

THEA380: Sound Designer Practicum

Ball State University, Department of Theatre & Dance

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Office Hours: By Appointment.

Class Location: We will either meet in my office or anywhere on campus for your weekly one-on-one. In addition, we will meet as a group once a week for Sound Forum.

Course Times: Sound Forum is Wednesdays from 3pm-3:50pm in AR103. Weekly check-ins are as scheduled with Brandon.

This is the syllabus you will use to complete your Department of Theatre and Dance (DOTD) production assignment as a Sound Designer.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Attend, engage in, and take notes of, design meetings.
2. Process the research and paperwork required to make a meaningful contribution to the overall design process of a show, especially through design presentations.
3. Understand Director's concept and fulfill their sound goals to the best extent possible.
4. Collaborate with all members of the creative team, the actors, and the shops, to create an artistically cohesive show on time and within budget.
5. Behave in a professional manner by meeting deadlines, addressing problems as they arise, and treating everyone involved with respect.
6. Source or build sound for a show (pull, create, record, edit, and etc).
7. Learn all the standard procedures for executing a sound design plan – demos, note-processing, paperwork, tech, and tech paperwork.
8. Attend weekly sound forum to discuss show assignments and learn from peers. Check the class calendar on Canvas to see what that week's topic is and what you need to prepare.

GRADING:

200 Max Points

- Prelim Paperwork – 50 points
- Final Paperwork – 50 points
- Final Design – 50 points
- Collaboration – 20 points
- Professionalism – 30 points

GRADING SCALE:

180 and above	A
179	A-
178	B+
157-177	B
156	B-
155	C+
134-154	C
133	C
132	D+
111-131	D
110	D-
Below 110	F

TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS GENERAL INFO

PRELIM DESIGN PAPERWORK: You will be asked to create a preliminary version of paperwork expected of a professional sound designer for a production. This includes a design statement, sound cue sheet, speaker plot, and a section view if applicable to your production. **This must be turned in by the due date listed in your production's calendar.**

You will base this paperwork off of the design meetings you have with your director and fellow design team members. This is by no means meant to be final, but to get on paper, the design that's in your imagination in a tangible form for you to share with your mentor as well as peers.

FINAL DESIGN PAPERWORK: You will continue to tweak your design paperwork based off feedback from your mentor as well as from your director, and fellow design team members. **This must be turned in by the due date listed in your production's calendar.**

The paperwork must be in a presentational and professional format that your mentor, audio engineer, and fellow designers would be able to read it and understand what your vision of the production is as well as where you would like to place speakers, what gear you need, and etc.

FINAL DESIGN: You will be evaluated on how your final design ended up after opening night. Was your vision from the beginning of the design process what it ended up being? Was it a cohesive sound design that supported the story you were trying to tell as well as the director's vision?

COLLABORATION: You will be evaluated for how well you communicate and work together with other members of the production including, but not limited to the director, other designers, crew members, and stage management. How well did you work with these members to accomplish the director's vision. How were you able to communicate your design with the other members and make sure your vision is woven into their designs as well.

PROFESSIONALISM: You will be evaluated on how well you are able to conduct yourself in a manner that is professional and respectful to other members of the production including, but not limited to the director, other designers, crew member, stage management, as well as yours and other mentors.

BELOW ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ASSIGNMENT. PLEASE FILL-IN DUE DATES TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. SEE MENTOR FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Understand that your mentor will be meeting with you weekly to assist you in the understanding of A.) Each step, and B.) the specific requirements based on the unique needs of your show.

EVERYTHING IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. ALL CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED.

DESIGN PROCESS: DEVELOPMENT PHASE

Before the Director's/Choreographer's Concept Meeting:

- Read play/musical/choreographer's concept (if available); mark-up any notes if necessary.
 - Understand the story, its plot, characters, themes, and etc.
 - Write down any initial ideas you may have about the sound design.
- Conduct any research necessary to help you understand the dramatic piece better.

