

THTR 256 Theatrical Set Design
Tuesday/Thursday 10:00am–11:20am
Kupfrian Hall, Rm 110
Instructor: Stephanie Osin Cohen
Email: soc@njit.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:20am-1:20pm (in Office)
Office: Kupfrian Hall, Room 113

Course Description

Theatrical Set Design is an introduction to the basic components of set, scenic art, and lighting design for the theatre. The students will create scale models of the set of plays chosen by the instructor. Research on the theatre spaces, concepts of the visual movement of the characters throughout the story, and a conceptual evaluation of the scripts will be examined to create the designs.

Course Objective

The objective of this course is to teach the students the basics of the design process for the stage. In addition to developing practical techniques such as researching, drawing, drafting, & model-making, students will practice examining texts, critiquing work, & communicating designs both visually and verbally. Additionally, these techniques crossover in a myriad of other disciplines including public speaking, interpersonal skills (working with others), intrapersonal skills (understanding your own self), the practice of empathy, and decision making. The hope is that these tools will foster a greater appreciation of the experience of theatre as well as an enhanced ability to express how design can help elevate any given production/play.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have made progress toward:

- Demonstrated knowledge within a play of story structure, plot, characters, language, genre, and style.
- Increased knowledge of the design process, from analyzing text, through research, to communicating design ideas.
- Gained confidence speaking in front of a group about a play & the design needs within them.
- Enhanced ability to communicate design ideas for the stage using visual & verbal language.
- Learning how to provide constructive feedback that leads to new ideas and positive action steps.

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is a vital aspect of this course. Theatre is experiential and communal; our work in this course will be no different. Lack of participation will be reflected in your grade—and there is a direct correlation between your presence in class and your ability to engage in in-class discussion. Participation makes up 25% of your grade, so please consider this a direct correlation to whether you are physically and mentally present in class. If you

believe you have a reason that qualifies an absence as excused, a note is needed from the Dean of Students. Please note that any work that is due on those days is still due and any presentation still requires attendance in class in order to fulfill that assignment.

Please make every effort to contact me before any class you have to miss. If you are feeling sick, please do not attend class in-person. Email me at least 2 hours before class and I will give you a zoom link to attend remotely. You cannot attend remotely for any reason other than being sick.

Note: audio or video recording of class sessions is not permitted without written consent from the instructor. Additionally, classes will not be recorded.

Student Absences for Religious Observance: NJIT is committed to supporting students observing religious holidays. Students expecting to miss classes or exams due to religious observances must submit a written list of dates to me, ideally by the end of the second week of class, but no later than two weeks before the anticipated absence.

This policy applies only to absences for religious observances. For other excused absences, students should refer to the policies from the Dean of Students.

[Note: You are required to attend Newark Playwrights Fest. on February 12 at 7:30pm, as well as one performance of Amelie between April 10-12. More information will be provided later in this document.](#)

Participation: Related to the importance of attendance, participation is critical to success in this course. We will be examining plays, presenting design ideas & decisions, constructively critiquing peer work, sharing our viewpoints, and challenging ourselves to think outside the box and use the tools given in the lessons. I promise to foster an environment of curiosity and openness if you promise to approach the class with effort and bravery.

Communication: Reaching out to me as soon as you know of any concerns or problems is very important. I know that extenuating circumstances happen and I am committed to finding a way to best help all of us through this course whenever possible. This means I must get communication from you as soon as you think there may be an issue. Please reach out to me—email is typically best, but I am available to chat briefly after class (typically) and during my office hours and by appointment.

Consent and Respect: I work to create a room welcome to everyone and rooted in tolerance. Disrespect toward anyone in the classroom will not be tolerated. If an event occurs that makes you feel unsafe or disrespected, please let me know so it can be addressed.

Anti-Racism: Racism is systemically a part of our society and I will be working hard to dismantle these practices where I find them. We may be addressing issues of race within this course. I welcome any feedback about ways I can be more effective in this process.

Questions/Concerns: Always feel free to reach out to me with any questions/concerns. If there is something you aren't comfortable communicating with me directly, please use the 'Anonymous Question Form' in Canvas and I will respond in a subsequent class for everyone.

Missing or Late Assignments: Missing or late work will not be accepted. If you feel you have legitimate circumstances that prevented you from finishing your work on time, please reach out to both me and the Dean of Students to discuss if there might be appropriate options.

