

## **Introduction to Scenic Design**

Summer Session B: July 5<sup>th</sup>-August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017

MWF 9am-11:15pm

Instructor: Rose Bochansky ([rosalie.bochansky@yale.edu](mailto:rosalie.bochansky@yale.edu))

### **Course Description:**

This course will provide an introduction to the theory and practice of scenic design for the theater. Students will gain an appreciation for the cultural, social and ideological forces that have influenced theatrical forms throughout history, and for the complicated interplay between story, space and spectacle that is 'theatricality.' The ultimate aim of this course is for each student to develop a process for exploring individual artistic expression within the parameters set by the playwright and the director. This involves not only identifying and understanding the major themes and necessities of a given text, but translating these ideas into a set of communicable visual concepts and concrete specifications.

Class sessions will typically include a seminar-style lecture and a group discussion or critique of work completed outside of class. The course will center around four major design projects that are subdivided into smaller critiqued assignments. The purpose of these assignments is to give students the opportunity to practice analyzing, researching and expressing scenic ideas across a range of theatrical frames and using a variety of methods. The focus of the fourth week will be an in-class workshop dedicated to generating work collaboratively. There will be one optional field trip related to the final design project that will occur outside of the regular meeting time.

Additionally, students will be asked to attend three plays (one prior to the start of classes) and to write a short response paper for each that analyzes the effectiveness of the design within the context of the larger production. A list of suggested local plays will be provided before the registration deadline.

### **Course Goals:**

Upon successful completion of this class, students will be able to:

- Read a play for space, tone and theme;
- Develop an accurate and comprehensive research portfolio;
- Translate abstract ideas into visual concepts;
- Articulate the relationship between the designer, the director and the text;
- Draft a groundplan, section and elevation by hand;
- Build a scale model
- Identify the role of the designer within the production process and understand the relationship between resources and workflow;
- Appreciate the dynamic between set and performance;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a given design.

## Course Work and Grading:

Reading: 50-75 pages per week

Design projects: 60%

Project #1: Visual Expression (10%)

Project #2: Play #1/drawing package (15%)

Project #3: Play #2/model (15%)

Project #4: Toy Theater (20%)

Written assignments: 25%

Script analysis essay (5 pages) (10%)

Response papers (2-3 pages) (15%)

Participation: 15%

## Course Materials:

Plays:

- The Bacchae*, Euripides
- Mandragola*, Niccolo Machiavelli
- Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, William Shakespeare
- A Dream Play*, August Strindberg

Required Materials: *Selections from the following will be made available on Canvas.*

- EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play*, Eleanor Fuchs
- Backwards and Forwards*, David Ball
- Stage Design*, Tony Davis
- The Dramatic Imagination*, Robert Edmond Jones
- Interaction of Color*, Josef Albers
- The Poetics of Stage Space*, Bruce Bergner
- Principles of Form and Design*, Wucius Wong
- Sculpting Space in the Theater*, Babak Ebrahamin
- A Journey Through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos*, Tadeuz Kantor and Michal Kobialka

Supporting/Reference Materials: *Available in class or on Canvas*

- Theatre Through the Ages*, Cesare Molinari
- Stage Design: Four Centuries of Scenic Invention*, Donald Oenslager
- Drafting Scenery for Theatre, Film and Television*, Rich Rose
- Drawing and Rendering for Theatre*, Clare Rowe
- The Handbook of Techniques for Theatre Designers*, Colin Winslow
- Toy Theatres of the World*, Peter Baldwin

Art Supplies:

The following supplies will be required for this class:

- scissors
- glue: craft glue, glue sticks, glue gun
- architect's scale (imperial or metric)
- 45 degree drafting triangle
- steel ruler (24 inch minimum)
- drafting lead holder
- protractor
- compass
- precision knife with blades
- matte knife or box cutter
- cutting mat
- watercolor or acrylic paint set with brushes
- colored pencils or other color drawing media
- black foam core
- white matte board
- black and white card stock
- tracing paper and vellum

A selection of supplies and materials will be available for community use, but in general students should expect to furnish their own materials. There are several art supply stores in the downtown New Haven area, and we will discuss bulk purchasing options for paper products and other expendables on the first day of class.

Productions:

Students will be required to attend three plays and to write short response papers that critique the visual design elements of each. A list of suggested local productions will be distributed upon registration; students should come to the first class session having recently attended the first of the three.