Design Meeting #1 (Director/Choreographer's Concept): _____

- Be prepared to listen, take notes, and ask questions.
- Listen to the director/choreographer's vision and goal for the production.
- Write down any ideas you may have about how sound design can help support that vision.
- Possibly share any initial ideas you may have.

Post Design Meeting #1:

- Take the ideas, concept, and notes you got from the first design meeting and go through the script and create a first pass at a sound cue sheet. Look for every possibility sound can help tell the story, practical sounds, soundscapes, musical underscoring, scene transitions, and etc.
- Research any necessary information to help you develop and formulate a design idea.
- Start to develop a design statement. How can your sound design support the director's concept?
- Email both the sound cue sheet and design statement to your director and schedule a one-on-one with them.

One-on-One with Director:

- Schedule before the second design meeting.
- Share sound cue sheet with director before this meeting. Give them enough time to go through it.
- In this meeting go through the script with the sound cue sheet and talk about specific moments scene by scene and see if what you imagined matches up with what the director is thinking about for the sound design for the production.
- Take any notes as necessary in this meeting.

One-on-One with Music Director (if it's a musical):

- Schedule before the second design meeting.
- Pit Layout?
- Are we doing traditional speakers for band foldback, or do we want to use Avioms?
- When is the band loading in?
- Bass Player Rig? DI, Mic, or.....?
- How many pieces are in the drum kit?
- Do you have a click track?

- Do you want to control the click?
- Are you using tracks?
- Do you want to control the tracks?

Before Design Meeting #2:

- Research any information needed based off conversation with director in your one-on-one.
- Revise sound cue sheet based off feedback from director in one-on-one.
- If it's a play:
 - Create a sound demo that you feel captures the overall aesthetic of the director's concept. Use Sound Cue Sheet for reference. Mentor will give feedback.
 - Share demo with director after feedback from mentor.
 - Revise demo based off feedback from director.
 - See mentor for advice and feedback on this.
- Continue to flesh out a design statement that captures what you think the story is about, what the director's concept is and how your sound design will support it.
- Prepare any research and sound demos (if applicable) into a slide presentation according to requirements in a separate document.

Design Meeting #2: _____

- Present design statement, research and sound demo (if applicable) with fellow design team members and director.
- If it's a musical discuss anything about the band that may be relevant to the rest of the production team.
- Be thorough but concise as many departments must present at this meeting.
- Gather feedback, ask questions.
- Take any notes as necessary.

After Design Meeting #2

- Upload presentation, design statement, and sound demo (if applicable) to Virtual Callboard and the Sound Area Folder in One Drive.
- Speaker Plot and Section View can be started to help determine designs.

Director Meeting (TBD): This is a meeting that will happen ASAP after DM#2 ONLY if research largely misses the mark.

Before Design Meeting #3:

- Create a preliminary speaker plot and section view. Your mentor will advise.
- For musicals, work on a mic plan. Speak with the costume designer & hair & make-up to determine where microphones can be placed on actors.
- For plays, create more sound demos as needed for scenes or other plot moments based on your sound cue sheet to help open more discussion with the director.
- Create or revise old presentation to share speaker plot, section view, and any new design elements for any feedback from design team.

Design Meeting #3: _____

- Present presentation with design team members. Don't linger on any material already discussed but share anything about your design that may have changed.
- Mainly focus on sharing design statement, speaker plot, and section view.

- Be thorough but concise as many departments must present at this meeting.
- If a musical, share what you discussed with costumes, hair & makeup with director your mic plan and where you think mics will live on actors.
- Gather feedback, ask questions.
- Take any notes as necessary.

After Design Meeting #3:

- Upload speaker plot, section view, gear list, console I/O to Virtual Callboard and Sound Area Folder.
- If a musical upload a mic plan into Virtual Callboard and Sound Area Folder.
- Upload presentation to Virtual Callboard and Sound Area Folder.
- Get any feedback from mentor.

Director Meeting (TBD): This is a meeting that will happen ASAP after DM#3 ONLY if largely missing the mark.

