Theatre 115 – Intro. to Theatrical Design and Technology

Fall 1, 2020 – M/W/F 10:00-11:50am – Meeting Space Virtual

Professor:
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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:00am-10:00am and by appointment
> **** *Please note that the distance-learning makes drop-in office hours incredibly difficult. Even during these posted office hours, please schedule an appointment in advance.*

Required Texts: NO REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS FOR PURCHASE
ALL TEXTS PROVIDED ELECTRONICALLY (However, some you may want to purchase particular texts if sections of the course fascinate you)

Some Examples of texts we will read:
> *Los Vendidos,* by Luis Valdez
> *Dutchman,* by Imamu Amiri Baraka
> *Scene Design and Stage Lighting,* by W. Oren Parker, R. Craig Wolf, and Dick Block
> *Designing and Painting for the Theatre,* by Lynn Pecktal
> *Theatrical Design and Production,* by J. Michael Gillette
> *The Stage Manager's Toolkit,* by Laurie Kincman
> *Designer Drafting and Visualization for the Entertainment Industry,* by Patricia Wooodbrige and Hal Tine
> *Making the Scene: A History of Stage Design and Technology,* by Brockett, Mitchell, and Hardberger

Students will also be required to read a variety of plays, handouts, and also watch a series of videos throughout the course, all of which will be available on-line.

Class Description:

Falling chandeliers, rolling waves, self-propelled furniture, falling snow, thunderstorms, sunrises and sunsets, horses, giraffes, growing grass. . . These are a few of the special effects, costume pieces, sounds, etc. students will have the opportunity to explore in this class. In this course, students will familiarize themselves with the performance design process as well as modern technical theatre practices from scenic construction,

to light and sound system installation, stage and production management, theatrical architectural styles, and special effects.

This term offers the opportunity to explore theatrical design and technology through a variety of pedagogical methods, although two methods will be emphasized. The first, Lecture/Discussion, will provide a foundation of production skills, design methodology, and historical design context. We will combine a series of informative presentations with discussion, providing ample opportunity to bring questions and insights to the group, as well as utilizing problem-solving to generate new ideas for performance-makers. The second component, Inquiry-Based Laboratory, encourages students to build upon the lecture/discussion component of the course through experiential application. Students will engage in technical drawing, painting, sketching, mask-making, and also sound and lighting design for productions. Additionally, students will work collaboratively on group projects to engage in the process of performance-making with their peers.

Course Objectives:

1. To develop a vocabulary of theatrical and aesthetic terminology
2. To develop an understanding of performance design and production processes, often referred to as "from page to stage"
3. To develop an understanding of the contemporary organizational model of theatre production, the duties, responsibilities of, and the working relationships between producers, production artists, performance artists, and technicians.
4. To encourage critical analysis and problem solving complicit in the transformation of design idea into practical production elements.
5. To create an understanding of the "collaborative imperative" in performance production
6. Provide a safe and supportive experiential environment in which to acquaint students with standard production techniques and practices discussed during lecture periods.
7. To expand creative and imaginative sensibilities through a series of design related exercises.
8. Prepare students through lecture, laboratory experience, and practical application of course material to tackle a wide variety of production positions professionally and/or to build, install, and run a small production here at Grinnell.

Class Assignments:

The primary projects of the course are meant scaffolded to provide a conceptual foundation for engaging in performance-making. Each project will build skills within a particular area of technical theatre/design, require students to build upon prior course materials, and create provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in their own creative performance-making projects.

Podcast Design Research and Analysis – Group Project
> This assignment will engage students in the process of reading, researching, and analyzing a play text as a theatrical designer would. The outcome of the design analysis will be a scene

breakdown chart and a short podcast detailing the historical and contextual information which influences design choices.

Die and Detail Drafting Assignments – Individual Projects

These short assignments will introduce students to standard technical drawing procedures used to communicate design intent. Using computer aided design software (we will use Vectorworks), students will complete a two-dimensional detail drawing of a gaming die and then create a three-dimensional model of the die in the same file. This exercise was created to demonstrate step-by-step instructions to provide opportunities to learn both drawing and organizational tools within Vectorworks. Students will finish the drafting section of the course by drafting a detail drawing of a small scenic sculpture in Grinnell College's Roberts Theatre.