**Statement of Artistic Integrity:**

It is said (though it is unclear by whom, originally) that “talent borrows, genius steals.” As important as it is for artists to be able to create and be credited for original work, originality is itself more often than not the result of trying and failing to emulate some person, place or thing that we’ve met and admired. Artists borrow, copy and interpret artifacts from the culture around them; this doesn’t make all artists plagiarists, but it also doesn’t excuse any artist for taking credit for another’s work. We’ll discuss issues of inspiration and ethics throughout the course, but in general we will work to develop a practice of citing our sources as we collect them, and if ever there is a question about integrity, we will err on the side of giving credit where credit is due.

For written work, we will adhere to the guidelines set by the Yale College Writing Center. For more information, please visit: <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism>.

## Schedule of Course Topics, Readings and Assignments:

*Note: Readings are listed on the day they are due (i.e. when they will be discussed).*

### WEEK 1: Session 1 (M):

Topics:

- Introductions, overview of course and syllabus
- A Brief History of Scenic Design

Assignments:

- Written response #1 (**due Session 2**), #2, #3 (due Session 15)
- Design project #1, Part (a): Collage project (**due Session 2**)

### Session 2 (W):

Topics:

- Critique: Collage project
- Visual Storytelling and Theatricality

Readings:

- EF's Visit to a Small Planet*
- The Dramatic Imagination, Selections*
- Stage Design, Selections*

Assignments:

- Design project #1, Part (b): 2D project (**due Session 3**)

### Session 3 (F):

Topics:

- Critique: 2D project
- Communicating Visually: Research and Rendering

Readings:

- The Dramatic Imagination, Selections*
- Principles of Form and Color, Selections*
- Interaction of Color, Selections*

Assignments:

- Design project #1, Part (c): 3D project (**due Session 4**)

## **WEEK 2: Session 4 (M): Design Project #1 due**

### Topics:

- Critique: 3D project
- Text Analysis
- Design and the Director

### Readings:

- Play #1: Mandragola or The Bacchae*
- Backwards and Forwards*

### Assignments:

- Script Analysis Essay: Play #1 (due Session 5)*
- Design project #2, Part(a): Rendering: Play #1 with directing notes (due Session 6)*

## **Session 5 (W): Script analysis essay due**

### Topics:

- Production Roles and Responsibilities
- Drafting Conventions

### Readings:

- Drafting for Theatre, Television and Film (optional)*

### Assignments:

- Drafting exercise (due Session 6)*

## **Session 6 (F):**

### Topics:

- Critique: Play #1 Rendering
- Drafting Continued: The Design Package

### Readings:

- The Poetics of Stage Space, Selections*

### Assignments:

- Design project #2, Part(b): Drawing package: Play #1 (due Session 7)*

### **WEEK 3: Session 7 (M): *Design Project #2 due***

Topics:

- Critique: Play #1 design package
- Models and Model-making

Assignments:

- Design project #3, Part(a): Design concept: analysis & research, Play #2 (due Session 8)*
- Model Box (due Session 8)*

### **Session 8 (W):**

Topics:

- Discussion: Play #2 analysis & research
- In-class exercise: The White Model

Readings:

- Play #2: A Dream Play or Twelfth Night*

Assignments:

- Design project #3, Part(b): Design concept: rendering, Play #2 (due Session 9)*

### **Session 9 (F):**

Topics:

- Critique: Play #2 design concept
- A History of Toy Theater

Readings:

- Stage Design, Selections*

Assignments:

- Design project #3, Part(c): Model, Play #2 (due Session 10)*
- Introduce Design project #4, Toy Theater: select "script" (due Session 10)*

**WEEK 4: Session 10 (M): *Design Project #3 due***

Topics:

- Critique: Play #2 Model
- Devised Work and the Avant Garde

Readings:

- A Journey Through Other Spaces, Selections*

Assignments:

- Design project #4, Part(a): Toy Theater design research (due Session 11)*
- Field trip to British Art center (optional)

**Session 11 (W):**

Topics:

- Discussion: Toy Theater design research
- In-class exercise: devised performance workshop

Readings:

- Toy Theatres of the World (optional)*

Assignments:

- Design project #4, Part(b): Toy Theater design concept renderings (due Session 12)*

**Session 12 (F):**

Topics:

- Discussion: Toy Theater design concepts
- Continue devised performance workshop

Assignments:

- Design project #4, Part(b): Toy Theater design/production concept (due Session 13)*

**WEEK 5: Session 13 (M):**

Topics:

- Discussion: Toy Theater Production Concepts
- Performance Strategies
- Measuring the Effectiveness of Your Own Work

Readings:

- Sculpting Space in the Theater, Selections*

Assignments:

- Design project #4, Part(c): Toy Theater final performance (due Session 15)*

**Session 14 (W):**

Topics:

- In-class work day

**Session 15 (F): *Design Project #4 due***

Topics:

- Final performance/Critique

***All outstanding work due by 5pm.***