

George Mason University
College of the Visual and Performing Arts

Introduction to Technical Theater

THR 230 001 Spring 2012
TR 3:00 to 4:15 PAB 105 TheaterSpace

Professor Clayton Austin

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Please include THR 230 in the subject line

Office Hours PAB A109B Monday and Wednesday 12:00pm to 2:00pm and by appointment

Class Description and Objective

If well produced, the play you attend will appear as a seamless event. In reality, there are four distinct components: the script, the actors, the physical production, and the audience. The director's task is to weld the first three components into a live dramatic event that engages the audience. In this class you will be introduced to the theory, practice, and historical context of the physical production component. We will study current techniques in the design and execution of technical theater, and see how these developed from earlier technologies. This will be accomplished using both lecture and hands-on methods.

Learning Outcomes

This course fulfills the General Education Arts requirement. By the end of the semester, the successful student will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the production process of theatrical performances using vocabulary appropriate to the form.
- Understand the relationship between design choices and the director's interpretation of the script.
- Understand the historical context and development of theatrical architecture and technology.
- Engage in the process of creating scenery, costumes, and/or lighting for a theatrical performance.

Requirements

- 1) Production Lab Component (30 hours) for homework – see attached lab sheet for details
- 2) Build and paint your own flat (materials supplied)
- 3) Attend four performances and write responses – see Production Response details below
- 4) 4 Quizzes (12 points each)
- 5) Final Exam (26 points)

Text – Not Required – A good reference source is:

Theatrical Design and Production by J. Michael Gillette , any edition

Grading

Quizzes 4 at 12 points	48
Production Lab: 20 points,	20
Flat Project: 10 points,	10
Production Responses (4 @ 4 points)	16
Final Exam	<u>26</u>
Total	120

Grade Point Distribution:

<u>115 and above A+</u>	<u>114-111 A</u>	<u>110-107 A-</u>	<u>106-103 B+</u>	<u>102-99 B</u>	<u>98-95 B-</u>
<u>94-91 C+</u>	<u>90-87 C</u>	<u>86-83 C-</u>	<u>82-71 D</u>	<u>70 and below F</u>	

Extra Credit

See Production Lab Policy

Four Production Responses

We will examine the production elements of the shows produced at Mason this semester. By attending these shows you will be able to observe and discuss the topics covered in class. In many cases free tickets are available, but you must make arrangements in advance. Make your plans early. Arrangements may be made at the Concert Hall Box Office.

Write Production Response on four events:

- 1) Theater at Mason Mainstage: *Galileo*
- 2) Mason Players Studio: *This is Our Youth*
- 3) CFA Concert Hall event of your choice
- 4) Live Theatrical event of your choice, on campus or off

Response criteria:

A *typewritten 500 word response* to the production elements of the show. This includes your overall judgment of the success (or weakness) of the design components in supporting the text and the actors in a seamless manner. Provide specific details to support your opinion. You do not need to cover all the design components, but may focus on those you found particularly successful (or not). You may discuss the production elements from both a design perspective (what is being attempted) and an execution perspective (how well is the design being carried out).

Details:

- If you are required to see an event for another class, you may also write a response for this class. The paper must meet the specific criteria of this assignment. *Submitting identical papers for two classes without prior approval from both instructors is an Honor Code violation.*
- You may review a show if you participate in the production. Describe the experience from your “backstage” perspective.
- Responses are scored 4 points apiece. Score is based on effective use of terms and concepts from class in critiquing the productions elements of the event. Include specific details to illustrate. Because the minimum length is set to give you space to express and support your observations and opinions, points will be deducted if it is not met.
- Responses should be turned in shortly after you attend the performance. All journals must be submitted by the final exam.

THR 230 Theater Production Activity Participant Advisory

The purpose of this memorandum is to advise you of certain risks and responsibilities that you may encounter during the scene shop, lighting, and theater related production activities in THR 230 Introduction to Technical Theater. This advisory is designed to protect the enrollees, the University, and other participants in the program. Safety and compliance with instructions are essential to the learning process of the class and are included in calculating your grade.

The teaching of theater production involves the participation of students in scene shop, on-stage, and other theater-related activities. These may take place during the class period or during designated time periods as specified by the instructor. The activities include, but are not limited to, using shop tools, hanging/cabling/focusing lighting instruments, building/moving/installing scenery, painting scenery, and working with materials such as lumber, steel, and plastics. They may involve exposure to toxic fumes, heat, heavy lifting, and the use of power tools. Each of these potential hazards is capable of inflicting a severe injury. In addition, there are the normal dangers associated with scene shop and stage activities: cuts, bumps, falls, electric shock, splinters, and spilled paint.

