

STAGECRAFT FUNDAMENTALS

A Guide and Reference for Theatrical Production

Fourth Edition

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

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By Rita Kogler Carver

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SYLLABUS

This syllabus is only an example. It is the culmination of several I have used in the past before writing *Stagecraft Fundamentals 4e*. Hands-on exercises are the best way to augment each day's class. These may be as simple as a "show-and-tell" of various tools, a knot board, or items pertinent to the chapters that have been read. They may be more inclusive, such as building stock scenery, applications of makeup, or anything else you can think of. Feel free to expand or change as you see fit based on your curriculum needs and the background of your students.

A major part of any Stagecraft course is the support of departmental productions. All chapters in the book, as well as exercises during class, should be geared toward making sure the students are learning enough so they are able to take an active role during pre-production and backstage during shows. Depending on the requirements of current productions; assignments, exercises, and projects should all be geared toward this goal.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Design and Stagecraft **3 credits** **W 1:00pm – 4:00pm**

Instructor

Rita K. Carver

E-mail:

In emergency – cell phone:

Course Description

This is only one possible description. Some courses are inclusive of costumes, makeup, etc. The more areas of theater the students are exposed to, the better!

The design and construction of scenery to be used for theatrical performances. Topics may involve design process experiments in class or on paper, building of models or drawing of renderings, construction methods for actual productions, and the study of lighting and other related topics.

Course Objectives

Be sure to list ALL possible objectives as this is one area of the syllabus that the students will look at in-depth and question you on.

- Students list the role of design in the theatrical process.
- Students list the types and functions of set design.
- Students list the types and functions of lighting design.
- Students explain the importance of drawings/renderings and model construction in the theatrical process.
- Students list and define the various lighting and sound instruments and their uses.
- Students design workable set renderings and models for a theatrical production.
- Students design workable lighting plots and sound plots for a theatrical production.
- Students successfully build and the paint the set for a college play production.
- Students successfully hang and focus the lights for a college play production.

Procedures and Assignment Schedule

Customize this as you see fit. The more hands-on assignments the better, however many institutions require written exams as well!

- 2 written exams on course concepts.
- Create a basic floor plan, lighting plot, and/or sketches for a portfolio.
- Doing technical work (building, painting, lighting, prop construction, sound) on the current college play production.
- Participating in in-class exercises and discussions.

Attendance

Most institutions have their own policy on attendance. Make sure you are within those guidelines.

Students are allowed only the equivalent of one week's worth of absences; in this case, one. This policy assumes medical necessity is the cause. Additional absences will reduce your final course grade. Only prolonged infirmity or an approved university required function might be reason for altering this policy. Each tardy will count as a half absence. If you cannot attend class please notify the instructor as soon as possible.

Note: This is largely a hands-on (or practical) class. If you are not in class than you are missing important participation in production based projects for which there is no possible make-up. The grade reduction due to attendance, even to the point of failing the course, is based on that missed work/participation in the course.

Grading:

How you grade each assignment is completely up to you. This is an area that students focus on and will bring up to you again and again. Make sure you are very clear on what is expected and how each individual grade contributes to the final grade. The "grading system" below is different from school to school.

Each student will be graded as follows:

- Class participation in all practical scenic work on department productions, demonstrations and discussions. 30 lab hours are also required for this course. Failing to achieve the 30 hours will result in grade reduction, similar to absences from class. Included in these lab hours is mandatory attendance at the department load-in on Saturday, March 31 and Sunday, April 1 as well as the strike on April 15. This will equal **25%** of your grade.
- 2 Exams. This will equal **25%** of your grade.
- Design Portfolio. The "final exam" consists of your design work on paper as assigned in class. This will be submitted during finals week for review. This will equal **50%** of your grade.

Grading System:

A 93-100 A- 90-92 B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 C 70-76 D 60-69
F 0-59

Class Etiquette:

This is an important area which will hopefully keep a polite and orderly class for you.

Please silence cell phones and any other electronic devices. Please don't pack up to leave until class is dismissed. If you must be late, please enter the theatre quietly. Ask the instructor what we are working on, and immediately go to work.

