THE ART DEPARTMENT – CONCEPTS OF THE VISUAL NARRATIVE

CTPR 534 (2 UNITS) Syllabus Fall 2025 v5

Prerequisite: CTPR 508 (CTPR 465 Recommended)
Instructor: Jack G. Taylor, Jr. – Email: jgtaylor@usc.edu
SA: TBA – TBA
Class Meeting Time – Wednesday Evenings 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM – Office Hours – Wednesdays 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
Class Location: Building SCS Room 107 (opposite Zemeckis Center)

The Art Department – Concepts of the Visual Narrative (CTPR 534) is a Graduate Level Class that offers a unique opportunity to examine traditional Art Department/Production Design collaborative roles and functions by applying fundamental cinematic core principles in creating a comprehensive visual narrative and storyline through the Art Department/Production Design relationships.

LECTURE SERIES - COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES:

- Learn and experience the process of Production Design and its techniques as it applies to an overall knowledge of the Cinematic Arts.
- Develop an understanding of the fundamental principles and relationships between the Art Department Production Designer and other member collaborators on a cinematic production team.
- Understand the inner workings and operation of the Art Department within a cinematic production.
- Explore the Five C's of Cinematography relation to mood, tone, color, scale, and thumbnail sketch art.
- Explore alternatives in Production Design when budgetary constraints occur.
- Introduce the techniques for making Art Department/Production Design presentations using script breakdowns, set designs/storyboards, working construction documents & set models.

ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS and GRADES

ASSIGNMENTS:
Students are given a variety of classroom Production Design review assignments and take-home projects.

Final Project Presentation:
- Each student creates and presents a completed Production Design Set Project from pre-selected script option. Each student develops a Keynote/PowerPoint presentation showing plans, elevations, color materials, fabrics, hardware, lighting, furnishings and furniture from a script as a final project. A white model or 3D Virtual/digital set is required. Students determine an in-camera Production Design technique from a prescribed list and demonstrate how to achieve it using Art Department concepts.

Production Design Movie Review
- **Weekly Production Design review assignments** and in-class discussions of selected movies spanning the past decades in motion picture production.

Final Exam
- Final Examination test covering Production Design Terms/Workflow processes and techniques.

Assignment Points
Assignments will be graded on the following factors:
- Did the student follow the instructions?
- Is the homework complete?
- Has the homework been submitted in time?

Assignment Submission

- Each Assignment Submitted with Name and date each submission with the class number.
- Homework should be submitted by 6 PM on the following Wednesday.
- Homework will not be accepted after being tardy for two weeks.

Grade Breakdowns

- 50% Final Exam/Class Projects/Assignments
- 35% Final Project & Presentation
- 15% In-Class Participation and Movie review Assignments

University Final Grades Scoring Scale:

- Course Final Grades will be determined using the following scale:
    - 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%

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES – Lab Materials as necessary and to be determined on an in-class project by project basis announcement.

- 1-Architects Imperial 12"Scale Ruler – Flat or Triangular
- 1-45 degree Adjustable Set Square
- 2-HB and B Pencils and Eraser
- 1- 8 ½" x 11" -1/4" grid, Fade-Out Design Sketch Pad.
- 1-X-Acto Cutting Knife with extra blades
- 1- 12" Metal Ruler for cutting
- Masking Tape/Draft Dots
- White Glue – Elmer's Brand, Gorilla Glue Brand -
- Measuring tape – Stanley Fat Max type 8'-0 to 10'-0" or greater for Site Surveying
- Black or White Foam Core – 1/8"-3/16"-1/2" thicknesses

Production Student Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. One Absence may result in a students's grade being lowered by one notch (IE: A becomes A-). **Two absences will result in a student's grade** being **lowered by two notches** (IE. A- becomes B). A third 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 absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence. **Grade Point deductions for in-class Cell phone texting or laptop emailing during class lectures.**

Tardiness: A student is deemed late 15 minutes after the class is scheduled to start. One late arrival may not affect your grade. Two late arrivals equate to one full absence. (IE A becomes A-). Three late arrivals may result in your grade being dropped by two portions (IE: A- becomes B) Four late arrivals may result in your grade being dropped three portions (0ne full point. B becomes C).
Lateness of more than 30 minutes will count as an absence.

Timely attendance is mandatory and failure to attend all class sections from beginning to end may affect grades.

- Exemptions will be allowed on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).
- Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are no longer required to provide an option for students to zoom into class. However, Faculty may choose to use zoom at their discretion in an effort to help students stay current in their course work.
- **If a student misses class due to an emergency,** the student must contact the Professor/Student Assistant 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason or contact the Production Office at 213-740-3317.

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 other or "recycle" work prepard for other courses without obtaining written permission form 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 a course, suspension, or even expulsion form the university.