Scene Painting Elevation Project – Individual Project

During the painting section of the course, students will be introduced to scene painting techniques in small-format exercises that can be practiced on a table at home. For the project, students will receive a complete drafting package for a production. Combining research methods and drafting skills learned in earlier weeks, students will translate the drafted scenery into large-scale paint elevations, which will communicate the painting colors, techniques, and styles needed to implement the design in full-scale.

Virtual Light-a-Song Project: - Group Project

For this project, students will adapt lighting control skills learned in lecture and laboratory to create a virtual, pre-visualized light-a-song project. Students will be provided a simple, three-dimensional rendering of a stage, choose a short piece of music, design, patch, cue, and perform their design on the virtual stage using Electronic Theatre Controls NOMAD and AUGMENT 3D software on their home computer. While the projects will be completed using a computer, the software is the same software that runs on our lighting consoles at the College, providing students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with lighting programming equipment used in live theatre.

Mask Project: - Individual Project with Peer Critique

Students will utilize script analysis, dramaturgical research, design/composition, painting, drawing, and costuming to design and create a character mask for production. Students will be provided with step-by-step instructions for creating a mask foundation from papier maché. Using this foundation, students will then complete their design using materials and methods in support of their design choices. While this project is individual, there will be two peer critique sessions in which students will meet in small groups to provide constructive feedback, answer questions, and help further each other's designs.

Sound Design Project – Group Project

For this project, students will work in small groups to analyze a play script, formulate a conceptual framework for a supporting audio design, create all sound effects/music/etc., and complete a cue structure and accompanying design paperwork to implement the design in a theatrical venue. This project will provide students the opportunity to engage in an audio design process that may be used in both virtual and live performances.

Final Reflection– Individual Project

Each student will create a final reflection upon the course to be turned in during the final examination period. Taking note of the course calendar and map of learning outcomes, students must evaluate what they have learned during the semester in virtual performance-making and write a reflection that demonstrates how the course content applies to making performance in both virtual and live environments. Specific guidelines for the reflection will be provided during the term, but the genre and/or medium of the reflections is up to each student.

Weekly Reflections – Individual Project

While not a large assignment, each week will end with a short Qualtrics survey. These surveys are not quizzes to evaluate learning, but each survey will be graded as "complete" or "incomplete". The purpose of these surveys will be for students to provide the instructor feedback on both course material and course sessions throughout the term.

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Class Participation and Attendance:

Here is my usual attendance policy, which I use when the course is offered in-person:

Due to the inherently collaborative nature of performance (as well as the collaborative nature of class projects), students are strongly encouraged not to miss class. Students will be permitted two absences, after which students will receive a ½-letter-grade-deduction from their course grade for each subsequent absence. After two tardy arrivals, each subsequent tardy arrival will count as an absence.

COVID-19 has led to a number of challenges with regards to teaching and learning. On the whole, my students who are able to attend course(s) live have had stronger learning outcomes. This has nothing to do with intelligence, desire, or organization, but rather, it is a reflection of the benefits of collaborations, discussions, and experiential group work. I highly encourage you not to miss class, as you and your classmates will all benefit from the collaboration. However, the challenges we face in terms of personal illness, family illness, internet variability, and a host of other compounding issues related to our current pandemic make it difficult to enforce a strict attendance policy. I will work with each student individually and as necessary to assist in creating a reasonable attendance record. I will also maintain a participation grade for each student that will reflect contributions to the course over the term, both in projects, discussions, and developing course content.

All materials presented in class will be available online as well, through our course Blackboard site on PWeb to assist all of us in building flexibility for unforeseen circumstances.