Academic Dishonesty:

This should be taken directly from the school's student handbook. Or if there is no handbook this information can usually be obtained from whatever "honor code" is used.

Academic dishonesty is considered a violation of the Campus Code of Conduct. Serious incidents may result in dismissal from the College or other disciplinary action. A complete description of the formal academic dishonesty appeal process may be found in the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. The Handbook is distributed to all students, faculty and staff in September of each academic year. Additional copies are available in the Office of Student Services.

Required Textbook:

Title: Stagecraft Fundamentals 4e
Author: Rita K. Carver
Publisher: Focal Press

Class Calendar

Class #1 – Introductions, Syllabus, Shop Orientation. Chapters 1 and 2.
Assign Fairytale for design project.

Class #2 – Chapter 3-5.

Class #3 – Chapter 6.

Class #4 – Chapter 7-8.

Class #5 – Chapter 9. Quiz #1-Theatre Review Due.

Class #6 – Chapter 10.

Class #7 – Chapter 11.

Class #8 – Chapter 12.

Class #9 – Chapters 13.

Class #10 – Chapter 14-15. Quiz #2-Knot Quiz.

Class #11 – Chapter 16.

Class #12 – Chapter 17-18.

Class #13- Chapter 19-20.

Class #14 – Chapter 21. Review for Final Exam.

Class #15 – Final Exam.

PROJECTS

The design project that forms a semester-long learning experience can turn into your final exam if you so choose. It can also be a separate project with an additional project. It all depends on how you structure it.

I love fairy tales! I collect wonderfully illustrated editions. It is one of my weaknesses. With that said, I always use a short fairy tale as the basis for the design project. It is much easier for the students to wrap their heads around, and provides for great imagination and design possibilities. Sometimes assigning a short play has the result of becoming very restricting for young designers. These projects can often turn into fully realized plays.

In the past I have used Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant" and Hans Christian Anderson's "The Match Seller" amongst others. Most of these stories are available for free on the web as they are out of copyright. Both of these stories have such visual image possibilities that they allow for the student's imagination to go wild. Search around for a story that you like, there are so many options. Most are shorter than 4 pages that make them very easy to read for students inundated with reading for other classes. I read the story to the class. Then we talk through the entire design process.

The design project in the syllabus is of course, just an example. You can swap out any or all of these exercises and devised projects of your own very easily. This is the best way you can develop an identity for your own course and for yourself as an instructor.

PROJECT OUTLINE

Design Projects **Instructor: Rita K. Carver**

Everyone must submit the following:

1. **Visual Research for all parts of design.** Color images from books need to be handed in as copies of your research with your final project. Computer printouts and tear sheets from magazines are also acceptable.
2. **Written production concept.** This should explain your approach to the project from a visual point of view, as well as any different time period or location you are choosing. It should also integrate your visual research into concrete ideas for the flow of the play.

In addition, please see below for assignment of individual design areas:

Scenic Designers:

1. **Painted perspective rendering with a sense of lighting.** Rendering must be in scale. Painted to give a sense of lighting. A costumed figure **MUST** be included in the rendering. Black and White Storyboard sketches should be included to see how your scenery changes from scene to scene.
2. **Models** can be substituted for the rendering above if you desire. They must be fully painted but should be in a scale (any accepted scale). Sketch models can be found objects in relative scale used to help visualize the general "building blocks" of the set.
3. **Finished ground plan, section and elevations.**

These can be hand drafted or computer drafted. You **MUST** have a title block in the lower right hand corner and a border around each page of drafting.

- a. **Ground plans:** Top views of your set should show walls, furniture, and major set dressing placement, as well as units in on-stage and off-stage positions (where applicable).
- b. **Section view:** shows a cut through side view of the set showing the major portions of the set.
- c. **Elevations:** Are front face on views of each wall in scale. These can be copied and will be used to make your model or sketch.

Costumes Designers:

1. **Costume renderings.**

Painted renderings (in color) of each character in costume. Fabric swatches are required as well as full notations for any details not shown clearly.

2. **Costume plot.** This should show scene by scene with character listing, costume description, accessories, and any special hair or makeup needed.

