

TRDA: 710.MV:
**The Uneasy Alliance: Government Support of the Arts During the
Federal Theatre Project**

Instructor: Leslie Jacobson, Professor of Theatre
CRN: 86430 Humanities GCR
IN **ACAD 302**, MW 2-3:45
Open to all students

The United States government has a history of being uncomfortable supporting arts organizations. The National Endowment for the Arts and various state arts councils (most of which have been in operation for only 30 to 35 years) are continually being scrutinized by various political groups and leaders including Congress, governors, and mayors. At the source of many of these controversies lie questions of morality, political bias, and artistic merit, which can make evaluating artistic endeavors a difficult proposition. Yet, one of the most fertile periods of American theatre was during the Great Depression, when President Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration launched the Federal Theatre Project.

Students in this inquiry-based course will examine some of the works created during the Federal Theatre Project, the artists and administrators involved in the Project, and its impact and influence on the development of theatre in the US. They will look at some of the controversies surrounding theatre funding by the NEA in the last 10-15 years. The course will culminate in a public project that will demonstrate various discoveries made about the relationships between politics and theatre in 20th and 21st century America.

Leslie Jacobson is Professor of Theatre and Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance. She is an award-winning director and the founding artistic director of Horizons Theatre, the longest-running women's theatre still in operation in the U.S. Professor Jacobson helped to inaugurate GW's graduate acting program with The Shakespeare Theatre and the Women in the Arts Women's Leadership Program on the Mount Vernon campus.