A designated University faculty or staff member will instruct you in the safe and proper use of tools, equipment, and general stagecraft procedures. Do not use tools or equipment without direction and permission of the supervising faculty or staff member. You will be provided with personal safety devices (face shield, ear protectors, hard hats, lifting tools, etc.) and you must use them when appropriate. You will not be required to perform any activity with which you feel uncomfortable. You are expected to observe the laws of Virginia and exhibit adult behavior. If you do not comply with instructions or appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, you will be asked to leave the premises and may be dropped from the course. Due to the nature of the production schedule and the layout of the workspaces, a faculty or staff member may not always be present in the immediate area; when in doubt, seek out the instructor.

Although the University has attempted to make the theater and its production area safe, personal injury and property loss/damage is possible. Any injuries, thefts, damage to personal property, or dangerous conditions should be reported immediately to the supervising faculty or staff member. It is strongly recommended that participants carry medical insurance and not bring expensive clothing or equipment to the area. George Mason University is not a guarantor of personal safety nor does it assume responsibility for lost or damaged personal items. This notwithstanding, GMU stands responsible for the negligent acts and omissions of its faculty, staff, and agents.

If you are not able to undertake the risks and responsibilities outlined in this memorandum, please discuss this immediately with the instructor and/or withdraw from the course. By participating in these activities, you acknowledge that you have been informed about certain risks and responsibilities, and that you are knowingly and voluntarily assuming them.

Class Policies

The class Blackboard account is used to post the syllabus, grade scores, and other useful information. Students are responsible for material posted on Blackboard and for printing their own copies when needed.

Lecture outlines are posted on Blackboard. Please get more detailed notes from your classmates if you miss a class.

There are four quizzes, each covering a major topic in technical theater. **Missed quizzes cannot be made up except for 1) in accordance with University policy for Religious Holidays or 2) verified significant extenuating circumstances. Plan ahead and contact instructor.**

If you will be absent for religious observances per university policy please notify instructor in advance. In these instances, quizzes may be made up and assignments may be turned in at the next class without grade penalty.

Accommodations as requested through the Disability Resource Center (703-993-2474) will be provided. Please contact the instructor directly to discuss details.

The **George Mason University Honor Code** will be enforced in this class and suspected violations submitted to the Honor Committee for adjudication. Examples of honor code violations in this class include: cheating on a quiz or test, submitting a Performance Response for an event you did not attend, and/or falsifying your Production Lab time sheet. See University Information at the end of this syllabus for more details.

Schedule of Classes

Week#1 January 24,26

T – Technical Theater-your experiences; Understanding production; Review syllabus

R - Geography of Technical Theater, Tour of theater and production facilities

Week#2 January 31, February 2

T - History of theater architecture

R - Production team: who does what.

Week#3 February 7,9

T – The Production Timeline and Technical Rehearsals

R - **Quiz #1 Basics of theater production ; Production Lab Agreement Due**

Week# 4 February 14,16

T – Introduction to lighting design; History of lighting technology

R - Instrumentation: Lamps, ERS and Fresnels

Week# 5 February 21, 23

T– Hang and focus training

R - Participate in *This is Our Youth* set load in (schedule throughout the day)

Week# 6 February 28, March 1

T – Instrumentation continued: gear and accessories

R – Principles of electricity for the LD and ME

Week#7 March 6,8

T – Lighting design – area coverage and drawing the light plot

R – **Quiz # 2 Lighting design and implementation; Journal #1 due**

Week# 8 March 13,15 **SPRING BREAK**

Week#9 March 20,22

T– Introduction to Scenic Design and presentation

R – Standard scenic construction methods and materials

Week#10 March 27, 29

T– Standard scenic construction methods and materials continued

R – Standard scenic construction methods and materials continued

Week# 11 April 3,5

T– Flat construction and painting demonstration in scene shop

R – **Quiz # 3 Scenery design and construction; Time Sheet Check**

Week# 12 April 10,12

T – Introduction to Costume Design and presentation

R– Costume construction, pulling, borrowing, buying, and thrifting

Week # 13 April 17,19

T – Costumes and the actor: wardrobe and make up

R – **Quiz #4: Costume design and construction; Time Sheet Check**

Week#14 April 24, 27

T - Class time used for flat project

R - Class time used for flat project

Week#15 May 1,3

T– Review for final; complete class evaluations

R - **Flat project presentation – “opening night party”**

FINAL EXAM TUESDAY MAY 15 @ 1:30 TO 4:15

Production Lab Time Sheet and any remaining Journals due

**NOTE : FINAL EXAM BEGINS AT 1:30 – THIS IS DIFFERENT THAN
OUR REGULAR CLASS MEETING TIME**

30 HOUR PRODUCTION LAB REQUIREMENT

The goals of this requirement:

- Apply and expand knowledge learned in the classroom.
- Experience working as part of a production team
- Work and learn with other members of the CVPA production staff

8 Hours lighting (hang, focus and light strikes)

8 Hours costume shop

14 hours scene shop (building, painting, set load-in and strike)

You will work on production crews during the semester for a total of 30 hours in the scene shop, costume shop and on lighting crews. A typical work call is 2 to 4 hours. Your assignments will normally be for Mason Players productions, but may include other CVPA projects in the shops during the semester. Record your hours on the time sheet (see back) signed off after each work session by your supervisor.