Lighting Designers:

1. **Light Plot and Section.** This must be in scale, hand drafted or computer drafted. You **MUST** have a title block in the lower right hand corner and a border around the drafting. There must be a Key to Symbols showing the type of lights you are using. Sections shows a cut through side view of the stage showing your hanging positions and angles for the lighting.

2. **Hook-up** may be done by hand (and legible) or in Excel, Light Write or Vector Works (if you have access to these two programs).

The hookup should have columns for the Channel Number, Hanging Position, Instrument Type and Wattage, Color and Templates, and Purpose.

3. **Magic Sheets** showing the angle of the major color washes and specials for the whole show.

4. **Cue Synopsis.** Columns should include Cue Number, Count, Placement, and Purpose.

CRITIQUE

As with any critique, you simply need to follow the guidelines you have already setup. Make sure you are very clear about what is expected. Set up periodic checks at each point of the design phase: (1) research, (2) concept, (3) rough sketches, etc. Feedback during these initial phases is critical, especially for the first-time designer.

When critiquing these initial phases, make sure to point out all the good ideas and reinforce that there are no bad ideas. The implementation, further into the process, is where these choices will succeed or fail. With that in mind, the more latitude students are given early on in the process will pay off later on. Let their imaginations run wild, or at least as wild as they can!

That said, an instructor needs to be sensitive to the fact that open, public analysis of one's work is a painful process; not just for beginners, but for nearly everyone. Clearly, some ground rules are essential; both for those giving and receiving feedback:

Your critique must remain positive and constructive. It is also important for the student to know when something might be problematic. The more specific you are, the better for the student.

No critique should ever be personal! This is the same for theatre reviews. Students making comments should be reminded that their turn is coming. Critique does not only mean pointing out problems. It also means highlighting good work!

Critique based on the intentions of the designer. It is not helpful for critique to proceed along the lines of how YOU would do it. It's not your design that is being critiqued. You need to explore how a student could have better accomplished what they were after.

Questions can be as revealing as observations. This is the time for a guided discovery by the student. By asking the right questions about the design, you will learn more about the student's thought process.

One person's critique can be a lesson for the entire class. Always remember that the purpose behind open critiques is not just to instruct the student being critiqued, but it is for the entire class to learn the same lessons. Do not hesitate to pause a critique session to give a mini-lecture on a specific point for the benefit of everyone in the room.

The student must take notes. When a student receives criticism, they are often nervous. This can skew their memory of the critique. Note taking, either during or after the critique, keeps the student's focus a bit more objective during the critique and they will also have something tangible and more reliable to refer to in the days after. It is also possible for you, as the instructor, to prepare a critique sheet to hand out to each student at the class following the critique, or via email.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of any creative work can seem arbitrary to a student. It is always important that a student understands how they are being evaluated. It is important that the student understand that most of their grade comes from the design process as outlined in the text as well as from class discussions. Their grade also comes from how they respond to early critiques of their process. Aesthetic design choices are the most difficult to grade, and some say should not be graded at all. It is easy, by comparison, to grade whether the design can be built, whether it fulfills the needs of the script, etc.

Any evaluation form that you are comfortable with can be adjusted to work for this class. The most important things to watch for are:

1. Following the guidelines of assignment.
2. Aesthetic choices based on research.
3. Technical requirements and solutions.
4. Creativity/originality of approach to subject.
5. Delivery – on time or not.

EXAM

The concept behind testing is not to test a student on everything you have covered in class, but to write the exam so that it is a good cross section of the knowledge with references to additional information. All questions on an exam should be determined by the fundamental knowledge required by the class curriculum.

There is certainly plenty of material contained in the pages of the text to help you devise your own exam questions directly. The study words at the end of each chapter are a good place to start. They are in bold and the chapter's color in their first use with the chapter and are the basis for the glossary. It is always good to combine two or three words into one question so that the student can relate what they have learned, not just recite it back directly.

SAMPLE EXAMS

How To Write a Theatre Review

Instructor: Rita K. Carver

When writing a theatre review, you must remember three main components: the acting, the technical, and the overall experience.