Academic Integrity: *Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).*

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu

Generative AI: This course expects students to work without artificial intelligence (AI) assistance in order to better develop their skills in this content area. As such, AI usage is not permitted throughout this course under any circumstance.

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that NJIT is located on stolen land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Lenni-Lenape people. Lenni-Lenape literally translates to "Men of Men" but is taken as "Original People." (<https://nanticoke-lenape.info/history.htm>) To learn more about the Lenni-Lenape people, visit <https://nanticoke-lenape.info/>.

Materials:

Texts: All readings and plays will be available digitally on Canvas. If you would like a physical copy of any book or play we are using, let me know and I can help you find a physical copy to print or purchase.

Materials to Purchase (Estimated Cost: \$50):

- 1 [Architectural Triangular Scale Ruler](#) (12" minimum) or equivalent
- 1 [X-Acto Knife](#) or [X-Acto Knife](#)
- 1 Package of 5 [#11 blades](#) or equivalent (quantity is up to you, must be #11 blade)
- 1 [Self Healing Cutting Mat](#) or equivalent (minimum size 18"x24" or larger)
- 1 [Straight-Edge Ruler](#) for cutting or equivalent (minimum length 18")
- 8-10 Large Sheets of Cardboard (can be found/recycled from boxes or purchased)

Additionally, please obtain: 1 bottle of glue, 1 roll of masking/painters tape, & 1 roll of double stick tape, 1 set of scissors.

Recommended, but not required:

[Sobo](#) or [Neutral PH](#) (for bottle of glue)

[Artist Tape](#) (instead of masking tape)

[Transfer Tape](#) (instead of double stick tape)

[Craft Tweezers](#)

Additional Costs: \$15 for a ticket to see Amelie April 10-12. You can purchase tickets at the door or online (buying in advance online is preferred to make sure you secure a ticket).

Grading Breakdown:

Participation: 25%

(general discussions, play analysis, presentations, peer critiques, performance postmortems)

Play 1 Project: 8%

Read Play: 2%

Portrait Gallery: 3%

Mood Board: 3%

Play 2 Project: 22%

Read Play: 2%

Portrait Gallery: 2%

Mood Board: 2%

Drafting Assignment: 4%

Design Ideas: 5%

White Model Design: 7%

Model Box Assignment: 10%

Performances: 10%

New Playwright Fest. Response Project: 5%

Amelie Response Project: 5%

Final Project: 25%

Portrait Gallery: 2%

Mood Board: 2%

Design Ideas: 2%

White Model Design: 5%

Color Model Design: 8%

Paperwork (drafting: 2%, lighting Ideas: 2%, props list: 2%): 6%

Final Grades:

A = 90 – 100 B+ = 87 – 90 B = 80 – 87 C+ = 77 – 80 C = 70 – 77 D = 60 – 70 F = 0 – 60

Schedule (*syllabus subject to change*):**WEEK ONE**

Date	Session	Assignment
T 1/21	Introductions, Go over Syllabus In-Class Design Exercise	Read Play #1 Due: 1/23
Th 1/23	DUE: Read Play # 1 Present The Room Designs Class Discussion on Play #1. Lesson on Design Process	Portrait Gallery + Mood Board for Play #1 Due: 1/28

WEEK TWO

Date	Session	Assignment
T 1/28	DUE: Portrait Gallery + Mood Board for Play #1 Students present Portrait Galleries. Peer critique	
Th 1/30	Cont. Students present Portrait Gallery + Mood Board + discussion on turning research into Design Ideas	Read Play #2 Due: 2/13 Bring in Scale Ruler + Pencil + Eraser Due: 2/4

WEEK THREE

Date	Session	Assignment
T 2/4	DUE: Bring in Scale Ruler + Pencil + Eraser Drafting 101 : ground plan + section + elevation of Dept's theater. In-Class drafting exercise.	Drafting Assignment Due: 2/6
Th 2/6	DUE: Drafting Assignment Site Survey: Discuss site surveying, measuring spaces to design in.	Bring in Model-Making Material Due: 2/11

	Discuss proscenium, wing space, grid height, site lines, borders, legs, etc. Visit Jim Wise Theater and survey space.	
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WEEK FOUR

