
THTR 491

Special Studies: Sound Design



Spring 2019
Tuesday & Thursday 12:50-2:20PM
PLH 206

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Overview

This course is an introduction to theater sound design; specifically, an opportunity for all of us to explore the technical and artistic methodologies of one of theatre's newest disciplines. This is small theatre class and therefore, it should be noted that this is a shared learning experience. By this, I mean that each of us will share our strengths and experiences for the purpose of better understanding sound design and technology.

Goals

Goals for this course include

- Engage, read and think about texts (plays, books, articles, aural and visual images)
- Contribute positively to discussions
- Think critically
- Present materials clearly and concisely
- Take intellectual and creative risks
- Develop a design concept in a collaborative environment
- Create a minimum of two portfolio pieces
- Have a stronger understanding of his/her aesthetic in terms of theatrical design

Credit Hour Compliance

Students will spend 3 hours on homework and outside assignments for every hour in class. Simply stated, expect to work 9 hours/week on homework and co-curricular activities.

Lab Computers & Software

We will be using several computer programs. For the most part, we will be learning the basics of these programs in class: QLab 3 and Logic X. Since much of your work will be on lab computers, I highly suggest you purchase a thumb drive for class. A small drive of 8GB will be sufficient. You will also be able to upload to Google Drive although there are some known challenges with Google Drive and QLab, hence the thumb drive as backup.

Texts and Materials

Kaye, Deena & James Lebrecht. *Sound and Music for the Theatre: The Art & Technique of Design 4th Ed*. New York: Routledge 2016. Print.

All other texts will be available on WISE.

Project Deadlines

Tuesday, January 29th

Project #1 Due

Tuesday, February 12th

Project #2 Due

Tuesday, February 26th

Project #3 Due

Tuesday, March 12th

Project #4 Due

Tuesday, March 19th

Project #5 Due

Tuesday, April 2nd

Project #6 Due

Tuesday April 9th

Project #7 Due

Tuesday, April 16th

Project #8 Due

Tuesday, April 23rd

Project #9 Due

Thursday May 2nd & Thursday May 9th

Project #10 Presentations & Final

Project (5PM)

Grading Policy

Attendance: Due to the way in which this course is taught, class attendance is mandatory. A missed class will constitute a severe drop in one's grade. Prompt attendance is also required. Tardiness and Absences are considered synonymous. Lateness is defined by (1) not in class at appointed time or (2) come to class after I arrive - whichever is the later.

Participation: Active participation in class discussion and group presentations is expected and will be a factor in each student's grade. The participation grade will be based upon thoughtful contributions in discussion and other class exercises. You will be expected to participate in thoughtful discussions of close readings and presentations. Note that class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner. All in-class projects will have a group critique attached to the assignments. Each student is required to participate in group critiques. Active participation in group critiques will count as significant part of the assignment as well as participation credit for the day.

Group critiques are fundamental to the process of collaborating. At their heart, the group critiques come from a place of openness and generosity. Asking hard questions is an important part of the process, however mean-spirited critiques will not be tolerated. Each student is asked to participate in each critique so that the work grows. Students will have the opportunity to adjust work based on the critiques given in class.

Reading Assignments: This is a seminar/design class not a lecture course. We are going to be talking and listening to one another. Engaging in collective enterprise and exploration. We will be discussing concepts in aesthetics and design that are central to our personal identities. Accordingly, we can and should expect that we will not all agree with one another regarding the topics we will be discussing. This course should neither be seen as an opportunity to compel others to "achieve" a proper stance, nor as a space for trying to impress people. Vital to the success of this class is the commitment we make to listening and speaking with one another with respect and thoughtfulness.

You are required to thoughtfully read every text. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but you should grapple with the ideas. You will be required to take notes on each text so that you will read for comprehension rather than reading for completion. I want you to *ponder every idea* rather than looking at every word. This means that you may need to read and reread sections of the articles/chapters. Reading means *engaging* yourself with the ideas of the texts.