The acting aspect is probably most important. It is a good idea to read the play before you go see it so that you are familiar with the script ahead of time. Make sure you know all of the characters' names and the actors who are playing them; a playbill is an ideal place in which to find all this information. Ask yourself if the actors understand what they are saying. How familiar are they with the script? Do they really know what the play is all about? Also look to see if each actor is connecting well with his/her character. (However, keep in mind that everyone has a very unique style of acting and maybe even comment on that.) How well are they giving and taking focus? Is there any one person who sticks out in your head as "hogging" all the attention? (Make sure that you comment on that.)

The second aspect to look at is the technical. This includes everything from the lights and sound to the costumes and makeup. Someone once said that if the technical aspect of the performance becomes noticeable, then it was not effective. Keep in mind that the lights, sound, makeup, etc. are there to enhance the performance, not to be the main focus. (However, as the reviewer, you should be looking for it.) For instance, the lights should be prospective to the time of day, the season and so on. Also, it should not cast any shadows on the actors' faces. The sound is usually just your opinion because everyone likes different kinds of music; however, it should accent the style and format of the play. If they are using microphones, look for the quality of sound coming from that. The costumes should portray the time period and part of each character's personality. The makeup should do the same, but as well, keep a look out for shadows and lines on the face. All these things are very important to the performance of the show.

The overall experience of the theater will give the reader a feel of exactly how well you enjoyed this play. Include ticket prices here and your opinion of the worthiness of that cost. Also, keep in mind the quality of the theater and its facilities. The audience is also a major part of your theatre experience. Was the audience big? Were they perceptive and interactive? Remember, you shouldn't make this the main point, but it would be good to comment on it. This entire portion should convey your opinion and feeling of how the show went.

So in conclusion, remember the acting, the technical, and the overall view, and you'll have written a successful theatre review. Oh, and one more thing: Don't ever lie so as not to hurt someone's feelings. Constructive criticism will only do someone good. Keep all these things in mind when writing your review and it will be great. Have fun!

Knot Quiz

Instructor: Rita K. Carver

Students will each need a piece of black tie-line approximately 2' long

Name: _____

Please answer each question as fully, and with as much detail, as possible. Feel free to ask any questions.

Please explain the main use(s) of the following:

1. **Coiling:** _____

2. **Belaying:** _____

3. **Clove Hitch:** _____

4. **Overhand Knot:** _____

Please identify the following knots:



5. _____



6. _____



7. _____



8. _____

Answer True or False to the following statements:

9. **Belaying is used to hold two pieces of pipe together.** _____

10. **A square knot can sometimes become too tight to easily undo.** _____

11. **A figure eight knot is easy to undo no matter how tight the knot was tied.** _____

12. **Tying a knot in a piece of rope strengthens the rope.** _____

Tie examples of the following knots in the black tie-line you were given, AND list their primary uses below:

13. **Figure Eight:** _____

14. **Bowline:** _____

15. **Square Knot:** _____

Answer the following as completely a possible, using examples (feel free to use additional paper if needed):

16. **Why do we now use primarily synthetic ropes in the theatre, instead of using actual hemp ropes?**

17. Learning how to tie knots for the theatre is very important. Explain why.

18. The knots we use in the theatre are all based on a completely unrelated industry. Explain what this industry is, and why their use of knots was critical to them.

EXTRA CREDIT

10 extra points will be awarded toward your final grade for tying a MONKEY'S FIST. Ask for another piece of black tie-line.

Final Exam
Instructor: Rita K. Carver

Name:

This is your final exam and is a MAJOR part of your overall grade. Please take your time, and feel free to ask me any questions if you are unsure about any part of the exam. Any questions that require a written answer should be answered as fully as you can. The last question should be considered an essay – and as such – should contain as much detail as possible.

