

555 ADVANCED PRODUCTION DESIGN SPRING 2020 SEMESTER

DESIGNING FOR STORY

Instructor: Jack Taylor

Office Hours: By Appointment on Wednesdays

Credits: 2 Units, - Day & Time: Wednesday 7-10PM - Classroom: SCS 107

Graduate Level Class

OVERVIEW

Advanced Production Design applies cinematic visual imaging concepts to the screenplay's written words. This class guides students step by step through the process of script analyzation and breakdown of a feature motion picture screenplay from page to screen staging by applying visual communicating design concepts and tools, revealing how to design for the story.

The Production Designer is a primary collaborator and style contributor in the storytelling process and interprets the story through visual artistic design concepts. It is through these important visual artistic concepts that the Production Designer helps to create and define rich screen characters, character interactions, the story plot with theme dilemmas, and the environments in which characters live the story.

Design and style should reflect what the motion picture is about, not design for its own sake.

SCREENPLAY

“**Stretcher Bar**” – a full length feature motion picture suspense melodrama screenplay will be used during the course of this class as an exercise in all aspects of Production Design to a final project presentation.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

All aspects of Production Design concepts and staging, outlined as follows, will be discussed and examined in through detail and with paralleling historical feature motion picture examples, reviewing as assigned. Students will learn and experience the processes of Production Design as it applies to an overall knowledge of the cinematic arts with relating projects throughout the course.

Topics to be Covered:

Project Management

- Script Breakdown – Excel Spreadsheets
 - Page count
 - Set lists – Location/stage sets
 - Graphics
 - Props
 - Set Decoration and Set Decoration Budgeting
 - Special Effects/Special Visual Effects
- Budgeting – Excel Spreadsheets from primary breakdown and number assignation
- Prep Schedule – Gantt Charting
- Shooting Schedule

Art Department Composition and Communication Chain of Command

- Production Designer
- Art Director/Supervising Art Director
- Assistant Art Director
- Set Designer
- Model Maker
- Story Board Artist/Illustrator
- Set Decorator
- Swing Gang
- Location Manager
- Construction Coordinator
- Basic Craft Departmental Knowledge: What are the various craft departments?

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(Continued)

Materials Required for Stage Sets, Interior and Exterior Locations

Research

Architectural

Period examples

Set Decoration

Visual materials showing the basic elements of set decoration necessary for the scene

Palette

Visual materials showing colors to be used in the set: surfaces, set décor, etc.

Sketches

Storyboards, renderings, thumbnails showing spatial design.

Scale white model of set(s)

Scale Stage Spotting plan showing placement of set, (platforming)

Construction Details/Detailing- Stage Set

Ground Plan

Reflected Ceiling Plan

Elevations/Sections

Door and Window Schedules/Hardware schedule

Fixtures and Practicals

Paint Elevations

Graphic and Signage design

Location Site Plans

Greens Layout

Director's Plans

CLASS PROTOCOLS

Read the screenplay "Stretcher Bar" and syllabus before the first class.

Notes must be taken by hand in this class, preferably with pencil in an unlined sketchbook.

Graphic work (i.e., thumbnails, concept sketches, storyboards, quarter inch scale plans and elevations, and finished illustrations, etc.) for this class done by hand on paper with traditional tools will receive extra credit upon presentation.

If you are comfortable with computer graphics and programs, use them. They are powerful and sophisticated tools, but they are not necessary for good Production Design and, at this stage, may take more time to execute than they are worth.

***Feature Film Review Note:**

A historic "Film Noir" feature film for viewing will be assigned each week as homework review and subsequent class discussion. See listing of films to be reviewed

BREAKDOWN

A Production Design Breakdown contains a list of all of the spaces, physical elements, effects and their intersections in a screenplay. Supporting that is a detailed list of the cast, broken down conceptually, developing backstories to their characters.

DESIGN

The design of selected sets on stage and on location will begin with a detailed reading of the screenplay, interpreting its language as a recipe for poetry. The script's language provides access to the meaning and aesthetic content of the story.

ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

One of the first tasks of the Designer is to interpret the text, which engages critical faculties and provides reference points for judgment of design issues. Latent and key imagery and how to use them are important aspects of a Designer's approach to the interpretation of the text.

