



FUNDAMENTALS OF DESIGN FOR THE THEATRICAL ARTS

Theatre 300- Fall 2025

rev. 26.AUG.25

Mon & Wed 12:00 PM -1:50 PM

Instructor: Matthew Allar

Classroom: PBK 249 (Design Room)

3 credit hours

Office: PBK 247

Phone: 757-221-2694

Email: mjallar@wm.edu

Office Hours: Mon & Wed 10:30-11:30am

Thurs 11:30am-12:30pm and by appointment

TEXTS: A Giacometti Portrait. James Lord ISBN # 9780374515737
(Available from Swem Library and via Blackboard)

*** 1-2 Plays provided to you via PDF on Blackboard

OTHER READINGS, FILMS, ETC: Additional research materials provided on Blackboard, sent via email, or distributed to you in class

COURSE GOALS and DESCRIPTION

Goals: By the end of this course, students will be able to...

1. Demonstrate basic skills in: pencil drawing, applied color theory, costume sketching and painting, manual (hand and computer) drafting, digital image editing and collage, and lighting analysis and conceptualization, and understanding sonic environments
2. Demonstrate a practical understanding of introductory design history and theory
3. Critically analyze visual design components in the context of live performance
4. Analyze and interpret a dramatic text in order to devise a design idea
5. Develop design ideas in a collaborative process and communicate those to others

Throughout the semester, students in this course will experiment with elements of visual design, theory, and research as they apply to contemporary theatrical practice.

1. The majority of the course will focus on the graphic skills necessary to communicate design ideas effectively with other theatre collaborators. The major objective is that students will be able to communicate ideas with other individuals whether or not they are also trained in visual



communication. Students will gain the necessary skills to pursue future theatre design courses and to become more effective in visual communication during the collaborative process.

2. Concurrent with graphic skills we will engage in seminar style conversations about design from current and historical perspectives. These discussions will consider the past roles that design has played in the theatre, theories and approaches to the design process, and the contributions designers can and should make to live performance. Discussions will engage readings and/or live performances as the bases for discussion.

3. The cumulative final product for the course combines the first two elements by having you collaboratively engage with a dramatic text as a team of designers. Students will collaborate to create the necessary documents of a design proposal for a full production. Each group will engage a common text to devise a preliminary design concept for a contemporary audience in a contemporary theatrical space. Each group will justify and convey their interpretation of the text through design documents and oral presentation.

4. Students are also *encouraged* to maintain an active sketchbook throughout the course of the semester.

GRADING

Partic/Attit/Commit (PAC)	100 points	Drafting Projects	100 points
Drawing Projects	100 points	Photoshop Projects	100 points
Color / Collage / Research	80 points	Lighting Projects	80 points
2 Performance Responses	60 points	Collaborative Project	200 points
Costume Projects	100 points	Sound Projects	80 points

***** Occasional extra credit opportunities may pop up during the semester !

Your final grade is earned via the following distribution:

		B+	870-899	C+	770-799	D+	670-699	F 599-
A	930-1000	B	830-869	C	730-769	D	630-669	
A-	900-929	B-	800-829	C-	700-729	D-	600-629	

ATTENDANCE: IT IS EXPECTED THAT ALL STUDENTS ATTEND EVERY CLASS. If you are too ill to attend class, and turn in work due that day, you must email me **prior** to the beginning of class (**no later than 11:59am**). Individual projects and presentations missed as a result of any other, non-medical absence(s) can only be made up by **prior arrangement** me. Each instance will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions will be made for a personal



crisis or serious illness; however such situations must be directed through the Student Affairs office. Class will begin promptly at 12:00pm each day – **DON'T BE LATE**. **Arriving more than ten minutes late to class constitutes an absence. This includes any time you may need to prepare yourself or your materials for the day's class.** **NOTE:** Quizzes and impromptu written, artistic, and oral responses from the assigned reading will often take place at the beginning of class, and cannot be made up due to tardiness. **Any unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by 10 points (P.A.C.) in each instance, in addition to preventing you from receiving credit for the material due that day.**

In addition to attending each class, you are also required to attend two departmental mainstage productions (*DancEvent* and *The Scarlett Pimpernel*.) Tickets are available via the William & Mary Box Office. Attending these productions will allow you to generate a written response to the design and/or thematic elements (sets, lights, costumes, and sound) for both shows. Please note the performance schedule as soon as possible as your attendance at the on-campus events is mandatory.