Presentations: Presentations are fundamental to this course. You will present regularly. The fundamental purposes of the presentation are communication and collaboration. Presentations should be well prepared, concise, and clear. Evaluations for presentations will include: content, collaboration, clarity, critiques (given and received), organization, creativity, risk.

The work load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment. Remember to make use of your resources: meet with me outside of class, form design groups with your classmates, TALK TO ONE ANOTHER!

Work Days are designed to bring ideas, challenges, and questions to the studio. It is expected that each student will bring a minimum of one idea, challenge, or question to each work day. Preparation for work days shall happen prior to class. For example. If a student would like to see what a certain microphone will do, s/he must bring that microphone (or arrange for it to be in class) to the work day. It will not be acceptable to hunt for materials during class. Our class time is limited and therefore preparation is vital to get the most out of our time in class

Assignments: Projects will be due at the beginning of class. Late projects will be levied -10% per day. To be clear, materials for in-class presentations must be uploaded to the appropriate assignment on WISE prior to the beginning of class. All assignments must be uploaded to WISE.

Project Criteria

An "A" assignment actively seeks and follows through on appropriate yet untested and potentially risky directions/approaches to the design question. It has a transparent process and communicates clearly to both artistic and production collaborators. It incorporates new directions/approaches into the design project while supporting the directions/approaches with thoughtful and creative evidence and analysis. An "A" assignment considers the intended audience and is distinctive, furthering the designer's choices.

A "B" assignment incorporates new directions/approaches to the final project within the design question. It selects a consistent plan and communicates amongst collaborators. It considers alternative directions/approaches to the design project while supporting the

directions/approaches. A “B” assignment is relatively clear and error free. It grasps the significance of its intended audience and its connection to designer’s choices.

A “C” assignment has a direction/approach to the design question but does not take creative risks in its development. It may fail to develop a consistent process and may be ineffective in its communication amongst collaborators. In addition, an assignment will receive a “C” if it does not have supporting material for design choices/decisions, lacks a sense of audience, and is stylistically unsophisticated.

A “D” assignment fails to present a direction/approach to the design question. It lacks process and communication amongst collaborators. Additionally, a plethora of mistakes may turn any assignment into a “D” if such lapses significantly affect the project’s process, final product, and/or “readability”.

An “F” assignment results when the designer neglects to hand in the assignment; refuses to address the assignment’s topic; or violates common standards of decency. Additionally, plagiarism will result in an assignment grade of “F”.

The following is the grading breakdown for this semester:

Attendance: 25%

Class Participation: 25%

Projects/Assignments: 50%

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needed accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible. Also, please request that the counselor for students with disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics.

We will be analyzing multiple standpoints and, at times, we may encounter individual resistance to the text(s). At times, such resistance may provoke unexpected responses. In such cases, please take personal care. Support services are available through Bishop Wellness and the Chaplain’s office. I will always be available to assist as desired/needed.

Sexual Misconduct and Mandatory Reporting: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. Please be aware that by law, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact our confidential advocate at confidential-advocate@willamette.edu. You may also contact WUTalk - a 24-hour telephone crisis counseling support line at 503-375-5353. If in immediate danger, please call campus safety at 503-370-6911.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. The OED defines plagiarism as, “the action or practice of taking someone else’s work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one’s own.” Willamette University plagiarism policy can be found in the College of Liberal Arts Catalog. Plagiarism may take many forms, but the common denominator is presenting someone else’s words or ideas as your own. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, I encourage you to err on the side of caution and to seek advice from me. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment and be reported to the honor’s council.

