

Explorations in Scenic Design

54-331, 54-731

Fall 2013

Anne Mundell, Instructor

Mondays 1:30-4:20

PCA 307

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Office Hours

by appointment or stop by

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will have:

- improved your overall design skills
 - in idea building
 - in storytelling
 - in dealing with a theatrical environment in four dimensions
 - in the craft areas such as model building and storyboarding
- have some projects you can include in your portfolio
- have made new inroads into your creative process and collaborations.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

You are now going to embark on an intensive study of Scenic Design. We will spend an exciting semester in an exploration of the process as well as an examination of the nature of creativity. We will also utilize some of the skills that a Scenic Designer needs, such as drawing, model making, storyboarding general collaborative skills. You will be expected to deal with in-depth research, scriptual examinations, careful arrangements of space, composition and ground plan, conceptual structure, real life obstacles and the elements of a successful final project. One of the major components of the class will be learning to work in the fourth dimension: not simply creating a picture appropriate for the script, but creating a universe that moves through time in support of your production. Communication and development of your ideas will also be central topics.

COURSEWORK

Although work in this course will be difficult and time-consuming, the projects are designed to be intellectually and creatively stimulating. Time management is a

must. Expect a difficult but rewarding semester.

Explorations in Scenic Design is mostly about visual storytelling, establishing creative pathways, learning to explore your own imagination and establishing a repertoire of studio and collaborative skills. You will learn to work quickly and investigate ways to draw upon creative resources. Ideas are central to each project with the secondary goal being to solidify your skills in service of your ideas. The expectations in terms of skills will be different for the Directors and Scenic Designers

PROJECTS

- **Part of Speech Project**
- ***Two Trains Running*-August Wilson**
- **TV Workshop**

READINGS AND COURSE MATERIALS

You will need to buy art supplies as needed through the semester. I will suggest many materials, but I also recommend that you explore your own ideas about the best supplies with which to investigate and represent ideas visually.

Required reading:

The play that you are required to pick up the following play on line or at the library is:

- *Two Trains Running*-August Wilson

CLASSES

Classes will be in seminar form or studio form with an occasional short lecture. We will discuss the readings during the classes noted in the syllabus, so you need to have read them. You **MUST** be in class to discuss your projects and to attend the skills sessions. The class time is imperative to give you perspective from your classmates and myself on the progress of your projects. It is important to see your work in progress; even at this stage in your academic careers, process is still more important than product.

STUDENT EVALUATION AND ATTENDANCE

You will have three projects this semester, with the grade breakdown as follows:

- **Part of Speech Project-35%**
- ***Two Trains Running*-35%**
- **TV Workshop-20%**
- **Participation-10%**

Each project will be evaluated based on the matrixes available to you within the course packet.

PROJECTS NOT HANDED IN ON TIME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. On the due date, you will hand in what you have finished and be graded on that. You may, however, continue working on the project and be RE-graded on the amendments.

THERE WILL BE NO INCOMPLETES IN EXPORATIONS IN SCENIC DESIGN. ALL work will be due on the last day of classes unless there are emergency circumstances.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

The School of Drama believes that discipline is a core standard of professionalism. Students are expected to maintain a professional attitude at all times. It is understood that this includes: the prohibition of cell phones, instant messaging or anything else on a laptop screen that might be disruptive to the instructor or classmates, prompt arrival to class and fully prepared for the day's work (i.e. readings and homework completed.)

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

The School of Drama has the following expectations of students while in class:

- Students are responsible for absolute punctuality at every class.
- Students being disrespectful to the instructor, fellow students or the classroom space and equipment will not be tolerated. This includes class disruption due to cell phones that have not been silenced, or laptop screens that could be disruptive to anyone in the class. No smoking is permitted in the classroom or the building.
- Food and drink are not permitted in the theatre spaces at all; however they may be permitted in other classrooms at the discretion of the instructor. If food and/or drink are allowed, clean up is mandatory. Students are responsible for cleaning at the end of each session.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON RECORDING OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

No student may record or tape any classroom activity without the express written consent of the professor. If a student believes that he/she is disabled and needs to record or tape classroom activities, he/she should contact the Office of Disability Resources to request an appropriate accommodation.

