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DRAM 111: Introduction to Stage Design

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DRAMA 111: Introduction to Theater Design

SUMMER 2020

Professor Meghan Healey

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The goal of this course is to help you master the understanding of how Scenographers, also known as Scenic, Lighting, Costume, Projection, and Sound designers, create and express the visual world of a play, dance, or live performance by analyzing the text of the play, finding primary and inspirational research, collaborating with other designers and artists working on the play, and then presenting those ideas through oral presentation and 2 or 3-dimensional renderings of their ideas.

You will be able to contextualize how design works in the larger world of theater, and we will discuss the role of theater as an art form in the context of Global culture. An important aspect of this course is learning to think visually, using images to express complex ideas and themes from the play's text through oral argument and presentation. You will have the chance to explore a variety of texts and visual media as you work to create original designs with your design groups.

You will work with traditional methods of research and rendering, as well as modern technologies such as computer drawing, photoshop, and Internet research. Please read the requirements for each project very carefully. It is important for you to view all films, or read short play texts provided, and the supporting materials and come to class prepared to discuss them.

CLASS # 1 (JUNE 7, 2021):

Introductions and discussion of the syllabus. A lecture on Scenography/Stage Design and the role designers play in developing a performance work. A discussion of how to begin reading and analyzing a play. Discussion of your **MANDALA PROJECT**, due MONDAY JUNE 14th.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** [Wordpress article on play analysis](#), Selection from [365 Days/365 Plays](#) (Parks)
- **VIEWING:** Watch *REAR WINDOW* (Hitchcock, 1953) by Wednesday June 9th

- **BRING TO CLASS:**
 - Google your name + Your Favorite Color+ the word “aesthetic” and make a collage or collect 6 of the best resulting images
 - Three descriptive words about the *365 Days* text
 - Both of these will be posted in [DISCUSSIONS](#) on Blackboard.
- **OTHER:**
 - Read over the requirements for the [MANDALA PROJECT](#), make sure if you have any questions that you bring them to class or email me

CLASS # 2 (JUNE 8, 2021):

Lecture on how designers read and analyze a script. Discussion and visual exercises in class with the text that you read for class today. Review of basic design principles, emphasizing color and texture. Discussion of the **MANDALA PROJECT**, which is due on **Monday June 14th**.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **VIEWING:** *REAR WINDOW* (Hitchcock, 1953)
- **BRING TO CLASS:** Costume design of yourself, to be used in your [HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS PROJECT](#)
- **OTHER:** Work on your **MANDALA PROJECT**.

CLASS #3 (JUNE 9, 2021):

Discussion of *REAR WINDOW*. Discussion of Primary Historical versus Inspirational research, and viewing and discussion of your costume design of yourself. **Review of the [MANDALA PROJECT due JUNE 16TH](#), and the [NEIGHBORHOOD BOX due on June 21st](#)**

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** [Short readings/images on Color](#)
- **VIEWING:**
 - [Video on color theory](#)
 - It is recommended to finish viewing your HISTORICAL FILM no later than 6/12
- **BRING TO CLASS:**
 - [Your completed MANDALA PROJECT DUE MONDAY 6/14. Please review the project dossier for details.](#)
- **OTHER:** Make sure you are also moving forward on your NEIGHBORHOOD BOX. Begin thinking about partners for your final project.

CLASS #4 (JUNE 14, 2021):

[MANDALA PROJECT IS DUE](#). View presentations in class of work from this project. Critique in class. Discussion of your [NEIGHBORHOOD BOX](#) project (**due MONDAY JUNE 21st**)

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **VIEWING:** HISTORICAL FILM if you have not selected and viewed it
- **BRING TO CLASS:** [Follow the instructions on creating a texture/mood collage to post in Discussions](#)
- **OTHER: NEIGHBORHOOD BOX** is due on Monday 6/21. You could be researching your final project, or begin working on your Powerpoint or video for your **HISTORICAL FILM** analysis which is due on 6/28.

