# Theatre 295 – Digital Media Design for Performance

Spring 2020 – Monday, Wednesday, 2:00-4:00pm – Digital Arts Lab, Roberts Theatre, and other rooms TBA

<u>INSTRUCTOR:</u>
Justin Thomas
BAC: 267A
(641)269-3126
thomasjm@grinnell.edu
Office Hours: Mon. 9-10am, Wed. 4-5pm, by appointment

<u>Required Texts:</u>
*The Dramatic Imagination*, Robert Edmund Jones
*Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theatre, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*, Steve Dixon
*Show Networks and Control Systems*, John Huntington
*Performance and Technology: Practices of Virtual Embodiment and Interactivity*, ed. Susan Broadhurst and J. Machon
*DSLR Cinema*, Kurt Lancaster
Other Short Readings and Plays Provided by Professor

## Class Description:

Over the past twenty years we have witnessed exponential growth in digital media technologies as well as the availability and accessibility of those technologies. As a result, there has been an explosion of digital media in performance and an increasing diversity of performance genres utilizing/including projected imagery in theatre, electronic music, live video, multi-continent performances, video games, architectural projection mapping, interactive art installations, et cetera.

This course will provide a survey of the ever-increasing integration of digital technology across a variety of performance genres. We will examine the proliferation of digital technology over the past two decades, and the effect it has had on performance content and style.

At the same time students explore the history and theories of digital performance, the primary emphasis of this course will be the application of digital performance technology in critical and creative work. Students will complete a series of assignments to build knowledge and abilities with digital hardware and software while, at the same time, enhancing their creative sensibilities to design original aural, visual, and interactive artistic works for live performance.

## Course Objectives:

1. Develop solid foundation of digital media hardware and software in relation to performance
2. Introduce students to the historical and theoretical frameworks of multimedia performance, providing critical lenses through which to analyze multimedia performance
3. Encourage critical analysis and active discussion of design elements and visual/aural concepts as they relate to class projects and productions
4. Expand creative and imaginative sensibilities through a series of design related exercises.
5. Practice diverse approaches to visual research, conceptual generation and idea development, design presentation techniques, and the collaborative process of professional designers.

## Class Assignments:

### Still Image Story Project:

For this project, each student will be assigned a still image (painting or photograph) and then create a 30-second sound scape that "tells" the story of the image. This project will introduce students to narrative and contextual roles of sound in performance, the basics of editing and layering sound, and techniques for recording audio.

### Sound Distribution Project:

In this project, students will familiarize themselves with digital and analog audio technologies used in performance. Small groups of students will be provided with three performance scenarios and accompanying sound designs. Each group must design and implement sound distribution systems that deliver the audio and serve the intent of the sound designs.

### Sound Design Project:

For this project, students will create, students will create, cue, and provide implementation documents for a one-act play. This individual project will provide students the opportunity to exercise their creative and critical sensibilities, engage a sound designer's process from "page to stage," build audio sequences using sound editors and cueing software, and create all accompanying paperwork for implementation in Flanagan Theatre.

### ~~Visual Research Project:~~

~~The visual research project introduces students to visual dramaturgy. Students will be assigned one of two plays and gather research on the play that visually demonstrates responses to the play in three areas: 1) Given circumstances, 2) Visual Style, and 3)~~

~~Emotional Arc. Students will consolidate and organize their research into short presentations to the class of no longer than 5 minutes.~~

<span style="color:red">**Discussion Board Posts:**

Due to the asynchronous distance-learning portion of the course, each student will make discussion board posts responding to the weekly readings. Specific instructions will be provided weekly.</span>

**Projection Design Project:**

For this project, students will work with one of a choice of play texts for a period of five weeks and create a series of projection designs that might be used in performance. This series of projection designs will start with a traditional "slide show" that utilizes projected images as scenery for the 20 scenes in the play. The second design will include image manipulation and the addition of performance cueing software (QLab/Isadora) in combination with an assigned visual style for the production. The final projection design will examine projections as a character element and introduce students to projection mapping technology to support characters' thoughts and actions.

**Video Project:**

This two-part project will require students to exercise techniques learned during class laboratories to create and edit their own videos for performance. Each student will be assigned a character monologue and will then be asked to create an accompanying video design for the performance of his/her/their monologue. The project is broken into two parts, the first being the filming, shooting, and gathering of original materials. The second part of the project will require students to combine and edit their video shorts and stills into a complete video for performance.

**Final Project:**

For the final project, students will be assigned to small groups and will create 10-minute performances using skills acquired and honed during the course laboratories and projects. Each group will pick an area of digital media on which to focus (sound, projection, interactivity, etc.), even though each project will likely have multi-media approaches. Additionally, each group will pick a performance venue (may be traditional theatre, athletic performance venue, or a non-traditional, site-specific location) and a performance genre (political speech, scripted play, devised performance, dance, interactive installation, etc.) to explore. Groups will present their performances during final exam week.

## GRADING:  POINT BREAKDOWN:

| | | | Grading Scale: | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participation: | 150 points | | 744-800 | = A |
| Still Image Story: | 50 points | | 720-743 | = A- |
| Sound Distribution: | 50 points | | 704-719 | = B+ |
| Sound Design Project: | 100 points | | 664-703 | = B |
| Discussion Posts: | 100 points | | 640-663 | = B- |
| Projection Project: | 200 points | | 624-639 | = C+ |
| Video Project: | 150 points | | 560-623 | = C |
| | | | 500-559 | = D |
| Total: | 800 points | | 499- 0 | = F |

## ~~LATE COURSEWORK WILL BE ACCEPTED ONLY FOR A PENALTY OF 50 POINTS PER DAY.~~

## LATE DISTANCE LEARNING COURSEWORK:
Late Coursework will be accepted. After one week, late work will be accepted for a 25% deduction.

## ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION:
Attendance and participation are crucial to collaborative art and performance. Therefore, we will model the highest level of professionalism in this course.  You will be allowed two absences from class if you notify the instructor 24-hours in advance of your absence.  You may choose how you use these absences, whether for illness, injury, or a needed personal day, but you must notify the instructor before missing class.  Any subsequent absence after your two personal days will inquire a 5% penalty to your overall course grade.

As we often say in the performance world, "10-minutes early is one time."  This allows for us to begin work immediately during our scheduled hours.  In return, class will never run beyond scheduled hours.  We will honor scheduled class time by beginning and ending on time.  Tardiness will not be accepted.  After two late arrivals, each subsequent late arrival will count as a class absence.

## ACCOMODATIONS:
Grinnell College and this instructor make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator of Disability Resources located on the 3rd floor of Goodnow Hall (x3702) identifying any special needs. Students should then notify the instructor within the first few days of classes.

It is also the policy of the instructor that students who wish to observe religious holidays should do so.  Students seeking accommodations for special religious

observances should notify the instructor within the first few days of classes in an effort to create a reasonable schedule for the student to make-up missed class time and assignments.  Accommodations for religious observance will not be granted if notification occurs after the first two weeks of classes.

The instructor also makes accommodations for documented illness and/or personal injury.  Should a student incur an injury or illness, documentation must be submitted to the professor upon the student's return to class.  Students must also make every effort to inform the instructor of illness or injury prior to missing class.

## COURSE MATERIALS:

### Required:
External Hard Drive – Minimum of 500GB

Instructor recommends a 1TB "My Passport Ultra Portable External Hard Drive" – available on Amazon for under $60.

### Recommended:
A second external hard drive.
SD Card of at least 32 GB
Sketch Book
Pencils
Digital Camera with Video Capability