

INTRODUCTION TO ART DIRECTION SYLLABUS

CTPR 456: Spring 2018
Section: 18561R 2 Units

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description and Outline

Overview

Introduction to Art Direction examines the role of the art director in motion pictures, television and other forms of cinematic imagery. Students learn how to use art direction to contribute to the storytelling process. Students develop the skills required by an art department and create projects that offer hands on experience solving the problems of bringing a script to the screen.

Course Goals

- This course examines the visual history and development of art direction and production design.
- The course focuses on the Hollywood Art Department: the staff, their responsibilities and relationships both internally and externally with the other crafts and departments of a production.
- Students learn how visual design elements enhance story, theme, character, location, cinematography, editing, and visual effects.
- Students design a final presentation using script breakdowns, research boards, conceptual illustrations, working drawings, and models.

Tests, Projects & Assignments

- Visual Diaries: students maintain a visual diary of at least one page per week of inspirational visual material – photos, sketches, colors, textures, etc. This diary is submitted to the instructor at the end of the semester.
- Assignments: Students are given a variety of classroom and take home projects.
- Mid-term Test: There is a mid-term test covering class lectures, classroom work and take home assignments.
- Final Exam: Each student creates and presents a completed design for a set.

Required Drafting Tools to be supplied by the student

#2 pencils with erasers
Architect's Scale (not Engineer's scale)
18" metal straight edge
30/60 triangle
45/90 triangle
25' tape measure
Xacto knife
Rubber cement (brush-in-lid style)
11 X 17 tablet of 4x4 Graph Paper
11 X 17 tablet of tracing paper
Five – 18" x 24" sheets of vellum
Foam Core or Museum Board

Suggested Reading

The Art Direction Handbook for Film, second edition; by Michael Rizzo
Production Design for Screen; by Jane Barnwell
Film Architecture from Metropolis to Blade Runner; edited by Dietrich Neumann
The Film Maker's Guide to Production Design; by Vincent LoBrutto
Designs on Film; by Cathy Whitlock & The Art Director's Guild.

Grades

Grades are based on each student's understanding, competency and execution of the art direction and their in-class presentation process. A student's growth in the understanding of the role of the art director and skill improvement will positively affect their grade. Tardiness and unexcused absences will negatively affect a student's grade. If a student must miss class, please notify the professor in advance via email.

Final Grade Calculation:

5% – Visual Diary
40% – Class Projects/assignments
20% – Mid-term test
35% – Final Exam/Project

Course Outline

Week 1 Monday January 8

Overview of class structure, syllabus and Visual Diary. Introduce the Hollywood Art Department's personnel, office configuration, division of labor and departmental responsibilities. Discuss the Art Department's relationship to the other departments on a production. Explain script breakdowns, working drawings, and locations vs. construction.

Clips shown: Owen's Blind Date and The Wizard Behind the Curtain.

HANDOUT: 10 pages of a scene-numbered screenplay. This screenplay will be used in class; students must bring this handout to class each week.

Week 2 Monday January 15

NO CLASS – MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY – SCHOOL HOLIDAY

Week 3 Monday January 22

In class demonstration of site measuring, scale drawing, drafting Ground Plans & Elevations, laying out a page of drawing, Title-Block and creating finished Presentation Boards for photos, colors and finishes. Students watch demonstration and make their own drawings using drafting tools supplied by the student (see list of required tools on page 2 of this syllabus). Drafting boards are supplied by the university and are available in class.

HANDOUT: Exercises using architect's scale and free-hand drawing.

Week 4 Monday January 29 – CAMPUS LOCATION

Scouting interiors. Entire class meets on USC main campus at Town & Gown to photograph, measure, research colors and finishes at location.

ASSIGNMENT #1: (Preliminary version due Week 5): Based on location photographs, research and measurements, students create:

1. A hand-drafted ¼" scale Ground Plan with Title-Block
2. A hand-drafted ¼" scale Elevation with Title-Block
(Elevation must include at least one door and one window)
3. Create a presentation board displaying surface finishes, paint colors and location photos.