Before Design Meeting #4 (FINAL DESIGNS):

- Adjust Sound Cue Sheet as needed based off conversations with director.
- Adjust speaker plot, section view, gear list, and console I/O as needed.
- Adjust Design Statement as needed.
- Create or revise presentation for final designs.

Design Meeting #4 (FINAL DESIGNS): _____

- Present Final Design Presentations. Share your final design statement, any necessary research to support your design, speaker plot, section view, mic plan, gear list, and console I/O.
- Be thorough but concise as many departments must present at this meeting.
- Gather feedback, ask questions.
- Take notes as necessary.

After Design Meeting #4:

- Upload final design presentation, design statement, speaker plot, section view, gear list, and console I/O to Virtual Callboard and Sound Area Folder.
- Get any feedback from mentor.

Director Meeting (TBD): This is a meeting that will happen ASAP after DM#4 ONLY if any final designs need more development.

DESIGN PROCESS: PRODUCTION PHASE

Before First Rehearsal:

- Make sure all final versions of design statement, cue sheet, speaker plot, and section view are uploaded into OneDrive Sound Area Folder and in Virtual Callboard.
- Share this paperwork with your audio engineer and with the lighting and sound shop supervisor.
- Prepare for your designer presentation at first rehearsal. It's a revised version of your final design presentation, but for actors.
- Prepare any rehearsal sound effects or music in a rehearsal QLab for use in rehearsals.

1st Rehearsal (or whenever Director determines): _____

- Attend rehearsal, present design to company.
- Share design statement, and any sound demos you think the cast may find cool, but also best represent your design to the cast.
- Ignore any talk about your system design, and mainly speak about how your sound design will support the director's vision with any research.
- Stay for the 1st read-through of the play (if that is happening in that rehearsal).

Final Sound Paperwork Deadline: _____

- Final design statement that clearly states your vision for the production.
- A revised sound cue sheet that lays out all your sound cues in the show for both the director and stage management.
- Final versions of speaker plot and section view that will help the shop understand where you want speakers and how to focus them for your production.
- If a musical, schedule a one-on-one with your A1/Audio Engineer and discuss the show.
 - Share more in depth about your system design.
 - How you want mics on actors and the pit.
 - What your overall vision of the mix will be (reinforced, classical, rock concert, etc).
 - Do you want them to make choices with the mixing? Are they open to feedback on the mix? How do you two want to coordinate communication in the tech process.
 - Do they want to program their own scenes, console layout, and DCAs? Or do they want help from you?
- Mentor will advise.

Load-In: _____

- Be around for the load-in process to answer any questions or be an extra set of hands.
- Help hang any additional speakers if needed.
- Help cable and focus any speakers if needed.
- Work with audio engineer to coordinate with scenic, props, and costumes to help hide or load-in any speakers or microphones as needed.
- If it's a musical
 - Continue to communicate with A1 to discuss your aesthetic for the mix and what you want to aim for.
 - Communicate with A1 your mic plan and how you want mic rigs to be built and placed on actors, as well as any information about color of lav, forehead, ear rig, and etc.

Rehearsal Process

- Attend any rehearsals as needed.
- Work on creating all your sound cues in your sound cue sheet.
- Share sound cues with director for feedback. Revise them as needed.
- Work on putting together a QLab session that contains your sound cues. It should match your sound cue sheet.
- Give a rehearsal QLab for stage management and director to use in rehearsals as needed. Adjust as you create more cues or based on any feedback you get from director during the rehearsal process.

DESIGN PROCESS: TECH/DRESS REHEARSALS PHASE

Before Tech Weekend: _____

- Attend designer run (1 week before tech).
- Attend Crew View (2 days before tech).