ATTENDANCE:

- Attendance and punctuality for all classes is mandatory.
- Attendance is understood to be an individual's presence and full participation for the entire time period assigned to the session.
- Punctuality is understood to mean an individual is present at the time attendance is taken and prepared to participate in class activities.
 - Anyone entering class after attendance is taken is considered late.
 - Anyone entering class 20 minutes after attendance is taken is considered absent.
 - 3 "late" arrivals will equal 1 absence in this course. See absence policy below.
- The grade for any student who has unexcused absences (including absences due to tardiness) for more than 1 class over the semester will drop by 5% for each successive absence. For example as student with an 89% for the course would receive an 84% with 2 unexcused absences, a 79% for 3 unexcused absences, etc.
- All students are responsible for the work produced in each class period, regardless of their presence there.
- An excused absence is one that can be documented by a note from health services, or is associated with an unexpected family crisis; all others are considered unexcused.
- While serious illness or injury may excuse a student from a session, excessive absence or lateness will call attention to the students' ability to keep pace with the training. If, in the opinion of a faculty member or members, a student has recorded excessive absences, the faculty and staff of the student's option reserve the right to determine future participation in the program.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Class participation is assessed with the following rubric:

For each class meeting the student will be assigned a score from 0-4

- 0= not in class
- 1= In class but asleep or using a mobile device or laptop when not instructed
- 2= In class but silent and/or ill-prepared
- 3= In class and making contributions to discussion and asking questions
- 4= In class and highly engaged, making quality contributions to discussion and asking questions that propel the discussion further

GRADING SCALE:

In accordance with the standards of the Carnegie Mellon School Of Drama, letter grades are defined as follows:

- **A+** (100-99%) Excellent and flawless work that exhibits a deep understanding of the material and mastery of the required skills, creative and aesthetically extraordinary, and/or memorable and outstanding work.
- **A** (98-94%) Excellent, flawless with a high degree of creativity, aesthetic depth and mastery of skills.
- **A-** (93-92%) Excellent work with minor flaws in technical execution or aesthetic approach.
- **B+** (91-90%) Very Good. Creative, skilled work with minor flaws in execution technically, conceptually and/or aesthetically.
- **B** (89-85%) Good. Solid, competent work with some flaws in technical execution, conceptualization and/or aesthetics. Possibly missing a minor element of the assignment due to not following all directions.
- **B-** (84-83%) Good. Competent work with some flaws in technical execution, conceptualization and or/aesthetics. Probably missing a minor element of the assignment or not completely following directions accounts for some of the flaws.
- **C+** (82-81%) Satisfactory work but with significant technical, conceptual and/or aesthetic problems
- **C** (80-76%) Average work with significant technical, conceptual and aesthetic problems. Missing components of the assignment.
- **C-** (75-74%) Barely acceptable work. Significant problems with execution and/or missing major components of the assignment.
- **D** (73-65%) Not acceptable work. Missing large components of the assignment. Student did not follow directions. Major technical, conceptual and aesthetic problems.
- **R** (64%>) Fails to meet the barest of requirements technically, conceptually, and aesthetically.

The following are areas of competency the School of Drama evaluates on a school wide basis: artistic and professional aptitude and potential, skill mastery, professional conduct and engagement, innovation and positive collaboration.

In this class you will be graded on your participation in classroom discussions, your conduct in the classroom, and the grades given on the various projects.