GRADING - POINT BREAKDOWN:

Participation:	100 points
Weekly Survey:	75 points
Podcast Analysis:	100 points
Drafting Assignments:	150 points
Paint Elevations:	125 points
Virtual Light-a-Song:	150 points
Mask Project:	100 points
Sound Design Project:	100 points
Final Reflection:	100 points

Total: 1000 Points

Grading Scale:
921-1000   = A
900-920   = A-
880-899   = B+
821-879   = B
800-820   = B-
780-799   = C+
700-779   = C
600-699   = D
599- 0   = F

LATE COURSEWORK WILL BE ACCEPTED UP TO ONE WEEK LATE, FOR A PENALTY OF 10% OFF THE PROJECT GRADE PER DAY. AFTER ONE WEEK, I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE COURSEWORK.

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation identifying any special needs to the Assistant Dean for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke, located on the 3rd floor of Goodnow Hall (x3089). Students should then notify the instructor within the first few days of classes.

It is also the policy of the instructor that students who wish to observe religious holidays should do so. Students seeking accommodations for special religious observances should notify the instructor within the first few days of classes in an effort to create a reasonable schedule for the student to make-up missed class time and assignments. Accommodations for religious observance will not be granted if notification occurs after the first two weeks of classes.

The instructor also makes accommodations for documented illness and/or personal injury. Should a student incur an injury or illness, documentation must be submitted to the professor upon the student's return to class. Students will also make every effort to inform the instructor of illness or injury prior to missing class. Particularly during the time of COVID-19, it is imperative that we maintain regular and open communication, particularly regarding illness and ability to complete work or attend class.

MOST IMPORTANTLY:
Come and see the instructor!!!! - especially if you are concerned with a specific project, grade, or the course on the whole. The door (or the WebEx, Zoom, Facetime, etc.) is always open, for extra help, thoughts, ideas, and support.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:

Table – Folding or other, you will need a work surface upon that is smooth (without divots, gouges, etc).
Table-top surface – you will need either a table you can paint upon, or you will need a cover to protect your table
          from painting, cutting, etc.
Architectural Scale Rule
Drafting Pencils

(Either Mechanical 0.5mm, 0.7mm, and 0.9mm w H, 2H, or HB lead)

(Or Wooden Drafting Pencil Set w/ Pencil sharpener)

(Or Lead holder, lead pointer, and 2H, H, or HB leads)

1 (Minimum)– 30x60x90 Triangle (Medium or Large Size)

1 (Minimum)- 45x45x90 Triangle (Medium or Large Size)

18"x24" Drafting Vellum or Plain Bond Paper (Either in tablet form, or by roll)

White Eraser and Eraser Shield

Drafting Tape or Drafting Dots (regular masking tape will suffice as well)

Artist's Pallet (for fine-art painting)

Water Color Set (cake or liquid)

Water Color Paper (Size TBD)

Mask Making Materials (Papier Mache base on Aluminum Foil)

- Aluminum foil
- Flour (or elmers glue)
- Newspaper (lots)
- Mixing bowl/bucket (disposable if using Elmers Glue)
- Other materials as necessary based upon design concept

Digital Camera (phone or computer camera is ok)

Headphones (earbuds are ok, but they must be stereophonic)

Software (We will discuss these programs in more detail):

- Vectorworks (also available through Virtual Computer Lab) - Free
- ETC Nomad (including Augment 3D) - Free
- Audacity – Free
- QLab – limited free version

ADDITIONAL COURSE MATERIALS (Not Required):

Pliers

Wire Cutters

Screw Drivers (Both Philips and Flathead)

Electrical Tape

Rubber Gloves (disposable)

Glues (Gap-filling C/A Glue, Sobo, Elmers Glue, Wood Glue, Spray 77)

Flexible Curves or adaptable curve drafting set

Various Drafting Templates (lettering, shapes, theatrical lighting)

Drafting Compass

Exacto Knife w/ Blades (#11 blades preferable)

Scissors

Fabric scraps

Natural materials like sticks, etc.

Variety of paper materials from vellum to printer paper to hand-crafted paper, etc.

3/8" Foam core (black on black, white on white, or other)

Rabbet Cutter for 3/8" foam core

Straight Pins

Bass Wood (variety of thing sticks, sheets, etc)

Modeling Plastics and/or Metals

Studio Headphones

Second Computer Monitor

Tripod

"Focusable" lighting fixtures

Lighting Filters

Lighting Dimmer Switches

MANY, MANY, MANY more possibilities