PARTICIPATION: This class demands personal and communal commitment. Theatre is inherently a collaborative art form and therefore, so is this class. I expect that each student will arrive prepared for each class session – mentally, physically, and emotionally. This includes completing all assigned work for the given session, but also means arriving at the studio mentally and physically prepared. Active listening skills are as important to the theatre artist as his/her verbal and artistic skills. If at any time you feel as though your thoughts and opinions have been unfairly dismissed by me, or by another student, please speak to me about it as soon as possible, as I can then work toward improving your class experience.

SNACKS AND DRINKS: Beverages in *closed* containers are permitted in class, provided that they do not become a distraction to anyone / portion of the class. It is expected that you will *maintain the cleanliness* of the room as a working design studio. Please, no food in class. Please also refrain from disposing of food containers, boxes, and/or wrappings in the design room garbage cans by making use of the garbage outside of the room throughout the building.

ZOOM CLASS EXPECTATIONS: Maintaining “in person” focus while meeting online can be challenging, but if we all participate in the following agreements, the entire class will collectively benefit.

- 1) Treat online class just as you would an in-person class
- 2) Dress as you would for any other WM class
- 3) Attend class in a room/area with as much privacy, and as few distractions as possible
- 4) Take care to provide alternative space for pets
- 5) Keep your camera on, but mute your microphone when not speaking
- 6) Utilize front facing or omnidirectional lighting and avoid strong side and back light
- 7) Use a separate ZOOM device from your note taking method



- 8) Minimize or eliminate non-class related communication with others at your location, or online
- 9) Refrain from the temptation to multi-task. Be present and focused!

PHONES AND DEVICES: Turn them off. Not on vibrate, off. No exceptions, No texting. Zilch, Nada, Nope. Any violation of this policy during classes will **reduce your final grade by 10 points (P.A.C.) in each instance.**

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL BEING: William & Mary recognizes that students juggle different responsibilities and can face challenges that make learning difficult. There are many resources available at W&M to help students navigate emotional/psychological, physical/medical, material/accessibility concerns, including:

- The W&M Counseling Center at (757) 221-3620. Services are free and confidential.
- The W&M Health Center at (757) 221-4386.
- To seek assistance for interpersonal, academic, and wellness challenges, please contact Care Support Services at wm.edu/care (care@wm.edu).



- For a list of other [resources](#) available to students, see [here](#) or:

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION: In this class, we strive to recognize the broadest representation of perspectives, ideas and expertise from all people without bias or preference toward race, color, ethnicity, creed or sexual identity. This is an anti-racist, inclusive space. Any violation of this collective understanding will not be tolerated in this course. Additionally, we acknowledge that the area on which W&M sits was originally the land of the Kiskiack Tribe, and we honor their heritage. We further recognize that W&M owned and exploited slave labor for over one hundred seventy years, and failed to take a stand against segregation for nearly one hundred more. As members of the W&M community, we are committed to equality and social justice for all.

MISCELLANEOUS: This is a class where **NEATNESS COUNTS**. All written work must be **neatly typed using a twelve point font style**, unless it is **required** to be submitted in another format (i.e. handwritten / sketched), and be free of spelling and grammatical errors. All visual work should be prepared with as much care and precision and possible.



Any assignment consisting on multiple pages must be stapled in the upper left corner. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points.