Week 5 Monday February 5

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE: Students present a preliminary version of their Week 4 assignment (Ground Plan, Elevation and boards). Presentations are discussed and evaluated in class. Students continue working on Assignment #1 and will present their final version to the class in Week 6.

Discussion about camera angles, lenses, aspect ratio and history of art direction. Film clips are screened and discussed.

Students bring the 10 page scene-numbered screenplay from Week 1 handout. Discuss how to find the visual concept of a story and identify the themes and emotional tone. Script breakdown, research, concept illustration, storyboarding, pre-visualization, digital tools and workflow are discussed.

Week 6 Monday February 12

ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE: Students present the final version of their Week 4 assignment (Ground Plan, Elevation and boards). Each page must be identified with a Title Block. Student presentations are discussed and evaluated in class.

Review for mid-term test.

Week 7 Monday, February 19

NO CLASS – PRESIDENTS’ DAY – SCHOOL HOLIDAY

Week 8 Monday, February 26

In class mid-term test.

Week 9 Monday, March 5

Review mid-term test results.

Discuss how to analyze the production design of a completed movie. Screen clips.

ASSIGNMENT #2 (due Week 11): From a list of movies nominated for an Oscar in production design, each student picks one title. Each student prepares a PowerPoint or Keynote and a verbal presentation/analysis of the production design of a movie. Discuss how visual themes, emotional tone, visual structure and arcs including space, line, shape, light and color contribute to the authenticity of the story and its characters so the audience suspends their disbelief and is transported to another reality.

Week 10 Monday, March 12

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week 11 Monday, March 19

GUESTS: Professional panel (depending on availability: art director, set designer, illustrator, set decorator, prop master, location manager, construction coordinator) discuss their jobs, resumes, work experiences, etc.

Week 12 Monday, March 26

ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE: Each student presents a visual and verbal analysis of an Oscar nominated feature film (assignment from Week 9). In class comments and evaluation of each presentation.

ASSIGNMENT #3: Based on the feature film each student selected in Week 9, pick one set from that film to art direct. For Week 12, bring a printed-on-paper screen grab (size at least 8½ x 11) of a wide shot of that set, also bring #2 pencils and a 9 x 12 tablet of tracing paper.

Week 13 Monday, April 2

ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE: Students bring a printed-on-paper screen grab (size at least 8½ x 11) of a wide shot of a set from their Oscar nominated feature film.

Students should also bring #2 pencils and a 9 x 12 table of tracing paper. In class demonstration of 1 & 2 point perspective and reverse perspective. Each student draws a reverse perspective view of their set screen grab.

ASSIGNMENT – FINAL EXAM: The Final Exam/Project includes a Ground Plan, Elevations, White Model, visual research materials and surface & color presentation boards of their chosen set. Each item identified with a title block. This assignment is due during the Exam Week class on May. A veteran art director and set decorator will attend these final presentations, which will last a full three hours.

Week 14 Monday, April 9

In class demonstration of white model building. Students make their own white model using copies of their drawings from the Week 4 Town & Gown location measurement class. Materials and tools supplied by the student (see list of required tools on page 2 of this syllabus). Cutting boards are supplied by the university and are available in class.

Week 15 Monday, April 23

Students work in class on their final projects. Students should bring their materials and tools to do this work. See list of required tools on page 2 of this syllabus.

The art department's historical VFX beginnings through modern techniques are discussed from Max Fleischer to Robert Zemeckis, Christopher Nolan and James Cameron.

Discussion of the first-time Art Director; what to expect, where to shop, how to find and develop a staff.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Visual Diaries are submitted.

Week 16 Monday, April 30

Finals Study Week. Instructor's office hours, by appointment, are available for meetings.

Week 17 Monday, May 7

ASSIGNMENT DUE: This class is the Final Exam. Attendance for this three-hour class is mandatory. Each student presents their Final Exam/Project's Ground Plan, Elevations, White Model and Presentation Boards. Each item identified with a title block. A veteran, professional art director and set decorator will attend these final presentations.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255 Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086 Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students