

Prerequisite: CTPR 310 Intermediate Production (for Production majors), CTPR 507 for Graduate Students or CTPR 456 Introduction to Art Direction (for non-majors)  
Classroom: SCS107(Firehouse Building in the Zemeckis parking lot)  
Thursday's, 7-10PM

Instructor: Michael Provar, E-Mail: [mprovar@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:mprovar@cinema.usc.edu)  
Office Hours, in-person: Thursday's 4-6PM as needed by appointment, SCA 423.  
Or Zoom by appointment.  
**Your SA is: TBD**

Production Designers are responsible for everything that is physically in front of the camera and doesn't move.

The goal of the class is to give students a practical base to implement their design strategies while working on productions here at USC and beyond. What are creative ways to stretch low-budget dollars to enable the design of the films to have more visual weight and a clear reality for the telling of a particular story. This Practicum will explore in depth the many facets of the Art Department.

When creating any cinematic image, the two elements that limit the work are time and money. You can, in a weekend, make The Titanic in a bathtub for a hundred bucks or spend months in the ocean and studio tanks for two hundred million and tell the story differently. But each approach is still The Titanic in its own right. The two constraints gravely impact all parts of film production. Generally, films have a better chance of being finished when they reflect a good management of both.

However, no matter how much time and money you have, the one thing that remains constant is how the Art Department should function. One objective of this class is to introduce and examine the collaboration between all the Art Department's sub-departments including: Set Design, Set Construction, Scenic, Set Decoration, Property, etc. How all the subsets of the Art Department communicate together to help shape the collective vision of a 'Show'. By exploring these inner departments, my hope is to give you a broader base of understanding about the Art Department as a whole and how you might fit into it after graduating from SC. Not everyone may be cut out to be a Production Designer, being a Prop Master or Set Decorator for instance, is just as vital to the storytelling and could be more rewarding to certain individuals.

The process of breaking the script down by the Art Department into manageable parts will be explained. How each department within the Art Department budgets differently and what changes a budget during production. We will then alter this standard breakdown procedure a bit and apply it in a different way for USC productions. How to set up and manage a budget will be discussed.

As we make our way through the many issues that weigh on all choices in the design process, this class will discuss the collaborative and fluid nature of the 'production' from an Art Department perspective.

Areas of focus and learning objectives include: The Art Department team, script breakdown, budgets, research, measuring and dressing a location, ground plans and elevations, white model building, SketchUp, set plotting and set layout, basic use of backdrops and sailboats, basic flat construction and set construction, basic scenic applications, etc.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is mandatory. Students are required to attend all classes.

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. One absence may result in a student's grade being lowered by one notch (IE: A becomes A-). Two absences may result in a student's grade being lowered by two notches (IE: A- becomes B). A third absence may result in a student's grade being lowered another full point (IE: B becomes C). Grades can be lowered by one full point for every additional absence.

If you cannot attend, it is your responsibility to get the information and HW assignment from a fellow student or SA. Please do not leave me an e-mail/voice mail inquiring about what you missed in class.

For an absence to be excused the student must have approval from me and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

If you have an emergency and must miss class, please contact me prior to class.

HW ASSIGNMENTS POINTS: Assignments will be graded 1 through 10, 10 being best. Your assignment will be graded on the following factors:

- > did you follow instructions?
- > is the homework complete and submitted on time?
- > how well you achieved the homework goal?

\* Please DATE each new homework assignment in your folders, even make-up HW.

GRADING TIMELINE: Generally, your assignments will be graded weekly. I try to give feedback to every student. If I miss you, please come and see me to discuss the assignment.

LATE OR INCOMPLETE HOMEWORK: Homework that is submitted incomplete will be graded accordingly. Homework that is submitted late will lose 1pt. of its possible score for each week it is late. As an example, homework that would have received an 8 but is submitted two weeks late would become a 6.

Homework submitted after two weeks will not be accepted.

ALL HOMEWORK WILL BE DUE BY 6PM THE FOLLOWING WEDNESDAY -UNLESS NOTED.

ALL HOMEWORK IS POSTED TO YOUR FOLDERS AND PLEASE DATE YOUR HOMEWORK.

I will always except Homework earlier, just let me know it's posted.

QUIZES: There will be one quiz at Mid-Term, multiple choice.

FINAL GRADES: I will tally your homework, EC and quiz points. A percentage will be determined by the total points you've earned as compared with the total points possible. This percentage corresponds to a letter grade: A = 100-94%, A- = 93-90%, B+ = 89- 87%, B = 86-83%, B- = 82-80%, C+ = 79-77%, C = 76-73%, C- = 72-70%, D+ = 69- 67%, D = 66-63%, D- = 62-60%, F = 59-0%.