PRODUCTION LAB GRADING

Production Crew Points:

Successful completion of 30 hours of Production Lab: 20 points

Completion of 20 to 29 hours of Production Lab: 20 points minus the number of missing hours

For example: 24 completed hours = 20 points – 6 missing hours = 14 points

Failure to complete a minimum of 20 hours of Production Lab: 0 points

Call the shop (993-1117 scenery/993-1118 costumes) if you can not make your work call.

Extra Credit:

Work up to 10 additional hours in the shop(s) of your choice.

5 hours – 3 extra credit points 10 hours – 6 extra credit points

PRODUCTION LAB AGREEMENT

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

I am responsible for notifying my supervisor if I will be late or miss a work call.

Missed work calls may result in points deducted from my grade.

I have read and accept the THR 230 Production Activity Participant Advisory

Scene Shop Day(s) _____ Hours _____

Costume shop Day(s) _____ Hours _____

Signed

Date

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

As a courtesy to others in the class, and in accordance with George Mason University policy, please turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. Also, please refrain from using Instant Messenger or email during class.

Copyright Law

Each student is individually responsible for his or her own work on assignments and creative projects. A willingness to learn from and share ideas with other students is important and equally important is that students do their own work. The use of other artists' images, videos, sounds, music is allowed as long as your inclusion of these creative works falls within the realm of "fair use" as described by copyright law. Students should always cite their sources. Try to use original source material as often as possible.

Honor Code

The Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Undergraduate Catalog, applies to all students in this class. The Honor Code requires that the work you do be your own. As a university faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously.

Using someone else's words, ideas, music or art without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is crucial to understand how to avoid plagiarism when using material from other sources. No grade is important enough to justify cheating, for which there are serious consequences. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or a member of the Counseling Center staff.

Disruptive Behavior

Faculty, staff, and students have the right to be treated with respect and professionalism by students and peers in all classes and activities sponsored by the Theater department. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If, in the opinion of the responsible faculty member, a student becomes disruptive in class or rehearsal, faculty may exercise their judgment on how best to address the situation, be it by requiring the student to leave, calling Campus Police, or taking other steps deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of the class, rehearsal or group. Such action may affect the student's final grade and standing in the University.

Missing class for productions

Under what circumstances is involvement with a Mason Players production justification for missing a class? Here are the general ground rules which we work with:

- 1) Students are never required to miss a class to participate on a Mason Players production. This includes rehearsals, load-ins, performances, etc.
- 2) Students are asked to provide their class schedule when auditioning, being selected as a designer, etc. When cast, etc, directors accept these conflicts.
- 3) Subject to the attendance policies of a given class, students may request of their instructor to miss a class or portion to participate in critical activities. Such a request should be rarely be made and is subject to approval of the instructor. The syllabus policy on absence would apply. Student academic success is the priority.
- 4) In the case of our Mainstage including weekday matinees on Friday, because of the unique nature of the situation, the director of the production will provide an email confirming a student's participation in the performance (on stage, back stage, etc), but it is still at the discretion of the instructor to excuse the absence. As this conflict, if it exists, is known at least 6 weeks in advance, it is the student's responsibility to confirm that they will be able to participate in the performance so alternative arrangements can be made if necessary.

Given the dual nature of our learning experience - in the classroom and in production - it is not surprising that schedules sometimes conflict. In the end, we are an academic institution, and that is where the priority lies.

GMU Add/Drop Policy: The last day to drop this class with no tuition liability is **1/31/2012**. The last day to drop this class without Dean's permission is **2/24/2012, by 5pm**. The selective withdrawal period is 2/27/2012 – 3/30/2012. It is the student's responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled as no credit will be awarded

Honor Code, Copyright, & Computing Policies: *To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:* Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

You are expected to adhere to all University policies and guidelines during your participation in this course. All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others is a George Mason University Honor Code violation. Please review the University's website for information on the following: Honor Code and Judicial Procedures; Copyright/Fair Use; and Responsible Use of Computing.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester, and the specific accommodation will be arranged through the Disability Resource Center.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. The GMU email accounts are the official accounts for this class.

Writing Center: Students in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). These services are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

Other Mason resources: <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/freshman/resources.html>

University Policies: University Catalog can be accessed catalog.gmu.edu

University Libraries "Ask a Librarian" <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) caps.gmu.edu or (703) 993-2380

University Policies

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

You are encouraged to sign up for the Mason Alert System by visiting the website <https://alert.gmu.edu>. Emergency information is posted in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert>.

NOTE: Cell phones, pagers and alarms must be turned off in class. Exceptions will only be made in advance or in case of emergency.