

STAGE PROPERTIES - THTR 439

Units:

FALL—Tuesday/Thursday—Time: 12-1:30pm

Location: PED 204 & TTL

Instructor: Mallory Birkrem

Office: TBD

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Info: Birkrem@USC.edu, Class Slack Channel.

I will typically reply within 12 hours.

Course Description

Understanding of what a Props Manager and Props Artisan's role includes and the skills incorporated. Props are important pieces in storytelling on both stage and screen.

Learning Objectives

This class begins to explore the managerial skills needed to be an effective Props Manager and some of the skills used by Props Artisans.

The goals for students in this course are:

- To learn how to break a script down and form a detailed props list, using research to create a comprehensive deck to share with designers, plan for acquisition of all items, project and track budgets for projects and productions.
- To understand the story and characters fully to decide the best options of props and set dressing
- To gain a basic understanding of several prop fabrication including
 - o Researching and producing a period paper good using digital software.
 - o Woodworking
 - o Casting and mold making using Smooth-On products.
 - o Studying research photos and recreating through sculpture and paint.
 - o Paint finishes including faux finishes and stenciling

Prerequisite(s): THTR 130 or THTR

Recommended Preparation: Basic Fabrication skills will be helpful, but not mandatory.

Course Notes

This is a project based class and may need to work on the physical projects outside of class. There may be materials you need to purchase to enhance your projects. Communication is key. If there is anything affecting your work in this course, please communicate this. I want to work with you for you to get the most out of this course.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

You will be using Google Sheet and Slides, Adobe Photoshop and InDesign. Adobe products can be used on the design lab computers or a discount student license can be purchased. A digital program that allows for

script breakdown could be useful, I recommend Scriptation (not required). Student licenses can be purchased on the Scriptation website.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

▪ Readings

- o Last Night in SOHO by Edgar Wright & Krysty Wilson-Cairns. I will provide a digital PDF copy.

▪ Art Supplies/Materials

- o Exacto knife and blade (USC Bookstore)
- o Snap knife (USC Bookstore)
- o Acrylic Paints and Brushes*
- o Scissors (USC Bookstore)
- o 3" 3 ring binder (optional)
- o 3 Hole Punch (optional)
- o Release Agent Spray*
- o Smooth-On, OOMOO*
- o Smooth-On, Smooth-Cast*
- o Foam*
- o Safety Glasses
- o A Glass item
- o Other materials as needed

*Will be discussed further in class. May be provided for you or bought in bulk.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Props Binder

A props binder holds all of the information a Props Manager needs and uses during the production and run of a show. This binder will have the running information for this semester's classwork. It must be well organized and complete. This binder should be fully online or fully in person, all information should be found in one place. Items that must be included in the binder are as follows:

- "Last Night in SOHO" full props list (film style)
- Short Story breakdown exercise.
- Budget Tracking on every project
- Research/Reference photos for every project
- Plans for every project that required them
- Written reflection pieces for every project
- Portfolio pictures of all projects
- In class worksheets
- Copies of any paper goods used for Desktop Project
- Copy of your deck presentation

Deck Presentation

You will be assigned a scene from "Last Night in SOHO" and will create a deck to present to the designer and the director. This deck will include options of items, brief written explanation of why these were chosen as options, and the budget implications. The deck will cover both hand props and set dressing for that particular scene.

Sculpture Project

Based on reference photos, you will recreate a carved 5" x 5" tile out of extruded polystyrene (foam). You will then seal the tile and finish it with a painted faux finish to replicate a different material. Turned in will be a portfolio picture before and after painting as well as the carving itself with the reference image.

Faux Food Project

Based on reference photos, you will recreate a meal using a variety of materials and techniques. There should be one example of a digitally crafted label. Turned in will be a portfolio picture as well as your fake meal with the reference photo.

Woodworking Project

You will choose one of the three projects and draw up a plan. Using that plan you will build an item using basic woodworking skills of: drilling, cut outs using a band or jigsaw, laminating pieces together, and sanding for aesthetic and safety. Depending on which project you choose you will seal it with either paint or a stain. The finished product along with a portfolio picture and its plan will be turned in.

Molding/Casting Project

You will bring a small item in to make a mold of using Smooth-On OOMOO, and a plastic resin cast using Smooth-on. Turned in will be a portfolio picture with the original item in the photo, and the mold and cast you made.

Stenciling Project

On a glass surface you will use vinyl stencils to place a permanent design. The stencil will be created digitally and printed out. You have the choice of etching the permanent design or using enamel paints. You will turn in a portfolio picture of the glass item as well as the item itself and a copy of the stencil.

Desktop Project

The Desktop project is our final project and will be displayed in a gallery showing. The date and location are yet to be determined. You will choose a fictional character and create their physical desktop. This surface will be 2'x4' (subject to change) and everything should be securely placed. At least 3 items on the desk should be manufactured/fabricated by you. You will have to provide research images and a written explanation for why that character has those items on the desk. The gallery showing should have a separate brief statement of who your character is and why the desk looks as it does. A small piece of your grade will be determined by visitor feedback.

Quizzes

- Soft Goods
- USITT Tech Olympics event
- Weapons and Safety
- Digital/SFX Props
- Furniture/Woodworking

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Props Binder	100	20.00
Deck Presentation	30	6.00
Quizzes	50	10.00
Sculpture Project	50	10.00
Faux Food Project	40	8.00

Woodworking Project	40	8.00
Molding/Casting Project	50	10.00
Stenciling Project	40	8.00
Desktop Project	100	20.00

Grading Scale (Example)

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

All projects should be turned in on the posted due date. Projects will be accepted with a single letter grade deduction up until the final in class meeting. The grade deduction may be waived through written communication with the instructor before the initial due date. Quizzes will not be allowed to be made up without an excused absence.