Date	Session	Assignment
T 2/11	DUE: Bring in Model Making Material. Lesson on Model Box Making + In-class exercise-measuring, cutting walls, assembling. + start building model boxes.	Finish Model Box Due 3/4
W 2/12	EVENING: STUDENTS ATTEND NEWARK PLAYWRIGHTS FEST. @7:30pm (In place of class on 3/25)	New Playwrights Assignment Due: 2/20
Th 2/13	DUE: Play #2 Discuss Play #2 Continue working on model boxes if time allows	Portrait Gallery + Mood Board for Play #2 Due: 2/18

WEEK FIVE

Date	Session	Assignment
T 2/18	DUE: Portrait Gallery + Mood Board. Students present Portrait Galleries. Peer critique + Translating Research into Design	
Th 2/20	DUE: New Playwrights Assignment. Cont. Students present Portrait Gallery + Mood Board. Peer critiques. Discussion: Design Ideas	Bring in Design Ideas for Play #2 Due: 2/25

WEEK SIX

Date	Session	Assignment
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T 2/25	DUE: Design Ideas. Students Present Design Ideas + Peer critique	
Th 2/27	Cont. Students Present Design Ideas + Peer critique	Bring in Finished Model Box + Model-Making Material Due: 3/4

WEEK SEVEN

Date	Session	Assignment
T 3/4	Due: Model Boxes. Work on designing inside model box.	White Model Design for Play #2. Due 3/6
Th 3/6	DUE: White Model Design Students Present White Model + Peer critique	

WEEK EIGHT

Date	Session	Assignment
T 3/11	Cont. Students Present model + Peer critique + start editing model boxes	Finish Model Box Edits for Play#2 Due: 3/13
Th 3/13	DUE: Final Models for Play #2 Present Model Boxes	Read Play #3, Bring in Portrait Gallery + Mood board for Play #3 Due: 3/27

WEEK NINE

Date	Session	Assignment
T 3/18	NO CLASS (spring break)	
Th 3/20	NO CLASS (spring break)	

WEEK TEN

Date	Session	Assignment
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T 3/25	NO CLASS. (Required attendance Newark Playwrights Fest. on 2/12)	
Th 3/27	DUE: Read Play #3. DUE: Portrait Gallery + Mood Board. Discuss Play #3 + Students present Portrait Gallery + Mood Board + Peer critique	

WEEK ELEVEN:

Date	Session	Assignment
T 4/1	Cont. Students Present Portrait Gallery + Mood Board + Peer critique. Lesson on Design Ideas	Bring in Design Idea for Play #3. Due: 4/8
Th 4/3	NO CLASS (wellness day)	

WEEK TWELVE:

Date	Session	Assignment
T 4/8	DUE: Design Ideas. Students Present Design Ideas for Play #3 + Peer Critique	Attend 1 performance of <i>Amelie</i> (4/10-4/12). Amelie Assignment. Due: 4/17
Th 4/10	Cont. Students Present Design Ideas for Play #3 + Peer Critique	Start White Model Designs for Play #3. Due: 4/17

WEEK THIRTEEN:

Date	Session	Assignment
T 4/15	NO CLASS. (Required attendance <i>Amelie</i> April 10-12)	
Th 4/17	DUE: Amelie Assignment. Students work on white model designs.	Finish White Model Design for Play #3 Due: 4/22

WEEK FOURTEEN:

Date	Session	Assignment
T 4/22	DUE: White Model White Model Presentation Part 1 + Peer Critique	
Th 4/24	White Model Presentation Part 2 + Peer Critique. Discuss scenery, finishes, props lists, lighting ideas. Students work on ground plan for designs.	Start color model for Play #3 & Print Finished Ground Plan of Designs for Play #3. Due: 4/29

WEEK FIFTEEN:

Date	Session	Assignment
T 4/29	DUE: Printed Ground Plan + Color Model Progress. Students continue work on color model design inside box	Continue working on color model + accompanying paperwork for Play #3. Due: 5/1
Th 5/1	DUE: Color Model Progress Check in. Present Progress. Students continue working on color model design + paperwork	Complete model + paperwork (drafting, props list, lighting, etc) for Play #3 Due: 5/6

WEEK SIXTEEN:

Date	Session	Assignment
T 5/6	DUE: Completed final project for Play #3. Final Design Presentations	