

**Stage Properties - THTR 439**

**Units: 3**

**Fall—Tuesday & Thursday: 12:00pm – 1:50pm**

**Location: PED 204**

**Instructor: Mallory Birkrem**

**Office: n/a**

**Office Hours: By Appointment**

**Contact Info:**

Birkrem@usc.edu

608.695.0306

**Course Description**

Working towards fully understanding the roles of Props Manager and Props Artisan. Discovering why props are an important piece of storytelling on both stage and screen.

**Learning Objectives**

This class begins to explore the managerial skills necessary to be an effective Props manager and introduces skills utilized by a Props Artisan.

Goals for students in this course are:

- To learn how to break a script down and create a detailed props list.
- Create a comprehensive “deck” to share with designers and directors using research
- Learn how to schedule and budget for acquisitions, projects, and labor to complete a show.
- Understand the characters and stories fully to confidently choose props and set dressing.
- Gain a basic understanding of several prop fabrication skills
  - o Woodworking
  - o Casting and Mold Making
  - o Paint Finishes
  - o Research
  - o Carving

**Course Notes**

This is a project-based class, and you may need to work on the physical projects outside of class. There may be materials you choose to purchase to enhance your projects, this should never be required. Please speak to me if you need any assistance with materials. If there is anything affecting your work in this course, please communicate this. I want you to succeed.

**Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

You will need to use a spreadsheet and presentation software for the props list and design deck. You may want to use Adobe programs which can be found on the design lab computers, or a student subscription can be purchased. Another program you may find useful is procreate. A program that can be helpful for breaking down is “Scriptation.”

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- **Readings**
  - o Movie Script - PDF will be provided.
- **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 provided for you.

## 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:

- Full props list (hand props only)
- Short Story breakdown exercise.
- Budget Tracking on every project
- Research/Reference photos for every project
- Written reflection pieces for every project
- Portfolio pictures of all projects.
- In class worksheets
- All plans created for projects
- Copies of any paper goods used for Desktop Project
- Copy of your deck presentation

### Deck Presentation

You will be assigned a scene from the feature script 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 hand props and set dressing for that 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. You will turn in portfolio pictures of before and after painting as well as the carving itself and the reference image.

## **Faux Food Project**

Based on reference photos, you will recreate a meal using a variety of materials and techniques. You will turn in a portfolio picture as well as your fake meal and the reference photo. The grade will be based on how well you replicate the reference picture.

## **Woodworking Project**

You will choose a project and draw up a plan. Once the plan is approved, you will use that plan to build an item using basic woodworking skills that must include 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 mold using Smooth-On OOMOO, and a plastic resin cast using Smooth-on. You will turn in 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 will then use etching cream to etch the design onto the glass. 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 in the lobby of MCC. You will choose a fictional character and create their physical desktop. This workspace 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 their 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
- Consumables
- Place Setting Worksheet
- Drink Matching exercise

- Weapons and Safety
- Digital/SFX Props
- Furniture/Woodworking Worksheet

### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Props Binder	100	20%
Desk Top Project	100	20%
Design Deck	35	7%
Carving Project	50	10%
Faux Food Project	45	9%
Mold and Casting	40	8%
Stenciling	20	4%
Woodworking	40	8%
Quizzes and Worksheets	70	14%

### 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 Rubrics

All rubrics can be found on Brightspace

### 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 communication with the instructor before the initial due date. Quizzes and in-class worksheets will not be allowed to be made up without an excused absence.

## **Grading Timeline**

I will do my very best to have grades posted 2-3 days after the posted due date. If a project is turned in late it will take longer for the grade to be posted.

## **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.

*Campus 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 with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

## **Additional Policies**

Being in class is only going to benefit you. If you are unable to make a class, I expect an email ahead of the class start time of 12:00pm.

## **Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

### **WEEK 1**

#### **8/27 - 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

#### **8/29 - Script Breakdown \*\*\* 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**

#### **9/3 - 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\*

#### 9/5 - **Decks**

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

### WEEK 3

#### 9/10 - **Deck Presentations\***

#### 9/12 - **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

#### 9/17 - **Carving Project**

- Class time to work on Carving Project

#### 9/19 - **Carving Project**

- Class time to work on Carving Project

### WEEK 5

#### 9/24 - **Carving Project (Faux Finishes)**

- Learn different techniques of painted finishes
- Class time to work on projects

#### 9/26 - **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 6**

10/1 - **Consumables** **\*\*Weapons Quiz\*\***

10/3 - **Faux Foods** **\*\*Have 3 reference photos to choose from\*\* \*\* Consumables 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 7**

10/3 - **Faux Foods**

- Class time to work on project

10/10 - **Fall Break**

## **WEEK 8**

10/10 - **Faux Foods Feast Day** **\*\*Food Projects Due\*\***

10/17 - **Soft Goods**

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

## **WEEK 9**

10/22 - **Binder Check**

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

10/24 **Proper Place Settings**

- Learn the types of dishes and cutlery

- Learn the when and where of place settings

## **WEEK 10**

### **10/29 - Drink Matching Exercise**

### **10/31 - 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 11**

### **11/5 - Casting & Molding**

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

### **11/7 - Casting & Molding**

- Use finished mold and 2 part plastic resin to cast

## **WEEK 12**

### **11/12 - Stenciling & Etching \*\*\*Have glass and 3 ideas ready\*\*\*Digital/SFX Quiz\*\*\***

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

### **11/14 - 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

## **WEEK 13**



11/19 - **Woodworking**

- Class time to work on woodworking project

11/21 - **Woodworking**

- Class time to work on woodworking project

#### **WEEK 14**

11/26 - 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.

11/28 - Thanksgiving

#### **WEEK 15**

12/3 - Set Dressing Final Project

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

12/5 - Set Dressing Final Project \*\*\* Last day to turn any outstanding projects in\*\*\*

- Class time to work on Desktop Project

#### **GALLERY SHOWCASE**

12/6 - **FINAL DESKTOP PROJECT MUST BE UP BY 5pm**

- Tables will be set up by 10am in MCC
- Any projects that are packed and labeled I can transport to MCC, but you will have to set up and secure your desk yourself.

#### **FINAL**

12/17 – **11am Meet at MCC to take down your final project**

- We will take this time to put everything back to where it belongs
- Binders are due today!!!!

#### **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](http://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](mailto: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.

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### 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/>).

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### 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>

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## Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

