

THET 328A: Stage Design & Opera (Spring 2019) 3 Credits
Monday & Wednesday | Time: 12:00pm – 1:50pm (110/mins)
Instructor: Christopher Brusberg

Office: Room 2741 (TDPS)

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00am – 12:00pm or by appointment

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Pre-requisites: THET116 “Fundamentals of Design” or approval from teacher.

Introduction:

Examining opera as a form of drama through the lens of design. Students will discuss how elements of design can help strengthen the audiences’ relationship to the drama and structure of the opera while aiding storytelling. The class will also be focusing on helping students develop a vocabulary to talk about opera and design.

Course Description:

Heaven, Hell, Presidents, and Myths; Opera covers it all. But what is the atmosphere of a man being dragged to hell? What does it look like? What should it invoke? The music in opera establishes a world in which the action and drama takes place. This class will discuss what elements of the world are needed to help the structure of the story while helping the audience understand motifs and themes in an opera. Students will become familiar with design concepts and strengthen a vocabulary to communicate their ideas of their worlds to others.

It is also important to understand that design doesn’t happen in a vacuum. A director and design team must understand theatrical conventions, current theories in art, and audience expectations to be able to make successful design choices. Over the course of a semester we will talk about stage design (lighting, costumes, and scenery) through the lens of operas (Please note that this is not a comprehensive opera history class). Looking at famous composers and opera periods from Montiverdi (1607) to Jake Hegg (2005) we will examine theatrical conventions (as well as specific opera conventions), audience expectations, styles of opera and their popularity in history as well as today to establish a base to talk about design.

Course Objectives:

- Be able to communicate design ideas to your peers,
- Be able to understand concepts, motifs, and theme and see where they repeat in history,
- Be able to critically listen to an opera and respond to it with visual research.
- Bonus: Be able to understand the general evolution of opera and how it has impacted theater and opera conventions today.

Course Expectations and Requirements:

It is very important that you stay up on your readings and listening assignments. This course will cover about 16 hours of listening assignments and that's not something you can cram. I've tried to make all listening assignments over the weekend so you have the time. You need to take the time to listen and respond to the opera BEFORE you come in to class so we can talk as a group about the opera. The course has two main sets of projects: **Visual Response** and **Visual Research**.

Visual Response is finding images that capture the atmosphere of the opera as well as your response to the opera. Sometime with Visual Response you will respond to the whole opera or follow one of the character's arch through the opera.

Visual Research goes further and requires you to find images that respond to the mood, atmosphere, plot, and visual elements prescribed by the libretto, all while having an encompassed style. It is expected that you will be able to describe how the visual response and research would affect elements of the world and stage design.

Both types of projects will be discussed and critiqued by the class, with everybody expected to participate. During a class I will give examples of visual research so students can understand what will be expected.

Required Texts:

The Met Opera on Demand (<https://www.lib.umd.edu/dbfinder/id/UMD08877>):

La Boheme (Puccini) – April 5, 2008 Recording

Peter Grimes (Britten) – March 15, 2006 Recording

Available on Google Play, iTunes, or at the UMD Library:

Orfeo ed Eurydice (Gluck) – EMI Classics Recording (2008) – ON ELMS

Don Giovanni (Mozart) EMI Classics Recording (2006) – UMD LIBRARY

Rigoletto (Verdi) Decca, London Symphony Orchestra (1971) – UMD LIBRARY

Dead Man Walking (Heggie) Erato Disques (2012) – UMD LIBRARY

Required Materials:

There are no books required for this class, a series of small handouts will be given out through the semester. You will need a couple of things over the course of the semesters

- Access to a color printer (The library does good color printing)
- 1 – 3/16" Black Foam Core Board (20" x 30")
- X-acto knife & blade (Get the \$5 one that comes with 5 extra blades)

Class Participation:

You should come to class prepared with doing the reading/listing beforehand. It is expected that we will go beyond just talking about the opera and dive deeper into the material during the class. Please email me if you have any questions about the reading/listing. Class participation also means adding meaningful thoughts and opinions to discussions and providing fair critique/feedback of classmate's projects.

Computers:

The class size is small and we need everyone present in the room for discussion so I am asking that you don't use a computer (or phone) in class. You need to be present and engaged with your fellow students, this is an important skill to practice and have as a designer. If you have an Individual assessment plan that would require you to have a computer or make it easier for you to have a computer please see me during office hours.

Grading Breakdown:

Please note how much your weekly research and class participation is heavily graded (it is over a quarter of your grade). You are expected to participate in discussion and critiques every week.