Grading Timeline

I will do my best to have grades posted 2-3 days later.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1

8/23 - Class Intro

- Go over syllabus
- Discuss what is a prop and identify the different types
- Watch "Why Props Matter"
- General overview of Props Manager and Props Artisan's roles
- Go over what should be in a Props Binder

8/25 - Script Breakdown * "LNIS" Script should be read at least once*****

- Discuss overall story and feelings of script.
- Ways to read a script.
- What are you looking for as a Props Manager.
- What should go on a props list.
- Exercise using a short story*

WEEK 2

8/29 - Budget Tracking & Research

- Ways to acquire a prop
- Time cost estimate overview
- Labor v. Material v. Office budgets
- Budget Estimation
- Budget Tracking
- Budgeting Worksheet*
- -
- Digital Research v. Physical Research
- Historical accuracies v. reference research

9/1 - Decks ** Assigned Scenes will be posted on Blackboard**

- Discuss decks, what should be in there
- Deck style methods
- How to shop for a deck.

WEEK 3

9/6 - Deck Presentations*

9/8 - Weapons & Props Safety

- Different Types of weapons
- How to handle weapons
- How to store weapons
- Other Safety conscious props
- Safety 1st, on all props

WEEK 4

9/13 - **Soft Goods & Consumables** **Weapons & Safety Quiz**

- Types of soft goods
- Discuss merits of building v. buying them
- Basic techniques and tools
- Repurposing soft goods
- -
- Further discuss types of consumables
- How to budget for consumables
- Consumables Worksheet*

9/15 - **Tech Olympics (props)** **Soft Goods Quiz**

- Break into teams and compete in the Props event from USITT tech olympics
- (counts as a quiz score)

WEEK 5

9/26 - **Sculpture & Faux Finishes** **Have 3 reference photos to choose from**

- Discuss methods of sculpture
- Tools of sculpture
- Materials that could be used in sculpture
- Budgeting information
- -
- Styles of finishes
- Learn different techniques that can be used for paint finishes
- Choose/assign Carving Project

9/29 - **Carving Project**

- Class time to work on Carving Project

WEEK 6

10/4 - **Carving Project** **Carving Project should be turned in at beginning of next class**

- Class time to work on Carving Project

10/6 - **Faux Foods** **Have 3 reference photos to choose from**

- When would you need to use Faux Foods
- Discuss different types and styles of Faux Foods
- Food safety
- Learn about different techniques that can be used for Faux Food fabrication
- Budgeting information
- Choose/assign Faux Foods Project

WEEK 7

10/11 - **Faux Foods** ***Faux Foods Project should be turned in at beginning of next class***

- Class time to work on Faux Food Project

10/13 - **Fall Recess**

WEEK 8

10/18 - **Casting & Molding** ***Bring 3 small items to choose from***

- When Casting and Molding is appropriate
- Learn different types of casts/molds
- Discuss different techniques
- Tools of Casting and Molding
- The principals(science) of Casting and Molding
- Choose/assign item to cast and molded
- Begin creating structure for Mold

10/20 - **Casting & Molding** ***have finished structures***

- Check Structures
- Budgeting Information
- Pour Smooth-On OOMOO
- Learn more about 2 part plastic resins

WEEK 9

10/25 - **Casting & Molding** ***if using a 2 part mold 2nd half should be poured and cured***

- Use finished mold and 2 part plastic resin to cast

10/27 - **Digital Props/SFX Props** ***Casts and Molds should be turned in***

- Types of Digital Props.
- Crossover Digital Props & and the importance of communication
- When you might use a digital prop
- -
- Types of SFX Props
- Safety & Consequences of SFX Props
- Techniques and skills used to fabricate SFX Props

WEEK 10

11/1 - **Binder Check / Stenciling & Etching** ***Have glass and 3 ideas ready***Digital/SFX Quiz***

- Check in on Props Binder Progress
 - "LNIS" Props List
 - Ongoing budget tracking
 - Time for any ongoing questions
- Discuss stencilling principals
- Techniques and skills for stenciling
- Science of etching

11/3 - Stenciling and Etching
-Class work time for etching project

WEEK 11

11/8 - Woodworking and Furniture

- Learn the styles and names of furniture
- Identify different types of joints and legs and woods
- Go over the variety of techniques used
- Breakaway furniture
- Choose Woodworking Project

11/10 - Woodworking (TTL)

- Class time to work on Woodworking project

WEEK 12

11/15 - Woodworking (TTL)

- Class time to work on woodworking project

11/17 - Set Dressing Final Project *woodworking project should be turned in***furniture quiz*****

- Give an in depth overview of what set dressing can be
- Character Choice *****should have 3 options available*****
- Go over Desktop Final Project Breakdown.

WEEK 13

11/22 - Set Dressing Final Project

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

11/24 - Thanksgiving

WEEK 14

11/29 - Set Dressing Final Project

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

12/1 - Set Dressing Final Project * Last day to turn any outstanding projects in*****

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

GALLERY SHOWCASE

TBD

FINAL

12/13

- Turning in the fully completed Props Binder.

- the 2 hrs set aside for the final can be used to add any finishing touches, but must be turned in by the end of that allotted time.

IMPORTANT:

In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing, and other academic activities. **For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester.**

(Please refer to the [Contact Hours Reference](#) guide.)

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

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” 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>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university’s site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.usc.edu>

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.