All work must be submitted on time (at the beginning of the class period on the date due). Theatre is based on deadlines. No assignments will be accepted via email or at a later date.

DESIGN ROOM KEY AND DRAWER POLICY: So that you may store your work materials, you will receive a set of 3 keys to 3 drawers in one of the drafting tables. At the end of the semester, you must return your keys to me. If you do not return your keys, you will receive an “*incomplete*” until I have the set of keys (however, it will not affect your final grade-just when you get the grade). If you lose your keys, please let me know ASAP as I retain an extra set of keys and can replace lost or broken keys *at your expense* (\$4.50 per key). Each student may also claim a flat file drawer by writing their names on the blank card in the brass holder. Please **DO NOT** write on the drawers themselves or affix / tape / stick anything to the drawer face or interiors. Final grades will not be posted until keys have been returned.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Don’t cheat. Don’t lie. Don’t Steal. A complete description of William & Mary’s Honor System can be found in the student handbook. If you have any questions about this policy, please speak with me about it *prior* to choosing your course of action.

STATEMENT OF ACCESSIBILITY:

William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2509 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please see www.wm.edu/sas

GOLDEN FUN PASS: Each student will be issued one golden fun pass ticket at the beginning of the semester. This ticket grants the user a single, a twenty-four hour extension on all work due that class day. To receive full credit, the work must be turned in by 11:59am on the following day (**i.e. – not the following class period**) with the signed Golden Fun Pass attached. The Golden Fun Pass ticket is non-transferrable and may not be used on any portion of the collaborative group project and holds no cash value if unused (just the respect and admiration of your classmates). **Use it wisely!**

NAME THIS DESIGNER AND RECEIVE A PRIZE !
--



MATERIALS LIST: In addition to the aforementioned texts, you are also responsible for obtaining the following equipment and supplies. Please note that many items on this list are “expendables” and thus, will need to be replaced at a rate dependent on your personal usage. Some things are easier to find than others so I will do my best to help you with your search. Locally, many items are found at Walmart, Michaels, Ace Hardware, Staples, or at Walls Alive (located in the Newtown Shopping Area) or from a variety of online retailers such as Blick Art Materials. Many other online vendors are available as well, but I encourage you to speak with me about utilizing them **before** making any purchases. (some are better than others!) On occasion, I will request that you bring your laptops to class, but will make sure to give you advanced notice. You should make arrangements to gain access to a color printer and befriend the staff at the copy center in the Sadler Center.

Added bonus: all of these materials and tools will also be used in Scenic Design (should you take it), and many will be useful for Lighting and Costume Design (should you take them.)

1st Batch **(You need these ASAP)**

A small notebook for step by step notes, thoughts, etc (think cheap, pocket sized)

#2 pencils (not mechanical)

Office Stapler – any size, any shape, any color (must be working...and filled with staples)

4B, 2B, H, 2H pencils (2 each)

Manual pencil sharpener

Art Gum Eraser

18 x 24 pad of newsprint

18” steel ruler

16 foot long (or greater) tape measure

A device capable of taking high quality photos

A device capable of recording sound (min 10 minutes)

Recommended but not required 8 x 10 or bigger sketchbook (spiral ring is best)

**2nd Batch (You need these by 9/17 unless otherwise discussed)**

12" Architectural Scale Ruler (white, with the fractions on the ends – NOT the 10,20,30, etc)

Drafting Dots or Drafting Tape – COULD BE SHARED

Prang Watercolor 16 Pan Starter Set (or a similar water color – NOT GUACHE – set)

Bristol Board Pad 5 Sheets 11 x 14 – 2ply Vellum Finish – TABLETS COULD BE SHARED

A small vessel to hold water such as a plastic bowl, mug, etc.