Visual Response Projects: (4 operas @ 5 each): 20 points

Visual Research Projects (2 operas @ 10 each): 20 points

Class Participation: 60 points

Evening at the Opera Participation & Paper: 15 points

Quizzes (6 quizzes at 5 points each): 30 points

Midterm: 20 points

Final: 35 points

Letter Grade Equivalency:

A+	200 – 196	C+	160 – 156
A	195 – 186	C	155 – 146
A-	185 – 181	C-	145 – 141
B+	180 – 176	D	140 – 121
B	175 – 166	F	120 or Less
B-	165 - 161		

An Evening at the Opera: You will need to attend either the Final Dress Rehearsal or Opening of the Spring Maryland Opera Studio Opera. Be prepared to discuss it in class.

Visual Response: A visual response project is at least 2 pages and no more than 3 on images that evoke the atmosphere of an opera or mood of how you interrupt the themes and motifs of the opera. Visual images can also include pictures of how you would like certain moments in the opera to look. I highly suggest you start collecting images as you watch/listen to the opera. All Response projects will then be discussed with the full class.

The following operas have a 2 to 3-page Visual Response Projects *La Boheme & Orfeo ed Eurydie*

*** SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE ***

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The following opera have a 2-page Character Visual Response Project: *Don Giovanni, Peter Grimes*
Midterm: There will be no midterm test. You will expand on visual response of *Orfeo ed Eurydice*. This is a large project but you will have four weeks to complete it. Your midterm will be comprised of the following:

- 1) Updated research on *Orfeo ed Eurydice*
- 2) Each act will need two pages of visual research depicting how you would achieve the atmosphere of music in each act, please use one page for the leadup to the emotional/musical climax and then another page for the resolve (or lack therefore).
- 3) Scenery Box – details will be handed out in class
- 4) For all major events you should be able to describe during the class response how you feel your stage design can accomplish what the opera.
- 5) A 1 page paper (12 font, 1" margins, double spaced) briefly talking about your concept.

Visual Research: Visual Research is a step up from Visual Response. You will be required to bring in a visual response to the major themes and motifs of the opera. In addition, you will also be required to pick one aspect of design (Scenery, Costumes, Lighting) and bring in more specific research of how the themes and motifs will be manifested in the project. Each theme can be represented by one image or several images. Please include a brief paragraph explaining your concepts (MAXIMUM 350 words or about one long paragraph) At the end of class you may either physically submit research papers to me or have them uploaded to drop box BEFORE the class starts

The following operas have Visual Research Projects: *Rigoletto, Dead Man Walking*

Final: There will be no final test, it will be a project. The final is an extension of a Visual Research/Response packet to any opera studied in class. Your final should contain the following:

- 1) 1 to 2 research pages containing the motifs and themes of your Scenery Design Idea and a rendering of the scenery for each Act of the opera.
- 2) Pick two contrasting characters and do a side by side page of costume research.
- 3) 1 to 2 research pages containing the motifs and themes of your Lighting Design Ideas. Your research should show the dramatic climax and shift in the opera.
- 4) Finally, please submit a 2-page paper on how you believe your design either embraces or challenges current design theory and audience expectations.

On Monday of Week 15 you will need to bring in your preliminary research, please be ready to discuss the research with the class for feedback.

Due on the day of the final for the class. No digital copies will be accepted.

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	DATE	Topic	WORK DUE BEFORE
Week 1	Monday (1/28)	<u>Lecture</u> : Overview Opera History & Terminology	
	Wednesday (1/30)	<u>Lecture</u> : Stage Design & Musical Dramaturgy	READING : Handout – <i>Dramatic Imagination</i>
Week 2	Monday (2/4)	<u>Watch & Discussion</u> : La Boheme (Puccini - 1896)	WATCH : <i>La Boheme</i> (MetHD)
	Wednesday (2/6)	<u>Watch & Discussion</u> : Baroque Beginnings	READING : Handout – <i>Opera As Drama</i>
Week 3*	Monday (2/11)	<u>Project Response & Discussion</u> : La Boheme	Visual Response : <i>La Boheme</i>
	Wednesday (2/13)	<u>Lecture</u> : Stage Design & Critique	
Week 4	Monday (2/18)	<u>Lecture</u> : A New Revolution? Orfeo ed Eurydice (Gluck - 1767)	LISTEN : <i>Orfeo ed Eurydice</i>
	Wednesday (2/20)	<u>Lecture</u> : Bel Canto	
Week 5	Monday (2/25)	<u>TBD</u>	
	Wednesday (2/27)	<u>Project Response & Discussion</u> : Orfeo	Visual Response : <i>Orfeo</i>
Week 6*	Monday (3/4)	<u>Lecture</u> : Classical: Don Giovanni (Mozart - 1787)	LISTEN : <i>Don Giovanni</i>
	Wednesday (3/6)	<u>Project Response & Discussion</u> : Don Giovanni Characters	Visual Character Response : <i>Don Giovanni</i>
Week 7	Monday (3/11)	<u>Lecture</u> : A New Sound - Masters of Romanticism	
	Wednesday (3/13)	<u>Midterm Response & Discussion</u> :	Midterm Due
	3/19 – 3/21	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
Week 8	Monday (3/25)	<u>Lecture</u> : Masters of Romanticism Verdi and Wagner: Rigoletto (Verdi – 1851)	Listen : Clips of <i>Rigoletto</i>
	Wednesday (3/27)	<u>Project Response & Discussion</u> : Rigoletto (Verdi)	Visual Response : <i>Rigoletto</i>
Week 9	Monday (4/1)	<u>Lecture</u> : French Grand Opera in Four Acts	Reading : Handout
	Wednesday (4/3)	<u>Watch & Discussion</u> : Counter point to Carmen	WATCH : Clips Of <i>Onegin</i>
Week 10	Monday (4/8)	<u>Watch & Discussion</u> : A New Century & A New Sound	
	Wednesday (4/10)	<u>Lecture</u> : After the war: Peter Grimes (Britten – 1946)	Watch : <i>Peter Grimes</i> (MetHD)