Define the following theatre terms:

1. Centerline: _____

2. Apron: _____

3. Rake: _____

4. Playing Area: _____

5. Orchestra Pit: _____

6. Plaster Line: _____

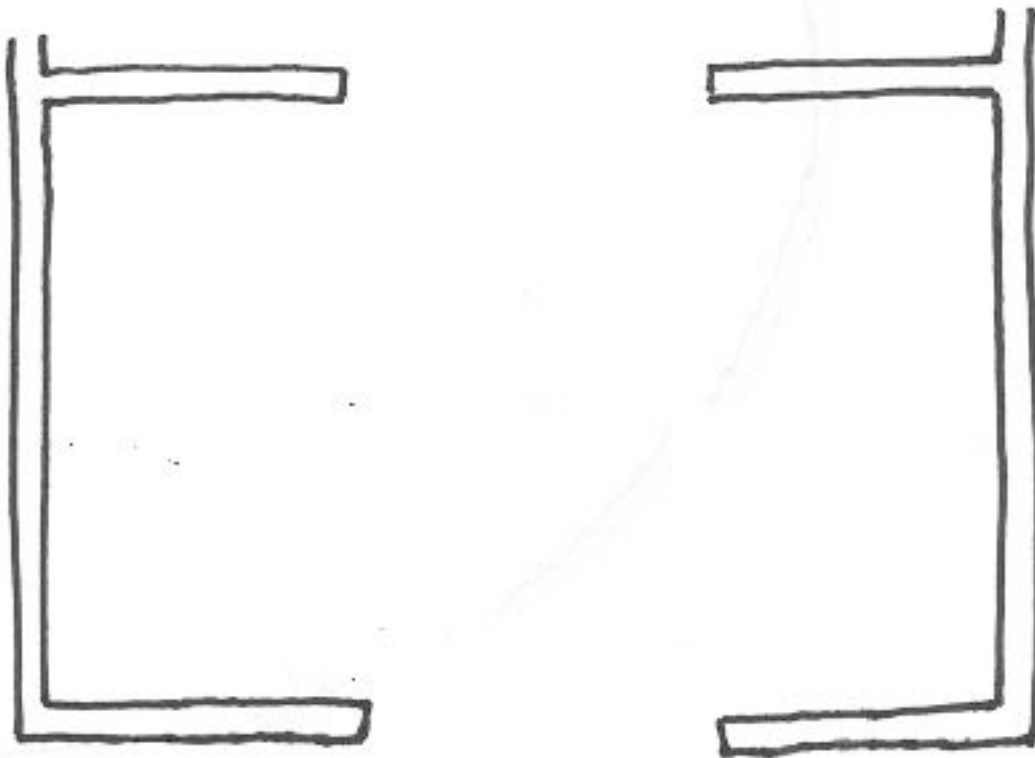
7. Auditorium: _____

8. Border: _____

9. Leg: _____

Below is a diagram of a theatre. Please identify the following parts of the theatre by placing the number of the following definitions in the diagram:

- 10. Upstage (US)
- 11. Downstage (DS)
- 12. Stage Left (SL)
- 13. Stage Right (SR)



14. Where do our stage directions US, DS, SL and SR originate from and how were they determined:

Please elaborate, based on what you've learned, on the following topics in terms of personal safety in the scene shop:

15. Footwear: _____

16. Clothing: _____

17. Hair: _____

18. Jewelry: _____

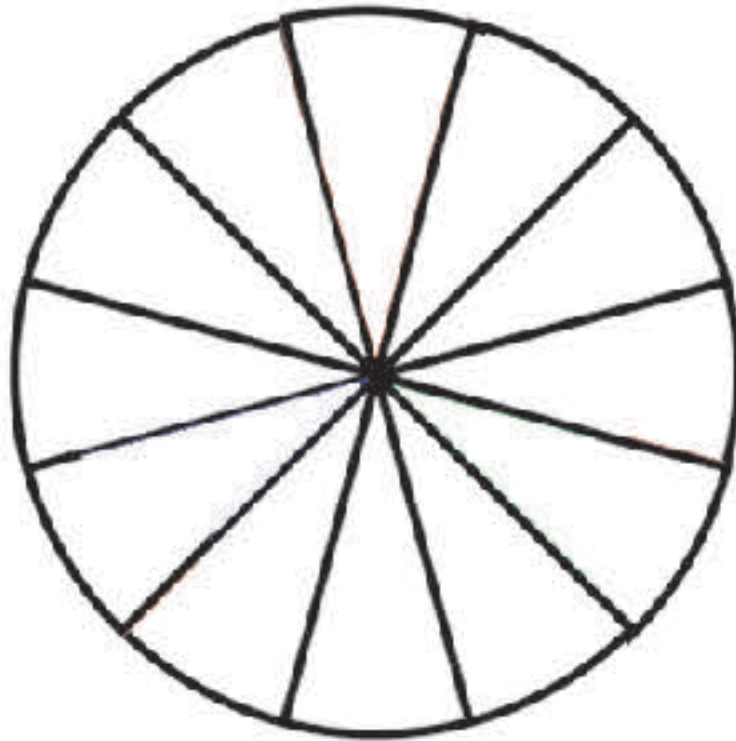
Name the 3 parts or components that must be addressed when writing a theater review:

19. _____

20. _____

21. _____

22. – 27. There are three primary colors and three secondary colors. Please fill in the names of the six colors on the wheel below, making sure they are in the right order:



Match the definitions on the left with the terms on the right. Write the letter of the term on the line preceding the correct definition:

- | | | |
|----------|------------------------|------------------|
| 28. ____ | Opposite colors | a. intensity |
| 29. ____ | Color + white | b. complementary |
| 30. ____ | Brightness or dullness | c. shade |
| 31. ____ | Color + grey | d. tone |
| 32. ____ | Another word for color | e. value |
| 33. ____ | Color +black | f. tint |
| 34. ____ | Lightness or darkness | g. hue |

Please identify the following lighting fixtures:

35.



36.



37.



Please identify the following hand tools:



38. _____ 39. _____



40. _____ 41. _____

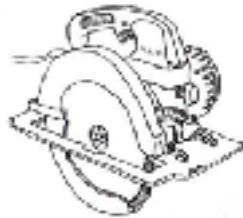


42. _____ 42. _____



43. _____

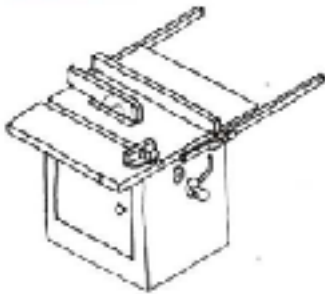
Please identify the following power tools:



44. _____

45. _____

Please identify the following stationary power tools:



46. _____

47. _____

In what order should the following makeup be applied? Please write the letters, in the correct order, on the lines to the left.:

48. _____

a. Lips

49. _____

b. Foundation

50. _____

c. Cheeks

51. _____

d. Prosthetics

52. _____

e. Jowls

53. _____

f. Powder

54. _____

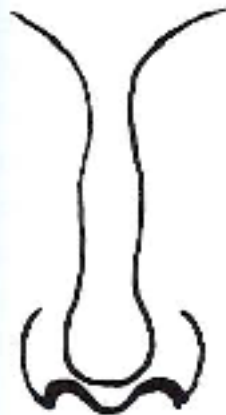
g. Eyes

55. _____

h. Nose

Please illustrate on the following nose outlines to show how makeup could be used to create (A)a broken nose, (B)a flattened nose, (C)a bulbous nose, and (D)a straight nose:

56.



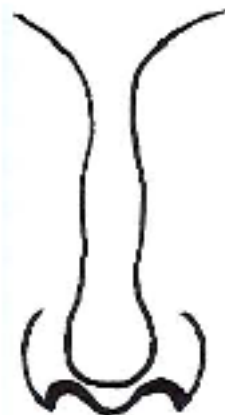
A

57.



B

58.



C

59.

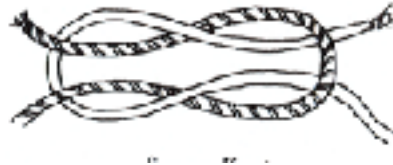


D

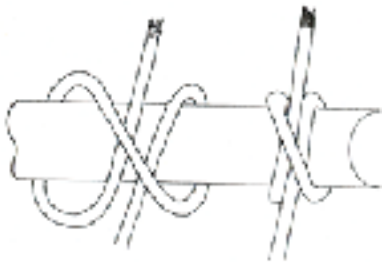
Please identify the following knots AND explain what the use is for each knot:



60. _____
61. _____



62. _____
63. _____



64. _____
65. _____



66. _____
67. _____



68. _____
69. _____



70. _____
71. _____