Class Assignments

Project One (Due 1/29)

Ism Project (Part I): you will choose an ISM that is not realism and that differs from your classmates. You will have 10 minutes to present your ISM in class. Your presentation must include the following: definition, historical context, contemporary context (if there are any), and reactions (political, cultural, historical, contemporary, etc.). Finally, your presentation will include an aural element – created by you – that represents the ISM. This is a NON SCRIPT BASED assignment. In other words, texts will include aural and visual images (words may be included). This project challenges the American emphasis on script as text with the hope to open our imaginations and to interpret different texts within the performing arts: aural and visual images, the body, etc. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Two (Due 2/12)

Ism Project (Part II): working as a group, you will each adapt one another's initial aural element to your selected ISM. There must be a distinct transition, falling in line with one or the other's ISM and the additional aural elements must compliment the initial aural image. Think of your addition as a new movement within a symphony. The initial ISM and aural element establishes the first movement and you will each add a new movement as an expression of your ISM. This project emphasizes collaboration as well as one's ability to listen and synthesize materials as an artistic team. Projects will be presented in class. Presentations will first allow the class to listen to the aural elements and allow class to ask questions regarding the aural element and the ISM. Things to think about: how does the piece build; how do the ISMS interact with one another; how does the aural narrative shift throughout the piece? Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Three (Due 2/26)

Working as a team, discover and research two locations in Salem. Once the two locations are chosen, research the locations in terms of history, use, etc. From the research, develop a 5-minute soundscape for each location. The soundscape must be able to seamlessly loop. It should complement the history and current use of the space. It must also take into account transitions within the soundscape as well as how the space may change throughout the day, season, semester, etc. Each soundscape will be presented in class along with the research materials. Each person must work on each aspect of each soundscape. Individuals will turn in their aspect of research, inspiration, and aural elements for each soundscape. The presentation will be a group presentation of the final products and research/inspirational materials. Each presentation will be no longer than 15 minutes in length. The presentation should be a culmination of everyone's work as if the team was presenting a unified vision to a prospective job. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Four (Due 3/12)

Concept, Research and Sound Plot: you will present your concept, research, and initial sound plot for your first play (this play will be chosen by you and approved by me prior to starting Project 4). Presentations should last no more than 10 minutes with 2 minutes of critique. Part of your evaluation will be on presentation organization and timeliness. Presentations may be digital in format and should include more than aural materials. Research is both historical and inspirational, supporting your concept that should be clear in your presentation. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Five (Due 3/19)

Opening Cue Sequence: Design and execute (in the media studio) the opening cueing sequence for your play from Project 4. Cues should include the last moment of "house open" through the Prologue. You will present your opening sequence in class through the media studio monitor system. The sequence should be cued via Qlab. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Six (Due 4/2)

Cues: Choose one scene of Project 4's play and develop cues for that scene. Cues may be scene framing cues, specific cues, underscoring, commentary sounds, segues, spot effects, ambiance, etc. You must develop one cue in Logic with at least one original element. All cues must be executed through Qlab. Your presentation should first be the execution of all cues and then show the class how you developed the Logic Cue. Your presentation should take no more than 12 minutes with 3 minutes for critique. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Seven (Due 4/9)

Recording: establish an aural element that you wish to record for Project 4's play. Presentation should discuss how you decided to record the element (which microphone did you use, why?) Did you need to manipulate the recording? What worked? What did not work? What would you do differently next time? How does it fit into the aesthetic of this production? Does this element change the design concept? Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Eight (Due 4/16)

Concept, Research, and Sound Plot: you will present your concept, research, and initial sound plot for your second play (this play should be a contrasting play and discussed with me prior to Project 8's due date) in class. Presentations should last no more than 10 minutes with 2 minutes of critique. Part of your evaluation will be on presentation organization and timeliness. Presentations may be digital in format and should include more than aural materials. Research is both historical and inspirational, supporting your concept that should be clear in your presentation. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Nine (Due 4/23)

Cueing Sequence: You will develop a cue sequence from the last moment before PLACES through the first scene of Play #2. Cues will include but are not limited to: framing cues, specific cues, underscoring, commentary sounds, segues, spot effects, and ambiance. You must use Logic

for a minimum of one aural element in the scene, and include at least one original element. All cues will be executed via QLab. You will have 12 minutes to present your cueing sequence with 3 minutes of critique. Once again, begin the presentation by execution of your cues and then present your work in Logic. Prior to class, presentations and aural elements are due on WISE.