VISUALS - RESEARCH, REFERENCE, AND DRAWING

The Internet provides a vast resource of images. The problem is not availability, it is choice and repetition. Taste and the powers of discretion are formed by a lively curiosity and an educated sensibility. The first steps in communicating design ideas are often references to images of what the Designer has discovered in the script. These images point the way to a new and subtle realization of the subject. For example, a visual collage made from research/reference materials can reveal a starting point and a path forward.

A Designer must be able to draw. The degree of finish is relative to the need. Concept sketches and simple ground plans drawn quickly and simply is a skill acquired through practice. For now, leave technical drawing and finished illustrations to specialists who spend a lifetime perfecting these skills. Try freehand-drawing ground plans in minutes, along with attempting to develop your own style towards fluent thumbnails of your important ideas.

COMMUNICATING DESIGN IDEAS

The Designer, having engaged the story and design issues in the script, must explain them clearly to the director, producer and production departments. Ideas can certainly be described by both speaking and writing. Speaking: it's true that we may both speak English but we are speaking a different language to each other sometimes. Writing can be slower than speaking, cumbersome and vulnerable to interpretation. If you are putting pencil to paper you're better off drawing with visual notes and supporting those notes with either visual research images or conceptual design ideas or both. As Designers, we work in a visual medium with production, so use it.

Engagement and persuasion are skills critical to successful Production Design. Salesmanship

ART DIRECTION

Art Direction is the expression and practical application of the Designer's interpretation of the story. Locations will be scouted, sets and props will be designed and completed work will be displayed and presented.

ARCHITECTURE

How do locations, architecture, detail, period, style, symbolism, and the social role of a given set piece affect the telling of the story?

BACKSTORY

What does the history revealed by the notional archeology of the screenplay's world and an understanding of its characters imply for the art direction?

CHARACTER OF THINGS

What are the effects of natural forces and human behavior on the artifacts and environments of the screenplay?

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third unexcused absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one, additional full letter (IE: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional unexcused absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence.

In order for an absence to be excused, the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor prior to class or contact the Production Office at 213-740-3317.

GRADING & INCOMPLETES

Final grade is based on:

- 15% Class attendance and participation,
- 30% Script Breakdown. Homework Assignments and Movie Review Assignment
- 55% Complete Portfolio of work for **“Stretcher Bar”** - Lori’s old and new apartment, including sketches, ground plans, elevations, stage spotting plans, tone boards, white model and location photographs. Overall Final Presentation with communicating design ideas.

Incompletes will not be given unless the student submits verifiable documentation per USC policy before the final class. All class presentations and student portfolios must be submitted on time and will be graded as representing the student’s final submission for the course. There are no make up exams, re-do’s or extra-credit assignments permitted for this course.

SUGGESTED READING:

Hollywood Art - Art Direction in the Days of the Great Studios
Beverly Heisner; McFarland & Company; 1990
A scholarly study.

By Design - Interviews with Film Production Designers
Vincent LoBrutto; Praeger; 1992
Interviews with a wide range of designers.

The Art Direction Handbook for Film
Michael Rizzo, Focal Press, 2005
Describes the modern art department in detail.

Setting the Scene - The Great Hollywood Art Directors
Robert S. Sennett; Harry N. Abrams, Inc.; 1994

Designs on Film: A Hundred Years of Hollywood Art Direction
Cathy Whitlock & the Art Directors Guild; Harper Collins; 2010

The Five C’s of Cinematography
Motion Picture Filming Techniques
Joseph V. Mascelli, Silman-James Press, Los Angeles,; 1965

MATERIALS:

Note: - Purchase materials as per Instructor and for in-class projects and homework projects & discussions.

Digital Camera and or Camera phone app
 Sketchbook, 8-1/2" x 11"
 Pencils – H, HB, B
 Tape Measure, 25' Stanley PowerLock(or similar)
 Architect's Scale Ruler – Flat or Triangular
 Metal Ruler, 12" Alumicutter suggested(bigger or smaller -additional)
 Cutting Mat, 18"x 24" suggested size – for working at home
 X-Acto Knife and #11 Blades
 1/8" - 1/4" – 3/4" Thk. - White or Black Foamcore, 1 each, 30" x 40"
 Spray – Scotch Photomount, small can
 Sobo Glue
 Draft Dots or 1/4" Drafting Tape
 Presentation Boards – White or Black, 3 - 20" x 30"

VENDORS FOR MATERIALS:

Architect's Corner (downtown LA location)
 Blick Art Supplies (franchise art store)
 Blick Art Supplies – Hollywood
 Blick Art Supplies - Pasadena
 Graphaids – La Cienega Blvd., Culver City.
 Carter Sexton – Laurel Canyon – Valley Village, North Hollywood
 Some supplies available at USC student bookstore

ADVANCED PRODUCTION DESIGN – 555 - WEEK-TO-WEEK OUTLINE

WEEK #1 - COURSE OVERVIEW

SYLLABUS OVERVIEW

THE BREAKDOWN PROCESS – THE SCREENPLAY PAGE AND PARTS – BREAKDOWN PROCESS

COMMUNICATING DESIGN IDEAS - DRAWING, SPEAKING, WRITING

INSTRUCTOR'S WALK-THROUGH OF A SCREENPLAY- CONCEPTUAL AND TACTICAL

STARTING TO FIND THE STORY WITHIN THE TEXT – Elements of Screenplay Formatting

DRAWING AND HOW TO USE IT

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 1: “The Set-Up” Director Robert Wise

DRAWING ASSIGNMENT 1: LINES

THUMBNAIL FORMS AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE TEXT

BREAKDOWN PROCESSES - SET LISTS & PAGE COUNT

WEEK #2 - TRANSLATING TEXT TO VISUAL FORM

DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 1 – “The Set-Up” Director Robert Wise

FINDING THE STORY

CAST AND DESIGNING FOR CHARACTER- Who are these people?

KEY AND LATENT IMAGERY

USING THE SKETCH

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 2 – “The Third Man” Director Carol Reed

REVIEW THUMBNAILS AND THE EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

HOW TO SHAPE KEY AND LATENT IMAGES

CREATING INSPIRATIONAL IMAGES ABOUT CHARACTER.

WEEK #3 –WHERE ARE WE – PART 1

DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 2 – “The Third Man” Director Carol Reed

SET LIST - EXAMPLE: BREAKDOWN FORMAT

RESEARCH ON PLACE – STAGE OR LOCATION?

PAGE COUNT AND SET LIST BREAKDOWN WITH LOCATIONS/EFFECTS

DRAWING 2

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 3 – “Out of the Past” – Director Jacques Tourneur

FINDING RESEARCH ON PLACE, EXTERIORS FIRST

CREATE SET LIST

DRAWING ASSIGNMENT 2: CREATING SPACE WITH LINES

WEEK #4 – WHERE ARE WE – PART 2

DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 3 – “Out of the Past” – Director Jacques Tourneur

LOCATION PORTFOLIOS

INTERFACEING WITH LOCATIONS, SCOUT LIST

INTERIOR SPACES

INTRODUCTION OF AN ARCHITECTS SCALE RULER

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 4 – “Mystery Street” – John Sturges

DRAWING ASSIGNMENT 3: READING THE SCALE

CREATE LOCATION PORTFOLIOS PER SET

RESEARCH

WEEK #5 – COLOR, PART 1

DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 4 – “Mystery Street” – Director John Sturges

COLOR AND ASSOCIATIONS

THUMBNAILS, COLOR, PATTERN AND LATENT IMAGERY

WHAT MAKES COLOR WORK FOR STORY?

LOCATION SURVEY TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES, EXERCISE

EXT. LORI'S STUDIO APT. REQUIREMENTS

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 5 – “Where the Sidewalk Ends” – Director Otto Preminger

SCOUT & PHOTOGRAPH EXT. LOCATIONS FOR LORI'S APT.- 6 MINIMUM

WEEK #6 – COLOR, PART 2 - BASIC STUDIO STAGECRAFT REVIEW**DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 5 – “Where the Sidewalk Ends” – Director Otto Preminger**

COLOR, TEXTURE AND TONE
 APPLYING COLOR IDEAS TO THE ENVIRONMENTS
 INTERIOR SPACES

BASIC STUDIO STAGECRAFT PRINCIPLES AND REVIEW

SET CONSTRUCTION & RIGGING TECHNIQUES
BACKINGS – PAINTED AND PHOTO BACKING TECHNOLOGY

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 6 – “Maltese Falcon” – Director John Huston

CREATE TONAL COLOR COLLAGES FOR ‘STRETCHER BAR’, 4 TOTAL
 DRAWING ASSIGNMENT 4 - CREATE THUMBNAIL PLANS FOR INT. LORI’S APT.
 3 VERSIONS FOR EACH

WEEK #7 – CREATING A GROUNDPLAN – FIVE C’S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY**DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 6 – “Maltese Falcon” – Director John Huston**

FIVE C’S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY – CAMERA ANGLES FOR STAGING OF SETS
 CRITERIA FOR SETS ON STAGE VS. LOCATIONS
 MATCHING LOCATION EXTERIORS TO SETS ON STAGE
 BLOCKING THE STORY ACTION ON THE GROUND PLAN

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 7 – “Ace in the Hole” – Director Billy Wilder

REFINE THUMBNAIL FLOORPLAN OF LORI’S APT.

