CTPR 455:
INTRO TO PRODUCTION DESIGN (2 units)

An introductory course in Production Design. Content includes:

- the structure of the Art Department and the duties of each member of the department
- the evolution of Production Design from the earliest days of cinema through the Hollywood studio system and up to the present day
- the underlying principles of visual design and their application to film and TV
- the design process: research; script breakdown; visualization; how to plan a set for camera, actors and crew; storyboarding; and budgeting (emphasis on working with a limited budget) – all the groundwork which must be laid *prior to* the actual drafting of plans, fabrication of models, and building of sets

The course will consist of lectures, film/TV viewings, student projects, guest speakers from the industry, and outside readings. There is no single text. Instead, a series of selected readings will be provided.

The class will be presented with an assigned script and a series of class projects both practical and conceptual in nature, designed around the script. Most importantly, students will apply design principles including space, framing, line, shape and form, graphics and color to the themes and ideas behind the assigned script.

Students are expected to do self-directed research about the period of the script and to find and make use of source material related to the script. This research will help students find a visual language and structure for their designs.

Students will be asked to rework their class projects incorporating feedback from the instructor and reflecting a growing knowledge of the design process. These revised projects will be presented as part of a final notebook, which will take the place of a final exam.

Style and presentation count. You should design your notebooks as if you are auditioning for the job of designing the film.

There will also be a midterm exam.

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE

The student will be graded on class assignments, class participation, the midterm and final project/notebook.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

>   Class assignments and participation..........................……....30%
>   Midterm………………………………………………..15%
>   Final Project/ Presentation……………………….........55%

Since this is a class where most of the information will be delivered in lectures, class attendence is essential. Students are expected to be on time and prepared. Two unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point (ex: B becomes C). Your grade will be lowered by one point for every absence after that.

An excused absence should be obtained prior to class. If you have an emergency and must miss class, please contact me prior to class.

CLASS HOURS AND CONTACT INFO

The class meets Mondays 7-10 pm in SCA 209.
There are no office hours *per se*, but the instructor will be available to meet immediately before and after class.

Instructor: Mark Stratton
Email: markstratton13@gmail.com

COURSE GOALS

The goals of this course are: to introduce the student to the world of the Production Designer, to establish a basic design vocabulary, to give the student experience with various aspects of forming a design concept based on a script, to give the student firsthand knowledge about current productions through the appearance of guest speakers, and to prepare the student for practical applications in the field of production design/art direction. Ideally, by the end of the semester, students should be able to translate abstract verbal ideas and concepts into a visual vocabulary and structure.

FINAL PROJECT AND PRESENTATION

The final project is a compilation and expansion of the work you have done throughout the semester. At a minimum it must include:

1) your breakdown of the script

2) your overall concept for the film/genre

3) your concept for your set

4) a floor plan of your set

5) a floor plan overlay with camera angles and actor action clearly indicated

6) a storyboard of the most complicated scene that takes place in your set

7) the design for a hand-prop or major furniture piece from the script

8) a budget for your set – it must include:
   a) materials
   b) furnishings
   c) salaries
   d) daily wages
   e) transportation
   f) contingency

9) photocopies of any research materials which were of particular relevance/ value/inspiration in helping you come up with your design concept for the film overall and for your set

10) bibliography

Many of these elements are class assignments from earlier in the semester. This does not mean that students are to simply recycle their earlier work. The final project is an opportunity to improve on the original work. At a minimum, errors should be corrected and past comments by the instructor should definitely be addressed. (If you really want to impress me, show that you have continued to think about and develop your design yourself, beyond simply addressing my comments!)

With regards to the notebook: presentation is very important. Imagine that you are auditioning for a job. You're trying to impress a producer. Your notebook needs to be designed. It needs to work as a whole.

INSTRUCTOR: MARK STRATTON
CONTACT INFO: markstratton13@gmail.com
There are no office hours *per se*, but the professor is available to meet immediately before or after class.

WEEK-BY-WEEK

WEEK 1 (August 25th): Introduction
Go over syllabus and class requirements.
What is the role of the production designer?
What is the makeup of the art department?
What are the requirements and functions of a set/location?
How does one establish a visual vocabulary and structure?

Reading assignments: Mariner, chapters 2 and 3
Interview with Ken Adams
Assigned script
Essays by Jae Carmichael

WEEK 2 (September 1st): Labor Day

WEEK 3 (September 8th): Historical Perspective: Production Design is Born
Realism vs Poetry: Lumiere Brothers and Melies
Compare and contrast *Trip to the Moon* with *The Great Train Robbery*.
The need for unified design and world view.
How sets shape blocking and action.
How the needs of the filmmakers shaped the development of art direction.

WEEK 4 (September 15th): Towards a Film Aesthetic
How did the designers control the audience's eye and still create such a
complex visual world? Screen *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.
The rise and fall of the Hollywood studio system. How art directors helped
brand the product.

Reading assignment: Pat Miller's book on script breakdown
Bring script to class to work on for Week 5.

WEEK 5 (September 22nd): Breaking Down the Script
We will work together on the first 10 pages to identify scenes, sets,
characters, props, costumes and special effects.

Assignments due Week 6: WORKING WITH THE SCRIPT, 1-5
Reread script; make thumbnail sketches; identify protagonist,
antagonist, acts and genre.
List 5 sets you would like to design, in order of preference.

Assignments due Week 8: WORKING WITH THE SCRIPT, 5-10
Continue breakdown, do breakdown pages, come up with set and
location lists.

WEEK 6 (September 29th): Screen documentary on role of production designer.

Written assignments due: WORKING WITH THE SCRIPT, 1-5,
as described in Week 5 above and List of 5 Set Choices.
Assignment due Week 8: WORKING WITH THE SCRIPT, 5-10

WEEK-BY-WEEK cont'd

WEEKS 7-12: Discussion of *mise-en-scene* and how it relates to production design

WEEK 7 (October 6th): *Mise-en-scene* space/framing
Students are given set assignments.

WEEK 8 (October 13th): *Mise-en-scene* graphics
Line/shape and form/size/orientation and movement
Review
Breakdown due

WEEK 9 (October 20th): Midterm

WEEK 10 (October 27th): *Mise-en-scene* tone and color
Discussion on the theories of color
Go over midterm

Written assignment due Week 11: overall design for film and
design concept for set

WEEK 11 (November 3rd): Screen *Vertigo*
Analysis of unified structure of color

Written assignment/design concepts due. Storyboarding handout.

WEEK 12 (November 10th): Discuss the relationship between floorplans, shot lists, camera angles, blocking and storyboards.

WEEK 13 (November 17th): Storyboarding: in-class exercise

WEEK 14 (November 24th): Budgeting – Guest lecturer, Mimi Gramatky
Production designer *Miami Vice*, *VIP, Lost* and current President of the
Art Directors Guild

WEEK 15 (December 5th): Last day of class. Students pitch ideas for overall design of film and for your set. Review.

PROJECTS ARE DUE FRIDAY, DEC. 12th AT 5 PM. SCA 404.

There are 14 class sessions in the spring semester. This is a tentative schedule. It depends on the availability of the guest lecturer and how quickly we cover the material.

The date that assignments are due remains the same regardless of any changes to the above lecture schedule. **ALL FINAL PROJECTS WILL BE DUE ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12th.** It is imperative that you make a readable copy (photo or scan or whatever works) of all materials that you hand in for your final project. The reason for this is that SCA 404 is used by all the classes in the Cinema Arts department, and there have been rare instances in the past where student projects have gone missing. It is your responsibility to have a back-up.

CINEMA 455 – PRODUCTION DESIGN

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 am – 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11:00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:

http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/