**Explorations In Scenic Design Calendar
Fall 2013**

Day	Date	Time	Agenda	Work Product Due	Reading Due
Monday	8/26	1:00-4:20	Welcome and Introduction Discuss Class Format Begin Part of Speech Project Discussion and demo of construction for 1/8" model boxes and models		
Friday	8/30	4:30-6:30	Pizza Party-Model building session		
Monday	9/2	1:00-4:20	Labor Day No Class		
Monday	9/9	1:00-4:20	Discuss Research Discuss list of what word is and isn't.	Research List of what words are and aren't . All Model Boxes, including 1/4"	
Monday	9/16	1:00-4:20	Words-First Draft Words-Rough Models Discuss TV Workshop	Rough Models	
Monday	9/23	1:00-4:20	Meet with TV Workshop collaborators.	Rough Models	TV Workshop scripts read
Monday	9/30	1:00-4:20	Words-Second Draft Models	Rough Models	
Monday	10/7	1:00-4:20	Discuss Parts of Speech Project next steps Discuss Director's letters Review Words Models	Final Models Sentences Research	
Friday	10/11	4:30-6:30	Warehouse scouting trip		
Monday	10/14	1:00-4:20	Discuss Director's letters, sentences, research Review Rough Sentence Models	Rough Sentence Models Director's letters	
Monday	10/21	1:00-4:20	Review Final Sentence Models	Final Sentence Models	
Friday	10/25	4:30-6:30	Warehouse Props Retrieval		
Monday	10/28	1:00-4:20	Read and discuss <i>Two Trains</i> Discuss field trip Discuss Image/Theme/Metaphor/ Breakdowns		<i>Two Trains Running</i>
Friday	11/1	All Day	TV Workshop		
Saturday	11/2	All Day	TV Workshop		
Sunday	11/3	All Day	TV Workshop		

Monday	11/4	1:00-4:20	<i>Two Trains</i> Field Trip		
Monday	11/11	1:00-4:20	Discuss research, ITMB and Director's letters, <i>Two Trains</i> Work on <i>Two Trains</i> in Class	Directors letter Research, ITMB <i>Two Trains</i> rough model	
Monday	11/18	1:00-4:20	Look at <i>Two Trains</i> roughs	<i>Two Trains</i> rough model	
Monday	11/25	1:00-4:20	Work on <i>Two Trains</i> in class.	<i>Two Trains</i> rough model	
Monday	12/2	1:00-4:20	Review <i>Two Trains</i>	<i>Two Trains</i> finished project	

Part of Speech Stories

Project Goals

- ❖ To be able to clearly demonstrate “words” visually in a theatrical setting
- ❖ To take the following givens into consideration:
 - Human scale, position, number of people
 - Gravity
 - Scale and nature of a particular space
- ❖ To consider the following very basic tenets of design and to be able to manipulate them to the advantage of the story you are telling and to be able to articulate how you have utilized them:
 - Color
 - Texture
 - Rhythm
 - Tone
 - Direction
 - Scale
 - Line
 - Volume
 - Positive and negative space
 - Contrast or lack thereof of the following:
 - Balance/Instability (on stage, humans are always part of this equation)
 - Symmetry/Asymmetry
 - Regularity/Irregularity
 - Unity/Fragmentation
 - Economy/Intricacy
 - Understatement/Exaggeration
 - Predictability/Spontaneity
 - Activeness/Stasis
 - Subtlety/Boldness
 - Neutrality/Emphasis
 - Consistency/Variation
 - Accuracy/Distortion
 - Flatness/Depth
 - Singularity/Juxtaposition
 - Sequentiality/Randomness
 - Sharpness/Diffusion
 - Repetition/Episodicity
 - Composition Types
 - Symmetrical
 - Asymmetrical
 - Radial
 - Crystallographic
 - Balance (includes humans as part of composition)

Project Guidelines

For this project you will:

- ❖ design three theatrical worlds which each of which evokes an emotion and implies story
- ❖ use any materials you wish, but the final outcome must be in scale and color and contain scale figures engaged in the story you are telling
- ❖ Think of design in four dimensions
- ❖ Design a fourth theatrical world that embodies the sentence you will construct

Facility Requirements

- ❖ Nosuch Theater, Proscenium configuration, as found in the course packet

Project Products

Due for this project will be:

- ❖ Paragraph on each design, detailing how you have achieved your goal
- ❖ Verbal Presentation of above
- ❖ Research Notebook (at least 1" of paper research)
 - No more than ½ of those sources may be web resources!
- ❖ 1/8" Scale color models for EACH of your parts of speech
- ❖ ¼" Scale color model for your sentence
- ❖ Each model must include
 - figures as an integral part of the composition.
 - representation of two rows of audience
 - a clean, precise presentation in both the box and the model

Project Timeline-See Class Calendar

**Explorations in Scenic Design-Grade Sheet
Fall 2013**

Student _____

Part of Speech Stories

Grading Methodology

Each category will be assigned a number. In order to weight ideas differently, that number will shown as a fraction, for example: 9/10 would be nine points earned out of a total of ten possible. This grade will comprise 35% of your semester grade and therefore would be 35 total points.