CLASS #5 (JUNE 15, 2021):

Lecture on how to create specificity and clarity in your design work using research and the tools of color, texture, line, and proportion. Most of class will be devoted to breakout rooms where you will work in groups on a series of exercises to develop creative problem solving and collaborative practice by creating small design projects. You will need to be in a place where you have access to art supplies and found objects for today's class.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **BRING TO CLASS:** Results of the "take home" collaborative project assigned during class time
- **OTHER:** [NEIGHBORHOOD BOX](#) is due on Monday 6/21. You could be researching your final project, or begin working on your Powerpoint or video for your **HISTORICAL FILM** analysis which is due on 6/28.

CLASS #6 (JUNE 16, 2021):

[Share back in discussion forum](#) and in class from your take home collaborative exercise. Everyone must post their exercise but only select groups will present in class. We will review what how the exercises helped you to synthesize combining different principles of design. Demonstration and discussion of rendering techniques for stage design. Breakout rooms in class will make space for you to begin brainstorming and researching with your final project partners.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** None
- **VIEWING:** None
- **BRING TO CLASS: NEIGHBORHOOD BOX PROJECT IS DUE MONDAY 6/21**

- **OTHER:** If you can, try to make progress on your HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS. If you have not even watched a film yet, you really must do so before Monday, or you will not have time to finish your project.

CLASS #7 (JUNE 21, 2021):

[NEIGHBORHOOD BOX PROJECT](#) IS DUE. Critique and discussion of the projects. Appreciation and posting in Discussions about the presentations. If there is time left in class, you will be allowed to have a small work session with your Historical Film Project partner.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** [Variety article on equity for Costume designers](#)
- **VIEWING:** [Video on Ruth Carter and her design practice](#)
- **BRING TO CLASS:** Two pieces of primary historical research from your project due Monday
- **OTHER: HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS PROJECT** IS DUE 6/28. The Powerpoint analysis should be done by now, and you should just be working on your sketches.

CLASS #8 (JUNE 22, 2021):

Deep dive into historical research. We will share and discuss your two pieces of research. Work session on your [HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS](#) project.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** None
- **VIEWING:** None
- **BRING TO CLASS:** Research and rough sketches in progress for your Final project
- **OTHER:** Continue progress on your projects due next week

CLASS #9 (JUNE 23, 2021):

A panel of guests from theater design will speak about collaboration and their practice. Questions and responses. Breakout room with your classmates to create a list expressing your own collaborative principles. You will have a breakout room to work on the Final Project, not with your groupmates, but by discipline to get some feedback and brainstorm with the other students doing costumes/scenery/lights for their final project.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** None
- **VIEWING:** None
- **BRING TO CLASS:** [HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS PROJECT DUE MONDAY 6/28](#)
- **OTHER:** Finish your [FINAL PROJECT DUE 6/30](#)

CLASS #10 (JUNE 28, 2021):

Presentations of the [HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS](#) project. Everyone will speak a little bit and show two images from their project. Since we will not view the full project, we will do a modified critique and discussion. If there is time left you will be allowed to have a work session on your final project.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** None
- **VIEWING:** None
- **BRING TO CLASS:** Final Project in progress, one last image you want to share with the class to sum up your experience
- **OTHER:** None

CLASS #11 (JUNE 29, 2021):

Final reflections and discussion. We will do a breakout room with a 20 QUESTIONS ABOUT SCENOGRAPHY exercise for posting in the Discussions threads and also shared back in class. If there is time you will be allowed one final short session to work with your group on your final project which is due tomorrow.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS:

- **READING:** None
- **VIEWING:** None
- **BRING TO CLASS:** [FINAL PROJECT DUE TOMORROW](#)
- **OTHER:** None

CLASS #12 (JUNE 30, 2021):

Presentation of the final projects in class. Final share back and appreciation.

