

USC School of Dramatic Arts

STAGE PROPERTIES - THTR 439

Units:

FALL—Tuesday/Thursday—Time: 12-1:30pm

Location: PED 114& TTL

Instructor: Mallory Birkrem

Office: MCC Adjunct Office

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Info: Birkrem@USC.edu

Course Description

Understanding of what a Props Manager and Props Arsan'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 Arsans.

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
 - Researching and producing a period paper good using digital software.
 - Woodworking
 - Casting and mold making using Smooth-On products.
 - Studying research photos and recreating through sculpture and paint.
 - Paint finishes including faux finishes and stenciling

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

Movie script. I will provide a digital PDF copy.

▪ Art Supplies/Materials

- o Exacto knife and blade (USC Bookstore)
- o Snap knife (USC Bookstore)
- 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. Will be provided for you or bought in bulk.

Descripon and Assessment of Assignments

Props Binder

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

- Chosen feature 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 reflecon 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 presentaon

Deck Presentaon

You will choose a scene from your feature script and will create a deck to present to the designer and the director. This deck will include opons of items, brief wrien explanaon of why these were chosen as opons, and the budget implicaons. 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 8" x 8" 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 porolio 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 craed label. Turned in will be a porolio 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, laminang pieces together, and sanding for aesthec and safety. Depending on which project you choose you will seal it with either paint or a stain. The finished product along with a porolio 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 plasc resin cast using Smooth-on. Turned in will be a porolio 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 porolio 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 in the lobby of MCC. You will choose a fictional character and create their physical desktop. This surface will be 2'x4' 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

Sewing Project	35	7 %
Props Binder	100	20 %
Deck Presentation	30	6 %
Quizzes	50	10 %
Sculpture Project	45	9 %
Faux Food Project	40	8 %
Woodworking Project	40	8 %
Molding/Casting Project	35	7 %
Stenciling Project	25	5 %
Desktop Project	100	20 %

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

8/22 - **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

8/24 - **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
- Research Worksheet*

9/31 - **Decks**

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

WEEK 3

9/5 - **Deck Presentations***

9/7 - **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

WEEK 4

9/12 - Carving Project

- Class time to work on Carving Project

9/15 - Carving Project

- Class time to work on Carving Project

WEEK 5

9/19 - Weapons & Props Safety

- Different Types of weapons
- How to handle weapons
- How to store weapons
- Other Safety conscious props
- Safety 1st, on all props
-
- -
- Styles of finishes
- Learn different techniques that can be used for paint finishes
- Choose/assign Carving Project

9/21 - Faux Foods **Have 3 reference photos to choose from ** Weapons Quiz****

- 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 6

9/26 - Faux Foods *Faux Foods Project should be turned in at beginning of next class*****

- Class time to work on Faux Food Project

9/28 - Faux Foods *Faux Foods Project should be turned in at beginning of next class*****

- Class time to work on Faux Food Project

WEEK 7

10/3 - Soft Goods

- Types of soft goods
- Discuss merits of building v. buying them
- Repurposing soft goods
- Basic techniques and tools

10/5 - Soft Goods

- Work time for your sewing project.

WEEK 8

10/10 - Soft Goods

- Work time for your sewing project.

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

10/12 - Fall Break

WEEK 9

10/17 - Tech Olympics (props)

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

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10/19 - Digital Props/SFX Props

- 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

10/24 - Stenciling & Etching *Have glass and 3 ideas ready***Digital/SFX Quiz*****

- Discuss stenciling principals
- Techniques and skills for stenciling
- Science of etching

10/26 - Binder Check

- Check in on Props Binder Progress
 - "LNIS" Props List
 - Ongoing budget tracking
 - Time for any ongoing questions

WEEK 11

11/8 - Casting & Molding *have finished structures*****

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

11/10 - **Casting & Molding**

- Use finished mold and 2 part plastic resin to cast

WEEK 12

11/15 - **Woodworking and Furniture**

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

11/17 - **Woodworking**

- Class time to work on woodworking project

WEEK 13

11/22 - **Woodworking**

- Class time to work on woodworking project

11/24 - **Set Dressing Final Project**

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 14

11/21 - **Set Dressing Final Project**

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

11/23 - **Thanksgiving**

WEEK 15

11/28 - **Set Dressing Final Project**

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

11/30 - **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 – restoring your workspace display.

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.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture Statement:

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of

Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

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.