GRADE BREAKDOWNS:

25% Final Project, 25% Home Work, 25% Mid-term Quiz, 25% In-Class Participation

PD PRACTICUM FINAL PROJECT:

The following elements will be required:

>USING THE SCRIPT THAT I HANDED OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER<

>25 reference/research images

> A "Key Image" for your sample script that anchors the Design of the show.

> A Palette for your film

> An overall Palette design to your film from start to finish, scene by scene.

> A virtual model using SketchUp of your set utilizing a predetermined JEP House interior as your set, TBD. Screen Grabs(minimum 5, 1 plan view and each elevation view inside the set from a camera POV) or Scenes(minimum 4) are both acceptable.

> All clearly labeled and ready to present –loaded to your homework folders.

> This presentation will be worth 60pts.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES: Cost is approximately \$50.00+/- and is to be purchased by each student. Supplies are needed by the second week of class and considered a Homework assignment. Most supplies can be found at Blick Art Supplies or Amazon.

9"x 12" spiral sketchbook

"Sobo" brand glue, a small bottle will suffice; 2 or 4 oz.

Four color pen

\*\*\*White Foamcore board, 1/8" or 3/16" thick by appoximately 18"x 24" or 20" x 30"\*\*\*

\*\*\*3-Button Mouse\*\*\*

\*\*\*White Foamcore board and 3-button mouse will be needed for week 5 and not needed for week 2

For students interested in being Production Designers and/or the Art Department, the purchase of the tools listed below is imperative. Otherwise, these tools will be lent to students for their use during the making of class projects and assignments.

Architects scale ruler(not an Engineer's scale ruler)

8-1/2"x 11" "Clearprint" No. 1000HP-4 grid, Fade-Out design and sketch vellum pad

"X-Acto" knife with extra #11 blades

"AlumiCutter 12" or 18" ruler or similar metal ruler

25' long measuring tape, "3/4" Stanley Powerlock" or typical

OPTIONAL:

Yellow Pads

Multiple leads

Stumps

Different sized metal rulers

Drafting Triangles and Templates

Mechanical pencil

Highlighters

Cutting Mat

Electric Eraser

Eraser shield

ETC.

**AI:**

I do not see a need to use AI in this class or can I see a way to use it within the structure of the class. As most of the exercises and assignments are a hands-on experience.

Learning to use AI is an emerging skill. Keep in mind the following when using AI:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.]

**THE COURSE, APPROXIMATE WEEK BY WEEK:****Week 1- 08.28, SCS 107, Syllabus Breakdown and Script Breakdown**

The Practicum Class Pipeline

The Art Department as a whole, broken down. -Positions

Discussion: What part of the Art Department are you going to get a job in?

Developing “hindsight” and Presentation, the backbone of the Art Department.

Handouts- sample scripts

Where to start?

Breaking the script down, breakdowns per department.

Exercise: A USC breakdown.

HW: Break down the script. Due 6 pm. Wednesday- 09.03

Gather supplies for the semester.

**Week 2- 09.04, Seeing how Design enhances story.**

Discussion and review film examples.

Where to start?

Quantifying mood and tone- the tools at a Designers disposal. Photographers, research, Inspirational films, tear sheets, etc.

Inspirational imagery and research imagery- what's the difference?

Developing a design concept and using visual metaphor to tell the story.

Key images and latent images. Can you build latent imagery into a set?

**EC** HW: Re-Do the Script Breakdown, please post the original and the new breakdown by 6pm. Wednesday – 09.10

## THE COURSE, APPROXIMATE WEEK BY WEEK: CONT.

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### Week 3- 09.11, SCS 107, Dressing the Set

The Set Decorator and the Set-Dressing department, -Positions  
Leadman, Swing Gang, On-Set Dresser, etc.

LA. 411

Dressing for character, broad strokes into details.

Dressing a set and dressing a location, tricks and mindset

Building a low-budget "kit"

Exercise: Location set dressing Demo

### Week 4- 09.18, JEP House Porch, Set or Location? \*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\*

Discussion: What determines a Set Build or Utilizing a Location?

The issues that drive the crucial choice of building vs. location work.

Practical exteriors with stage interiors. -Matching

Exercise: Surveys -how to measure and photograph a location.

Windows, Doors and Mould Details

Handouts-Moulding styles

HW: Photograph and Label Mould Details, Post by 6pm. Wednesday- 09.24

### Week 5- 09.25, SCS 107, Drafting by Hand. Scale Drawing Tutorial

The Scale Ruler

Plans- where everything starts, blocking, exits and entries, depth or not?

Elevations- architectural style applied.

Exercise: How to draw plans and elevations of the JEP house.