This course is a requirement for all Drama/Theater majors. Drama and Dance majors must receive a C or higher in order to count this course towards their degree. It also fulfills the CE requirement in Pathways. Below are the learning outcomes expected for all students of this course:

1. You will be able to identify and apply fundamental concepts of Scenography such as:

- ★ How to read and analyze a play
- ★ Name and identify the different members of the design team and their respective responsibilities
- ★ How to use primary historical research to support your design ideas
- ★ How to use inspirational research
- ★ How designers use the essential elements of design, including color, line, shape, positive/negative space, proportion, and texture to communicate complex environments and ideas
- ★ Creative problem solving
- ★ Fundamental principles of collaboration in Theater/Performance
- ★ Oral Presentation and communication
- ★ Drawing/rendering ideas for the stage

2. You will be able to articulate how meaning is created in scenography through discussion and participation in critique.

3. You will demonstrate a mastery of skills involved in Scenography through a number of class projects.

4. You will use appropriate technologies such as Zoom, Adobe, Excel, and the internet to research and communicate your ideas.

General Class Policies

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Candidates with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: 1) register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office 2) create an email attachment with the letter to your instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Queens College candidates, visit the [website](#), or contact: Special Service Office; Director, Miriam Detres-Hickey, Frese Hall, Room 111; 718-997-5870.

CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion as provided at <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/academic-integrity-policy/>.

All work in this course must be your own original creation. You may not plagiarize websites and cut and paste the material you find there and present it as your work.

You may not use another person's design or images from the internet or any other class and present it as your work. You may also not present work you did for another course as your work for this course. If I discover that you have used images, text, or ideas from or directly lifted from someone else's design of the play **without attribution**, that you have cut and pasted your assignments from Internet sources, or that another person has done any part of your assignments that will be considered plagiarism. **Students caught plagiarizing in this course will be reported to the Dean of Students and the USSC for disciplinary action, if found guilty you face failure in this course, and a suspension of your studies at the college.**

NETIQUETTE

Please maintain a professional demeanor when posting online and during the live synchronous session. You can be respectful even when you have a difference of opinion. Treat others as you'd want to be treated yourself. Don't type in all caps in the chat or in the discussion threads, as that is the online equivalent of shouting. If you need to emphasize a word or phrase, use italics. Remember that we sometimes feel free to be rude or snarky in an online forum and behave in ways we would not if we were face to face with someone. Be sure to check yourself if you feel your responses are heated or you need space before making a response. [Please carefully review the rubrics posted on blackboard for online class participation and email etiquette.](#)

On some occasions, if the entire class consents, I will ask that your cameras and mics are turned off to accommodate a short recording of factual lectures which will be available in the cloud for students who are absent, or who want to review the lecture at a later time to flesh out their notes. All questions will be recorded in the chat, and discussion will commence with cameras on after the recording is stopped. Private chat is disabled in this course. All chat messages are public, except to the host/instructor.

The rest of the time class is in session your camera is expected to be on for you to participate in class. **Please be aware that courses which have learning outcomes related to oral communication are exempt from the regular CUNY camera policy, and you can and are required to use your camera in this course. If you need to keep your camera off during a specific class for a specific reason, please discuss this with me in advance.**

If you do not have permission to have the camera off, and you do not respond to me within five minutes of being called on, you will be removed from the Zoom and marked absent for the day.

It is a violation of FERPA and other student's privacy for you to record this course without consent. If you are found doing so, you will be referred to the University for disciplinary action. No one, not even me, can record class when your cameras are on. Please respect everyone's privacy.

Works that have been shared with you via Blackboard for the purpose of being used in class exercises are SOLELY AND ONLY to be used for the purposes of class work and discussion. Under no circumstance are you permitted to share these texts or distribute them to individuals outside of class. Doing so constitutes a theft of intellectual property, and jeopardizes the generous permission we have been given to use this work free of cost to you. Please respect these artists and their work.

