theorizing Performances of the Human-Animal Relationship"
- Kimberly (Tony) Korol-Evans (Visiting Asst. Professor, University of Arizona), "Modern Carnival: Performer and Patron Interaction and Immersion at the Maryland Renaissance Festival"
- 2007 Ann Folino White (Asst. Prof. Michigan State University), "Paradox of Want amid Plenty': Aesthetics of New Deal Food Rights Performances"
- Douglas O'Keefe (Asst. Prof. Jacksonville State University), "Ballad Opera, Imitation, and the Formation of Genre"
- Jacob Juntunen (Fulbright Fellow, Poland), "Profitable Dissents: the Theatre of Larry Kramer and Tony Kushner as a Negotiating Force Between Emergent and Dominant Ideologies"
- 2008 Stefka Mihaylova (Lecturer, University Illinois at Chicago), "From Gestus to the Abject: Feminist Strategies in Contemporary British and American Radical Theatre"
- 2009 Dan Smith (Adjunct Lecturer, DePaul University), "Libertine Dramaturgy: Reading Obscene Closet Drama in 18C France"
- Oona Kersey (Artistic Advisor, North Park University): "Taking on History: Children's Perspectives on Performing the American Past"