Before Sitzprobe (MUSICAL ONLY)

- Typically held a week before tech.
- Finalize any paperwork that relates to the system design beforehand, speaker plot, section view, console I/O, and gear list to make sure things can be completed on time for Sitz.
- Make sure sound system you've designed is functioning as you intended.
- Make sure all speakers are hung, focused, and cabled properly.
- Line check outputs of the sound system.
- Line check inputs of the sound system.
- Are all the inputs routed to the correct outputs?
- Are the monitors for the cast working as intended?
- Are the pit monitors/Avioms functioning as intended?
- Quiet Time for System Tuning
- Is QLab speaking to the sound system correctly?

Sitzprobe (MUSICAL ONLY): _____

- Focus on getting a preliminary pass at setting actor EQ, dynamics, and gain structure.
- Focus on getting a preliminary pass at setting instrument EQ, dynamics, and gain structure.
- Work on making sure that the actors can hear on stage what they need to hear in their foldback to do the show.
- Work with the pit to make sure they can hear what they need to hear in their monitors to do the show.
- Work with A1 to get a good first pass at a general balanced mix of the band and cast.

Post Sitzprobe (MUSICAL ONLY):

- Copy the general band balance you did to all scenes. That way when you have the band next time you can do more detailed notes for each song.
- Save EQ and dynamics into console library function.
- Backup console file.

Leading into Tech Weekend: _____

- Finish Up Load-In
 - Make sure sound system you've designed is functioning as you intended.
 - Make sure all speakers are hung, focused, and cabled properly.
 - Line check outputs of the sound system.
 - Line check inputs of the sound system.
 - Are all the inputs routed to the correct outputs?
 - Quiet Time for System Tuning
 - Is QLab speaking to the sound system correctly?
 - Have a rough QLab session of the entire should built that you can load into the show computer.
 - Quiet Time for setting rough levels in QLab before tech.
- Process Tech Paperwork (Play)
 - Sound Cue Sheet (share with SM).

- Console I/O (revise if needed)
- Speaker Plot (revise if needed)
- Section View (revise if needed)
- Show Duties Paperwork (if needed, may be done by your audio engineer if you have one).
- Process Tech Paperwork (Musical)
 - Sound Cue Sheet (share with SM).
 - Console I/O (if needed)
 - Speaker Plot (if needed)
 - Section View (if needed)
 - Mic Plan (if needed)
 - Mic Wrangler Cheat Sheet (if needed, may be done by your audio engineer if you have one).
 - Pit Layout
 - Show Duties Paperwork (if needed, may be done by your audio engineer if you have one).
 - RF Placement (if needed, may be done by your audio engineer if you have one).
 - Networking Chart (if needed, may be done by your audio engineer if you have one).
 - Aviom Layout (if needed, may be done by your audio engineer if you have one).

Tech Weekend: _____

- Attend all tech rehearsals.
- Work with fellow design team members to build the show and solve any problems.
- Adjust sound cues in QLab based on actors, other design elements, and feedback from the director.
- For A Play
 - Create new cues as needed.
 - Adjust current cues as needed.
 - Work with your fellow design team members in a professional and courteous manner.
 - Adjust sound system as needed if issues arise.
- For A Musical
 - All the task above for a play as well as below.
 - Work with your A1 to figure out how you want to blend the actors with the band.
 - Work with the actors on stage to make sure they can hear what they need to hear to perform to the best of their ability.
 - Work with the musicians to make sure they can hear what they need to hear to perform to the best of their ability.
 - Handle all actor EQ, dynamics, and gain structure.
 - Revise based on feedback from both the director, and music director.

Dress Rehearsals: _____

- Attend all dress rehearsals.
- Once run starts take your own notes or convey to note-taker.
- Attend all post-rehearsal production meetings, working with all team members to solve problems.

Opening Night: _____

- Celebrate!

During The Run:

- Assist in solving any designer-required problems.

STRIKE:

- Help Audio Engineer as needed with strike for the show.
- Assist with taking down any speakers, cables, microphones, and etc that may be in the air or within the scenic design.
- Make sure that the gear is stored and put back into its proper spaces.

Post-Mortem With Mentor: _____

- How did you do during the process?
- What were some take aways from the process?
- What could you improve on?
- What did you do well?