One of the reasons for these rules is the importance of creating a positive atmosphere for class. This can only exist in a class where you and your fellow students are focused and respectful of one another. Some of the works we will be reading and viewing can be provocative, controversial, and may even be offensive to some students. Your honest reaction to these works is your own, you do not have to agree with, or even like, what the artist is expressing, or what another student is saying about it. But a true dialogue is only possible when we respect one another's differences and really try to hear different points of view. We need to foster an atmosphere of trust and non-judgmental listening. We need to honor that someone else's lived experience as a person is authentic and that everyone does not share our experiences or privileges, so it is a gift to be able to learn about someone else. Students should not be afraid to speak their minds for fear that it will be discussed in other contexts, or that their experiences and identities will be dismissed because they may draw attention to issues of implicit bias or privilege. This class may involve discussion of sensitive and difficult topics. Every student in this class has a right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to be heard. Thank you in advance for respecting these principles.

LATE WORK

I do not accept late work, unless you are experiencing extraordinary circumstances. Please note that if you will be ill or absent on the day one of the homework projects is being presented in class, you must arrange to email it to me prior to the beginning of the class when it is due. Please carefully view the rubric for each assignment to check the expectations and grading criteria. I will accept a project that you are not able to attend class to present, but there will be a markdown for missing the presentation. If you know in advance you will be absent the day a project is due, you can submit a video presentation.

Vacations, forgetting a project is due, and having a lot of homework from other courses are all NOT extraordinary circumstances and will not be accepted. Given the short duration of this semester, if you become ill with COVID-19 or have to care for someone who is, please discuss this with me as soon as possible, as we may need to make alternate arrangements for you to complete this course.

There is no extra credit in this course. The only opportunity to improve your grade is by committing yourself to do the assigned work to the best of your abilities, to take my notes, and to improve the quality of your journals or participation.

Thank you in advance for respecting these guidelines.

If you need to reach me, my primary email address, which appears on page one of this syllabus, is the best way. If you do not show up to a scheduled appointment two times, you will not be permitted to make any more in-person appointments this semester.

The syllabus, and all other class documents, as well as lecture notes for class will be available to you on Blackboard. I will also be emailing you as a group through the Blackboard system, which means you need to check your school email address regularly, so that you do not miss important information. Please be sure that your preferred email address is the one connected to Blackboard. For assistance from the helpdesk, you can follow the link on our homepage to chat, email, or use their pre-existing help modules.

GRADING POLICIES:

CLASS PARTICIPATION 40% OF TOTAL- Class participation in this course does not just consist of regularly attending class and keeping up with the readings. Excellence in class participation means coming to class prepared and ready, contributing consistently to class discussions and activities and offering meaningful critiques of our discussion AND meaningful consistent participation in the in-class projects and exercises. A detailed rubric on expectations has been provided for your information.

HOMework PROJECTS 40% OF TOTAL-

MANDALA PROJECT- 25 POINTS

HISTORICAL FILM ANALYSIS PROJECT- 25 POINTS

FINAL PROJECT 20% OF TOTAL-

NEIGHBORHOOD BOX- 20 POINTS

REAR WINDOW PROJECT- 80 POINTS

If you wish to discuss your final grade with me after it has been posted, you must contact me within 30 days to make an appointment to review it. After that time I will consider the grade accepted and the matter closed. I absolutely will not make appointments or relitigate your grade months or years after the fact. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

All texts for the reading assignments in this course will be provided to you free of charge. You will need to rent or find the film REAR WINDOW and whatever film you select for your History project. Please let me know if you are experiencing difficulty doing so and we will find a way to provide these to you.

You will need a variety of art supplies and found objects for assignments in class. We will discuss the recommendations in class on June 8th, but digital drawing tools are highly recommended for this course, though traditional materials will also work. You will need artist quality supplies, not Crayola crayons, pencils or youth/children's markers. Those will not work for this course, as you will not be able to produce the quality of work necessary to progress.

Thank you, and be sure to make an appointment if you have questions or concerns. **The Office Hours for this course in SUMMER 2021 are on WEDNESDAY from 11-1PM. Please email me in advance to let me know you are attending.**