Grade	Category	Note
/5	Ideas	
/5	Realization of Ideas (did you follow through well on your ideas or use them to develop others?)	
/3	Research Notebook	
/3	Written Ideas	
/3	Use of Space	
/3	Verbal Presentation	
/5	Models descriptiveness/exploration/craft	
/5	Sentence Model	
/3	Growth During Process	

/100	Final Grade	
/35		

Fall 2013
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Television Workshop-Art Directors

Project Goal

- To work as Art Directors on the TV Project.
- To collaborate with directors, writers, production designers and crew to design and dress a pre-established wall configuration.
- To quickly develop ideas and implement environments for new TV scripts.

Project Teams

The project will have a student Production Designer/Art Department Coordinator
Art direction teams will be determined after scripts are in place

Project Guidelines

For this project you will:

- Design groundplan, props and dressing for 2013 Television Workshop segments.
- You will be working in the Wells Video Studio
- You will need to consider the following:
 - Different audience (camera)
 - Different concept of color and pattern
 - Designing for three camera
 - Designing flexibly

Project Products

Due for this project will be:

- Groundplans of space
- Research as needed.
- Rough sketches and/or models of the space for your segment
- Journal of your experience during the TV Project.
- Photos of all parts of the process.

Project Timeline

The Project will take place the first weekend of November. A more detailed production schedule will follow as it is developed. Some tentative deadlines provided in calendar.

**Explorations in Scenic Design-Grade Sheet
Fall 2013**

Student _____

Television Workshop

Student was responsible and always on time.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Student made a strong contribution to the process.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Student made a strong contribution to the product.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Student was a good collaborator with supervisors.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Student was a good collaborator with crew.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Student was organized and prepared.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

/60
or Final Grade
/20
or
/100

Project Goal

You will design a set for *Two Trains Running* by August Wilson. This design will focus on the following priorities:

- ❖ Creating a unique universe in which this play can take place
- ❖ An excellent understanding of the characters
- ❖ A clear understanding of what was happening during that period in Pittsburgh.
- ❖ Thorough research, which includes primary sources (IE, going to the Hill District and taking photos)
- ❖ A thorough exploration of the many metaphors, themes and images presented in the text. How do those images impact a design? How do you research those images?
- ❖ A very workable ground plan
- ❖ The moment by moment unfolding of the story. How does the environment evolve as the situation unfolds?
- ❖ Living and dreaming this world
- ❖ Working on model and storyboard skills

Project Guidelines

For this project you will:

- ❖ Design for the Rauh Studio Theatre
- ❖ Do a thorough job on research of historical context, imagery and more concrete details.
- ❖ Think of design in four dimensions, length, width height and TIME
- ❖ NOT make any assumptions at the beginning
- ❖ NOT design scenery, but create a new world from the bottom up

Project Products

Due for this project will be:

- ❖ Director's letter
- ❖ Image/Theme/Metaphor list /Breakdown
- ❖ Research Collages and 1" of research from many sources
- ❖ 1/4" model
- ❖ Model photo storyboard

Project Timeline-See Class Calendar

**Explorations in Scenic Design-Grade Sheet
Fall 2013**

Student _____

Two Trains Running

Grading Methodology

Each category will be assigned a number. In order to weight ideas differently, that number will shown as a fraction, for example: 9/10 would be nine points earned out of a total of ten possible. This grade will comprise 35% of your semester grade and will have a total of 35 points.

Grade	Category	Note
/5	Idea	
/5	Realization of Idea (did you develop your idea well or did it lead to others?)	
/4	Success of 4 th Dimension (moment to moment)	
/5	Research	
/3	Director's Letter	
/3	Image/Theme/Metaphor/ Breakdown	
/3	Use of Space	
/2	Model descriptiveness/exploration	
/1	Model craft	
/2	Model Storyboard descriptiveness/exploration	
/1	Model Storyboard craft	
/1	Growth during the Process	

/100	Final Grade	
/35		