3rd Batch (You need these by 10/29 unless otherwise discussed)

Personal Laptop Computer (not a tablet) capable of running Vectorworks (free download) and Adobe [one month student license of Adobe Photoshop](#)

Computer Mouse

THEATRE 300 SCHEDULE : SUBJECT TO CHANGE

rev. 26.AUG.25

** Indicate days with homework assignments that typically require more time than others

1	8/27	First Class : Welcome : Fear and Loathing : <i>HW Favorites Lists, Buy Materials, Buy Books</i>
2	9/1 9/3	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY Drawing 1 – Angle Evaluation: <i>HW generate drawing from another view</i>
3	9/8 9/10	**Drawing 2 – Shape, Distance, and Basic Perspective: <i>HW draw from int. and ext. locales</i> Drawing 3 – Check-ins, Getting the Gist/ The Talking Sketch: <i>HW Draw and Caption / Half Inked</i>
4	9/15 9/17	**Drawing 4 –Referencing the Figure, Shadow & Fabric: 1 st Text Intro: <i>HW Additional Scenarios And Hanging Garment Drawing, Read G.P. 1-55</i> 2nd Batch of Materials: G.P. Disc: Intro to Color Theory, Mix and Match: <i>HW Color Wheel, Read G.P. 55-117, Finish Drawings Final Drawing Packet</i>
5	9/22 9/24	G.P. Disc: Laying out the figure: <i>HW line drawings and tracings</i> Working W/ The Paint / Additional Process Paint: <i>HW Color/Shadow Studies On Line Drawings</i>
6	9/29 10/1	**NO CLASS – HW Work on Shadow Studies, Color Explorations, and Process Notation NO CLASS – HW Read 1 st Play
7	10/6 10/8	** The painted costume rendering: <i>HW 2 Reality and 2 Fantasy Color Renderings</i> Very brief design history: <i>HW Work On Costume Renderings</i>
8	10/13 10/15	1 st Play Discuss: Breakdown, Build the visual res: <i>HW 2nd Read/breakdown, Emot React for 1st Play. Finish Costume Project for Final Submission</i> Emotional Reactions: Looking and Talking Research: <i>HW Audio Reflect, Meditations, Scoring</i>
9	10/20 10/22	**Audio & research recap, AI as composer: HW Use AI to generate original scoring for scenes Listening Party w/ Res: <i>HW Loc Sound Journal, Assign 2nd Play and Final Project</i>
10	10/27 10/29	**Lighting – The Brass Tacks: <i>HW Light Observations</i> Introduction to Drafting: <i>HW work on line weight and GP surveys, Download VW, Perf Response</i> DANCEVENT PERFORMANCES: 10/30 Thur, 10/31 Fri, 11/1, Sat @ 7:30pm, 11/2 Sun @ 2pm
11	11/3 11/5	Response to Production: Intro to VW, drafting the survey: <i>HW Draft survey in VW</i> VW Drafting Part 2, Elevations: <i>HW Dev Front Elev.</i>
12	11/10	**Drafting #3, Cross Sections: <i>HW Draft Elevation and Section of Table</i>



	11/12	Drafting Fixes/Catch up: <i>HW Set up workflow plan with group.</i> Finalize Drafting Packet
13	11/17	Photoshop #1: <i>HW TBD, work on final projects</i>
	11/19	Photoshop #2: <i>HW TBD, work on final projects: Performance Response – Digital Submission</i>
		<i>THE SCARLETT PIMPERNEL PERF: 11/20 Thur, 11/21 Fri, 11/22, Sat @ 7:30pm, 11/23 Sun @ 2pm</i>
14	11/24	Remote Learning Day: Response to the production: HW Catch Up On Photoshop Projects
	11/26	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING: Eat Some Tofurkey!
15	12/1	Photoshop #3: <i>HW Complete Final Photoshop Submission, Work On Final Projects</i>
	12/3	Final Class: Collaborative work: <i>HW Work On Final Presentations</i>

IN PERSON FINAL DESIGN PRESENTATIONS: TUESDAY, DEC 9th 9:00a-12:00pm