Handouts: Drafting Basics

HW: **FINISH** 1/4" scale Plan and continue Elevations of the JEP House and bring to class. **Purchase WHITE Foamcore and 3 Button Mouse**

### Week 6- 10.02, SCS 107, White Models, Presenting a visual idea- physically.

The White Model, how it's used and creating Elevations that reflect architectural style.

Exercise: Building a 1/4" scale white Model of the JEP House

HW: **FINISH** the Plan and Elevations and bring to next class Wk. 8.

### Week 7- 10.09, >WINTER BREAK< ??? ...maybe YTD?

### Week 8- 10.16, SCS 107, White Models, Build and try to Finish Models in-class.

HW: **FINISH** the White Model and bring the finished model to class.

Download SketchUp Pro, free trial or purchase- student rate and have your mouse with you.

### Week 9- 10.23, SCA B120 SketchUp, another way to Present Visual Ideas

Guest: Ryan Garton presents SketchUp, the bells and whistles of the program.

Begin SketchUp exercises. \*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\* **MID-TERM QUIZ**

HW SKUP 1: Post screen-shots of homework by Wed.- 10.29, 6pm.

### Week 10- 10.30, SCA B120 SketchUp, Continued, Guest: Ryan Garton

Continue Plan and Elevations exercises, adding texture and finishes, set dressing.

Handouts: Homework Guide & Short Cuts \*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\*

HW SKUP 2: Post screen-shots of homework by Wed.- 11.05, 6pm

Week 11- 11.06, SCA B120 SketchUp, Guest: Ryan Garton, Continued  
Presenting what you see in your mind's-eye. \*\*Imperative to be in-class\*\*  
HW SKUP 3: Post screen-shots of homework by Wed.- 11.12, 6pm

Week 12- 11.13, Stage 4, The Construction Department  
Positions  
Basic Flat construction  
Moulding review  
Materials Used, Tools- Pneumatic and Mechanical, Lumber, Kits and Vendors  
Spotting and Layout of a set, Firelanes, Backings, Sailboats and lighting space discussion.  
Exercise: Basic Flat handling and connection of flats. Students stand up walls.  
Bracing of flats and flat safety, usage of "wailers/hog troughs", "jacks",  
"bottle jacks" and "wild walls".

Week 13- 11.20, Stage 4, The Scenic Department  
Positions  
Materials and Tools Used, Building a "kit"  
Ageing and glazes  
"Blocking"  
Exercise: Demo of a Basic Wood Grain and other Faux Finish  
Students Paint the finish.  
Prep of walls, Low Budget and Normal Prep  
Seams and corners –inside/outside and Surface fills  
Paint application, priming/underpainting and "mud" paint discussion.  
HW: Find 10 Images of aging examples. Post by 6pm. Wednesday **11.25**

Your FINAL PROJECT due Week 16- Thursday 12.04 based on the script I handed out and using the JEP House as one of your locations in the story, TBD by me.

You must present the following:

- > 25 reference/research images
- > A "Key Image" for your sample script that anchors the Design of the show.
- > A Palette for your film
- > An overall Palette design to your film from start to finish, scene by scene.
- > A virtual model using SketchUp, utilizing a predetermined JEP House interior as your set, TBD. Screen Grabs(minimum 6) or Scenes(minimum 4) are both acceptable. If you include your SketchUp model, please save it as a 2017 version.
- > All clearly labeled and ready for presentation –loaded to your homework folders.
- > This project will be worth 60pts.

**\*\*\*Make sure the project works and combine all elements into one document please???**

Week 14- 11.27, **>THANKSGIVING BREAK<**

Week 15- 12.04, SCS 107, Last Class/Guest Speaker

Final Projects are to be posted by **6PM on: 12.04** into your HW. folders.  
Please **check** your projects so they open easily in your folders.

Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace.

### SUGGESTED READING:

Art Stars – Legends of Production Design  
Tom Lisowski; Masaryk Productions; 2023  
Interviews with significant designers and their advice for young aspiring designers.

The Work of Art, How something comes from nothing.  
Adam Moss; Penguin Press; 2024  
Interviews with Artists about the process of creating.

How To Write One Song  
Jeff Tweedy; Dutton; 2020  
Creating

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 today's 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  
by Cathy Whitlock and the Art Directors Guild; Harper Collins; 2010

STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage. The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

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>.

Safety:

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.



#### Stressful Times:

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School in and of itself is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, 213-740-9355.

#### [Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

#### Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator Processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed. <https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

#### [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

#### [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

#### [Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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

#### [The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

#### [USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

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

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

PLEASE NOTE:

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) **ARE NOT PERMITTED** IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX...only at home. 🙄