Project Ten (Presentations Due on 5/2 & Final Due on 5/9 at 5pm)

This project ties everything together. Here you will finalize your Sound Plot for Play #2. You will cue the entire show of Play #2. On 5/2, you will present your Sound plot and some samples of your production. You will work off of Project Six and Seven. While repetition in presentation is not necessary, note that you may want to remind us of concept. I strongly suggest your presentation include samples of some of your more difficult sections. This presentation is meant to aid in your development of the project. You should be approximately 85% there – think of the presentation as the beginning of Q2Q (but going through each cue will not be necessary). You will have 12-15 minutes of presentation with 3-5 minutes of critique. The final version of this project is due at 8am on 5/5 on WISE.

Class Schedule

Tuesday 1/22	Introduction & Assigning the ISMS	
Thursday 1/24	Robert Edmond Jones “To a Young Stage Designer”	
Tuesday 1/29	In Class Presentations	Project #1 Due
Thursday 1/31	S&MFT: Introduction, CH1, CH2	
Tuesday 2/5	Anne Bogart “What’s In a Story” (Selections)	
Thursday 2/7	S&MFT CH 3 & CH 4	Discuss Project #2
Tuesday 2/12	In Class Presentations & Bring (2) play options you want to work on for Project #3 – Otherwise, I will assign the play.	Project #2 Due Discuss Project #3
Thursday 2/14	Arnold Aronson “Theatre Technology and the Shifting Aesthetic”	
Tuesday 2/19	S&MFT CH 5 & CH 6; Introduction to Logic, bring aural element to class to work on in Logic	
Thursday 2/21	AME CH1, CH 2, CH3, CH 4, CH 5; Logic continued	
Tuesday 2/26	Introduction to Qlab (bring 2 aural elements to class)/ Class Presentations	Project #3 Due
Thursday 2/28	S&FMT CH 6, CH 7, CH 8	
Tuesday 3/5	Discuss and familiarize ourselves with each other’s plays. Bring a synopsis of your chosen play along with some dramaturgical support (history of the play, why is this play important, what style is this play, how does the play fit into the western canon, is it similar in style and function to other plays, what makes this play unique?	Discuss Project #4
Thursday 3/7	AME CH 12 & 13 & S&FMT CH 11	
Tuesday 3/12	Class Presentations and Workday for Project #5	Project #4 Due
Thursday 3/14	SFX Bible CH 1 & CH 2	
Tuesday 3/19	Class Presentations and Workday for Project #6	Project #5 Due
Thursday 3/21	SFX Bible CH 9 & CH 19	
Tuesday 3/26	SPRING BREAK (NO CLASSES)	
Thursday 3/28	SPRING BREAK (NO CLASSES)	
Tuesday 4/2	Class Presentations and Workday for Project #7	Project #6 Due
Thursday 4/4	Ross Brown “The Scenography of Engagement and Distraction”	
Tuesday 4/9	In Class Presentations; Discuss and familiarize ourselves with each other’s plays. Bring a synopsis of your chosen play along with some dramaturgical support (history of the play, why is this play important, what style is this play, how does the play fit into the western canon, is it similar in style and function to other plays, what makes this play unique?	Project #7 Due Discuss Project #8
Thursday 4/11	Workday Project #8	
Tuesday 4/16	In class Presentations; Workday Project #9	Project #8 Due

Thursday 4/18	Adolphe Appia “Music and the Art of Theatre” (PART ONE)	
Tuesday 4/23	Class Presentations; Workday Project #10	Project #9 Due
Thursday 4/25	S&FMT CH 9 & CH 10	
Tuesday 4/30	Antoine Artaud “The Theatre and its Double” (pp 7-52 & 84-100)	
Thursday 5/2	In Class Presentation; Workday Project #10	Project #10 Presentations Due
Thursday 5/9	FINAL EXAM	Project #10 due at 5PM via WISE