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Week 11	Monday (4/15)	<u>Project Response & Discussion:</u> Peter Grimes	Visual Character Response: <i>Peter Grimes</i>
	Wednesday (4/17)	<u>Lecture:</u> Modern American Opera & The New Opera House	
Week 12	Monday (4/22)	<u>Lecture:</u> Modern Opera: Dead Man Walking (Heggie)	Listen: Dead Man Walking
	Wednesday	<u>Watch & Discussion:</u> Music after the 80's	Reading: Handout
Week 13	Monday (4/29)	<i>Catch Up Day</i>	<i>Catch Up Day</i>
	Wednesday (5/1)	<u>Project Response & Discussion:</u> Dead Man Walking	Visual Research: Dead Man Walking
Week 14	Monday (5/6)	<u>Discussion:</u> What's Next Doc? Part Duex	Reading: Handout
	Wednesday (5/8)	<u>Discussion:</u> In Progress Final Review	In-progress final
Week 15	Monday (5/13)	IN CLASS WORK DAY (FINAL)	
FINAL	TBD	Final Discussion & Response to Final	Final Project

Class Calendar (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Please note that lecture classes will involve Q&A and Discussion (You will be very bored if I talk for 110 minutes). Please come to class everyday with the reading and listening assignment done.

Classroom and University Policies

Attendance and Absences:

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. Consistent attendance offers students the most effective opportunity to gain command of course concepts and materials. Events that justify an excused absence include: religious observances; mandatory military obligation; illness of the student or illness of an immediate family member; participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control (e.g., death in the family, required court appearance). Absences stemming from work duties other than military obligation (e.g., unexpected changes in shift assignments) and traffic/transit problems do not typically qualify for excused absence.

Students claiming an excused absence must notify the course instructor in a timely manner and provide appropriate documentation. The notification should be provided either prior to the absence or as soon afterwards as possible. In the case of religious observances, athletic events, and planned absences known at the beginning of the semester, the student must inform the instructor during the schedule adjustment period. All other absences must be reported as soon as is practical. The student must provide appropriate documentation of the absence. The documentation must be provided in writing to the instructor by the means specified in this syllabus. [please insert your language in the syllabus here.]

The full university attendance/absence policy can be found here:
<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

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Academic integrity:

The UMD Honor Code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures. On every examination, paper or other academic exercise not exempted by the instructor, students must write by hand and sign the following pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (or assignment).

For more information please see: <https://www.president.umd.edu/administration/policies/section-v-student-affairs/v-100b>

Copyright notice

Class lectures and other materials are copyrighted. They may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from the instructor. Copyright infringements may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

Disability Support:

Students with a documented disability should inform the instructors within the add-drop period if academic accommodations will be needed. NB: You are expected to meet with your instructor in person to provide them with a copy of the *Accommodations Letter* and to obtain your instructor's signature on the *Acknowledgement of Student Request* form. You and your instructor will plan together how accommodations will be implemented throughout the semester. To obtain the required Accommodation Letter, please contact Disability Support Service (DSS) at 301-314-7682 or dissup@umd.edu

Academic accommodations for students who experience sexual misconduct:

The University of Maryland is committed to providing support and resources, including academic accommodations, for students who experience sexual or relationship violence as defined by the University's Sexual Misconduct Policy. To report an incident and/or obtain an academic accommodation, contact the Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct at 301-405-1142. If you wish to speak confidentially, contact Campus Advocates Respond and Educate (CARE) to Stop Violence at 301-741-3555. As 'responsible university employees' faculty are required to report any disclosure of sexual misconduct, i.e., they may not hold such disclosures in confidence. For more information: <http://www.umd.edu/ocrsm/>

Diversity

The University of Maryland values the diversity of its student body. Along with the University, I am committed to providing a classroom atmosphere that encourages the equitable participation of all students regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, or sexual orientation. Potential devaluation of students in the classroom that can occur by reference to demeaning stereotypes of any group and/or overlooking the contributions of a particular group to the topic under discussion is inappropriate.