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DRAM 560.01: Graduate Sound Design

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Drama 361/560

Instructor	Malcolm Lowe	Phone	406-549-3623 or 406-880-6414
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Office Hours	9:30 – 11:00 M/W or by appointment	Sound Lab Assistant	Dan Hartman 240-3649

Required Texts:

The Sound Reinforcement Handbook by Gary Davis and Ralph Jones. Hal Leonard Publishing 1989.
Sound and Music for the Theatre 2nd ed. By Deena Kaye and James LeBrecht. Focal Press, 2000.
“The Sand Storm: Stories From the Iraqi Front” by Sean Huze – Copy/PDF file
“The Voice of the Prairie” by John Olive. Samuel French 1989 or approved script

Description:

This course will prepare students in the fundamentals of analysis, design and operation of all aspects of sound in a live theater production.

Goals:

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the creative process as it applies to theater sound. Students will be challenged to cultivate an aural awareness of their environment and to analyze sound for its emotional impact. Class discussions and daily exercises will focus on listening observations and how these ideas apply to the stage.

Students will learn to analyze a script for audio needs, create a sound plot, diagram systems, and utilize audio equipment to deliver sound to the stage.

The technique of a sound design artist is rooted in their knowledge of audio equipment and their facility with it. Projects and the text will focus on developing a technical understanding of the equipment required to effectively make audio ideas part of a theater production. Assignments and lectures will cover the general function of each type of equipment, diagrams, troubleshooting, acoustics, and technical problem solving.

Projects and Requirements:

Project 1 – Sandstorm: Choose “theme” music for assigned characters. Plot sound effects and transitional cues in and out of assigned segments. Bring three options of recorded music for each character theme. Be prepared to discuss entire work. Due Sept 14. 50 points.

Project 2 – Record 5 minutes of a talk show, televangelist, or news report and cut and paste it to say something different. Project should be done using reel to reel tape and manual splicing techniques. Final length should be 1 to 2 minutes. Original and spliced tape will be played in class. Due Oct 10. 75 points.

Project 3 – “Voice of the Prairie” sound plot and diagram. Part 1: Analyze script for style and musical content, establish cue plot with at least 5 specific music selections notated, recorded to CD and turned in with plot. Part 2: Diagram of sound system including console routing, microphone placement, processors, amps, and speakers. Part one due Oct 3. Part 2 due Nov 16. Each part 75 points.

Project 4 – Create complete sound scene including scripted dialog, overlapping EFX, environmental factors and emotional content using Pro tools. Eg: A conversation in a bar, Osama bin Laden’s jail cell, The Mad Hatters bedtime. Scenes should be discussed and approved by instructor before students begin work. Final length should be 60 to 120 seconds. Due at final exam. 150 points

Critiques -- Critiques should contain 300-500 words. They should discuss the role of sound in the production, including analysis of how sound served the overall concept, technical challenges, designer vs. operator influence, specific examples should be given to support arguments as to the overall effectiveness of the design. No discussion of plot, character, or actors’ performances should be included. Each critique is worth 30 points.

Examination #1 – This test will cover material presented in the text and in class. It will focus primarily on terms and definitions.

Examination #2 – This test will cover terms, definitions, equipment functions, processes, and concepts presented throughout the term.

Weekly listening assignments – each week an audio journal, environmental recording, or musical selection exercise will be given. These will be due Monday of each week. Each entry is worth 15 points.

Attendance/Daily reading – Students will be expected to come to every class. They are expected to have read assigned texts and participate in discussions. Each day participating is 10 points.

Cell phones – If a student’s cell phone rings in class they will be docked 5 attendance points; If they answer it they will be asked to remove themselves from the class and will receive no points for attendance.

Writing ability – All written assignments will be graded on correct use of academic English as well as content.

Late projects/papers – Assignments turned in late will lose 5% of their point value for each class day missed. No projects or papers will be accepted after the day of the final.

Extra Credit – Extra credit is encouraged by the professor. Student must receive the instructor’s approval before starting a project that is to be used for extra credit.

Grades will be A to F derived from percentages of total points.

Grading	Points	Percent	Grade
Attendance	290	90-100%	A
Listening journals	195	80-89%	B
3 Critiques@30 ea	90	70-79%	C
Examination #1	100	60-69%	D
Examination #2	100	59% and below	F
Project #1	50		
Project #2	75		
Project #3 2@75	150		
<u>Project #5</u>	<u>150</u>		
Total Points	1200		