WEEK #8 - INT/EXT LORI’S STUDIO APARTMENT - CLASS GROUPS**DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 7 – “Ace in the Hole” – Director Billy Wilder**

WHITE MODELS AND HOW THEY ARE USED
 BUILDING A MODEL AND GRID PAPER

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 8 – “The Big Sleep” – Director Howard Hawks

REFINE FLOORPLAN OF LORI’S APT. USING GRID PAPER,
 STARTS THE BUILD OF EXISTING MODEL EXAMPLE

WEEK #9 - INT/EXT LORI’S STUDIO APARTMENT - CLASS GROUPS**DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 8 – “The Big Sleep” – Director Howard Hawks**

ELEVATIONS AND MATCHING ARCHITECTURE
 BEGIN ELEVATIONS ON GRID PAPER
 CONTINUE TO BUILD EXISTING MODEL EXAMPLE

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 9 – “How Green was My Valley” – Director John Ford

REFINE AND FINISH ELEVATIONS ON GRID PAPER
 FINISH EXISTING MODEL EXAMPLE

WEEK #10 - INT/EXT LORI’S STUDIO APARTMENT - CLASS DISCUSSION**DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 9 – “How Green was My Valley” – Director John Ford**

THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF *STRETCHER BAR* - *HOW WILL CHRIS’ PAINTINGS BE REALIZED?*

ASSIGNED: Feature Film 10 – “Key Largo” – Director John Huston

START THE BUILD OF EXISTING MODEL EXAMPLE
 REFINE FLOORPLAN OF LORI’S APT. USING GRID PAPER

WEEK #11 - INT/EXT LORI’S STUDIO APARTMENT - CLASS GROUPS**DISCUSSION: Feature Film 10 – “Key Largo” – Director John Huston**

FINISH EXISTING MODEL EXAMPLE BUILD IN CLASS
 BEGIN ELEVATIONS ON GRID PAPER

ASSIGNED: FEATURE FILM 11 – “The Big Clock” Director John Farrow

FINISH EXISTING MODEL EXAMPLE
 REFINE AND FINISH ELEVATIONS ON GRID PAPER

WEEK #12 - LORI'S STUDIO APARTMENT**DISCUSSION: FEATURE FILM 11 – “The Big Clock” Director John Farrow**

FINAL PROJECTS

SET DECORATION BOARDS AND PALETTE

ASSIGNED: Feature Film 12 – “Thieves Highway” Director Jules Dassin

BEGIN BUILD OF LORI'S APT. FOR FINAL PRESENTATION

WEEK #13 - LORI'S STUDIO APARTMENT**DISCUSSION: Feature Film 12 – “Thieves Highway” Director Jules Dassin**

PRESENTING YOUR IDEAS - DISCUSSIONS

BUILD MODELS IN CLASS

ASSIGNED: FINAL PRESENTATION WITH PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS

FINISH TABLE TOP WHITE MODELS,

SET LISTS,

BREAKDOWNS,

INSPIRATIONAL RESEARCH,

TONAL COLOR COLLAGES,

SET DECORATION BOARDS,

LOCATION PHOTOS FOR SHOW & TELL.

WEEK #14 - INDIVIDUAL SHOW & TELL, FINAL PROJECTS- GROUP ONE

PRESENTATION OF STUDENT WORK

DISCUSSION: COMMENTARY BY GUESTS

WEEK #15 - INDIVIDUAL SHOW & TELL, FINAL PROJECTS - GROUP TWO

PRESENTATION OF STUDENT WORK

DISCUSSION: COMMENTARY BY GUESTS

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

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>.

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave the class pending discussions and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

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 and 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 micro-aggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

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

USC Emergency Information. Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

Diversity at USC - Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave the class pending discussions and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.