AI Generators Course Policy

University policy Option A – Not permitted this Production Design Course

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 or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portionof the assignment, Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, **using AI generated tools is prohibited** in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Statement on Academic Conduct

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 S Campus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/s campus-part-b. Other forms of Academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in S Campus and university policies on scientific misconduct, misconduct. Support Systems:

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instruction and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility services (OSAS) accommodations. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor.

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but in not limited to providing materials fro distribution by services publishing course materials. 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.

(Living our Unifying Values, The USC Student Handbook.) Page 13

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ART DEPARTMENT – CONCEPTS OF THE VISUAL NARRATIVE
CLASS SCHEDULE

Please note that schedule and content are subject to adjustments based upon guest availability. Please check your USC email regularly for changes in assignments, scheduled content or general information.

LECTURE SERIES

WEEK 1: 7/27 - COURSE OVERVIEW
- General introduction: Syllabus review, class structure, attendance and grades.
- Discuss basic Production Design/Art Direction with current industry knowledge criteria.
- Discuss Production Designer responsibilities and relationships to other departments.
- Discuss the functionality of the Art Department's process, procedures and workflow.
- Discuss script setting for students' Final Project assignments.
- **Final project requirements handout with class review.**
- **Movie Review Assignment: TBD**

WEEK 2: 9/3 - ART DEPARTMENT SCRIPT BREAKDOWN ANALYSIS
- Script Analysis - Seven Basic Plot types.
- Basic elements of a script. Dramatic structure & Production Design.
- Screenplay page and parts - Master scene format main elements.
- Art Department Breakdown process - Excel spreadsheet breakdown process examples.
- The Art Department breakdown process for budgets, scheduling, workflow and set lists.
- Script breakdown for previz/storyboarding, visual effects.
- Script breakdowns for research to create Mood & Tone Boards.
- **Assignment 1:** Using your instructor assigned script, selected set, create a breakdown, provide research material, and create Mood & Tone Concept Boards reflecting the script.
- **Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD**

WEEK 3: 9/10 - THE FIVE C'S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY & PRODUCTION DESIGN Part I
- **Review Assignment No. 1**: Student presentation of their mood and tone board assignment.
- Discussion of the Five C's of Cinematography in Production Design collaboration.
- Define camera angles and how to use them in Production Design/Set Design layout.
- Create your own Camera Angles. Review of Panavision camera lens angles and aperture ratios.
- Use of camera angles in projection from plan to illustrate use for stage backings spotting criteria.
- Forced perspective defined and demonstrated.
- Discuss and review continuity – Camera Set ups to establish and maintaining proper screen direction.
- **Assignment 2**: Review the camera angles used in a selected assigned film movie scene.
- **Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD**

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CLASS SCHEDULE   (continued)

WEEK 4: 9/17 - THE FIVE C'S OF CINEMATOGRAPHY & PRODUCTION DESIGN Part II

Review Assignment 2: Review In-class student presentations of assignment.

- Continue discussing The Five C's of Cinematography and Production Design.
- Discuss and review Cutting/Editing in Production Design.
- Discuss and review Close-ups in Production Design.
- Discuss and review Composition in Production Design.

Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD – Discuss the 5 C's in relation to the movie.

WEEK 5: 9/24 - PRODUCTION DESIGN/ART DEPARTMENT STAGECRAFT MANAGEMENT

- Discuss Basic Production Design/Art Department/Studio Stagecraft techniques.
- Discuss the Basic Studio Crafts and Production Design/Art Department responsibilities.
- Basic Stagecraft Construction techniques and materials.
- Studio rigging techniques and Art Department Co-ordination collaboration.

Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

WEEK 6: 10/1 - STAGE PLANS & LAYOUTS

- Scale and scaling defined. Review proportional scaling, charts, and scaling for miniatures.
- How to use a scale ruler, 30/60/45 triangles, T-square & parallel straight edge.
- Review Construction Master Calculator, laser measure, & tape measure.
- How to measure a location for Art Department/Production use and create a scale from a photograph.
- The Production Design thumbnail as a visual narrative tool.
- Creating set ground plans, stage set layouts, elevations, sections, and details.
- Set Design process and procedures – Creating Construction Documents -
- **Assignment No. 3:** Create your plan (thumbnail/rough scale draft of your selected set with hand drawing) thumbnail rough scale plan layout including wild walls, furniture layout & suggested camera angles.

Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

WEEK 7: 10/8 - ART DIRECTION, SET DESIGN, STAGE CRAFT - CONSTRUCTION

- **Review Assignment No. 3**: In class student presentation of their assignment.
- Discuss Art Department communication oversight.
- Review architectural documentation types: plan, elevations, sections, detail types, doors and windows, schedules, stage spotting plans, and director's plan (stage, backlot, & locations).
- Hand drafting vs CAD software: AutoCAD, Sketch Up, Rhino.
- Discuss architectural styles, and molding profiles and Staff Shop ornamentation.
- Color Basics – Additive/Subtractive Theories Reviewed – Pantone Colors vs Coatings
- Discuss signage and graphics layout, grip and stock sets.
- **Assignment No. 4:** Create elevations from the plan of your selected set and include research boards with examples of color choices (Mood & Tone Boards) details and hardware choices.

Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

CLASS SCHEDULE   (continued)

WEEK 8: 10/15 LOCATIONS

- **Review Assignment No. 4**: In class student presentation of their assignment.
- **GUEST SPEAKER:** Location Manager TBD.
- Script Location Breakdown: Determining and defining locations.
- The Role of the Art Department Location Manager and workflow structure with the Production Designer and production filming.
- Discuss the workflow search for locations. Review location companies and State Film Commissions.
- Photographing locations for Production Design selection, review and presentation.
- Creating the photographic location panorama with digital software.
- Presenting the location with the Production Designer's Cinematic Vision: The Pitch.
- Location processes and procedures: measuring the location and the Location Contract.
- **Assignment No. 5:** Select an exterior location to match your interior selected set and create a location photographic presentation board, including establishing location panoramic views.
- **Final project requirements handout and class review reminder No. 1.**
  Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

WEEK 9: 10/22 - THE ART DEPARTMENT SET DECORATION & PROPERTY MASTER

- **Review Assignment No. 5**: Student presentations of their assignment.
- **GUEST SPEAKER:** Set Decorator TBD.
- Discuss the Production Designer's role/relationship with the Set Decorator and Prop Master.
- Discuss the Set Decorator and Prop Master positions.
- Discuss Art Department Workflow.
- Discuss the Set Decoration Crew and the importance of the Lead Person.
- Props important role to the story and visual character reinforcement.
- Prop rental houses: Creating the Production Design/Set Decoration vision with furniture, fixtures, drapery, and hand props.
  Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

WEEK 10: 10/29 - SPECIAL EFFECTS AND SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

- A brief history of Special Effects and Special Visual Effects.
- Understanding digital and practical use of in-camera techniques.
- The Art Department/Production Designer's role/relationship with the Special Visual Effects Supervisor and previz storyboarding.
- Discuss blue/green screen, LED, Unreal software workflow as used in the Production Designer's vision. Discuss the Production Design Vision with Special Visual Effects Background Plates.
- Scenic painted backings vs digital photographic backings.
- **Assignment No. 6:** Student/Teacher In-class project mentoring of creating a stage set spotting plan with backings. Creating and choosing rental backing types for the student scripted final set project.
  Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

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CLASS SCHEDULE   (continued)

WEEK 11: 11/5 - PRODUCTION DESIGN STAGING CONCEPTS IN THE VISUAL NARRATIVE

Assignment No. 6: Student/Teacher in class final project mentoring.

- What is set blocking and the Director's plan?
- Production Design concepts in scripts scene staging and set design/set decoration layout.
- Review Stage blocking concepts in relation to camera angles/continuity/composition/cutting and close-ups – Staging with the 5 C's of Cinema.
- Review of film Clips on Production Design and staging.
- **Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD**

WEEK 12: 11/12 - MAKING THE VISUAL NARRATIVE PRESENTATION

- Art Department concepts in creating the visual narrative presentation.
- Discuss creating the Production Designer's vision presentation and what directors and producers need to understand from that presentation. The Art Department look book.
- The 'Production Design Pitch' and how to make it. **"You're a salesman now…".**
- The Production Designer's presentation: previz, the white model, the 3D digital model, location photos, and the director's plan.
- **Open Lab class** to review and mentor student issues on their final project presentation.
- Final Project Presentation Criteria reminder No. 2.
  Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD

WEEK 13: 11/19 - PRODUCTION DESIGN CONCEPTS REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

- In-class review of all of the class topics.
- Final Exam review and related topics.
- **Movie Review Assignment & Review: TBD**

WEEK: 11/26 – THANKSGIVING DAY HOLIDAY RECESS

- No Wednesday Class Meeting

WEEK 14: 12/3 - FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION

- Students' final project in-class presentation and critique from instructor. Final project presentation includes items from class criteria handout. Keynote/PowerPoint presentations, model of selected scripted set – Including Stage Backing selections and stage spotting plan.

STUDY DAYS – DECEMBER 6 THRU DECEMBER 11

WEEK 15: 12/10 FINAL EXAM

- Art Department – Concepts of the Visual Narrative - Final Examination Test.
- Review student final project presentation material remaining to be presented.