



Costume Design 1 | ARTT B255-001

Fall 2026 | 1 Unit

Tuesdays, 1:10 – 4:00 pm

Rockefeller Hall, Theatre Studio

Katherine Fritz: kfritz1@brynmawr.edu

Course Description: This is an entry-level course in the study and practice of costume design for the theatre. Students will explore the role of the designer within the larger context of the theatrical environment, analyze ideas as they are reflected in conception and reading of a play, and examine how these ideas about interpretation and aesthetic can be reflected in production. Students will leave with an understanding of research methods and practices, sketching and rendering techniques, and execution of a costume design from both aesthetic and practical standpoints. We will also emphasize the role of collaboration and communication in the design process.

This isn't a class where we make costumes. (Those are awesome too! But this is a bring-your-art-supplies class, not a needle and thread class). It is a class where we think deeply about how costumes tell stories, and how we can better translate those ideas into choices. We will research, sketch, render, and share our ideas with one another throughout the semester. Welcome. It's going to be great.

What I want us to learn (Course Objectives):

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to...

- Articulate the role of designer within the larger context of the theatrical environment;
- Analyze ideas as they are reflected in the conception and reading of a play;
- Reflect their ideas through sketches, swatches, renderings, moodboards, and collage;
- Familiarize themselves with basic research methods and practices;
- Execute a costume design from aesthetic and practical standpoints;
- Understand the role of costume designer as dramaturg;
- Strengthen skills of communication and collaboration;
- Engage in meaningful critique of your own work and the work of your peers.

First Things First.

Ours is a very confusing classroom to find. It is, in fact, **so confusing** that we won't meet here on the first day at all. I'd like us, instead, to gather **in the lobby of Goodhart Hall, outside the Hepburn Teaching Theatre.**



From this gathering place on the first day, we will journey together to our classroom. It is an older room which requires the use of stairs to access. If anyone in the class has any kind of mobility-related challenges, please reach out soon – I want to be sure we can be proactive in finding a solution!

Eventually, we will gather in our classroom. I've included some photos. These are for you to reference later, after we've walked it through together – *again, the first class will gather in the lobby of Goodhart rather than in the classroom.*



Office Hours / Where to Find Me: I am reliably on campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and happy to meet with any student who wishes to discuss their work or their progress in the course. The best and easiest way to find me is to grab some time before class begins, or after class ends. I'm also a working professional designer, and I teach at other institutions, so my schedule can be a bit bonkers. But I always find the time to chat and answer questions – just reach out and we'll find a moment. I'm usually pretty helpful via email, too: kfritz1@brynmawr.edu.

My office: you can usually find me in the Costume Shop. From the lobby, walk towards the staircase, head up the stairs, turn at the whimsical sign as pictured below. Give me a heads-up that you're coming, however – I am sometimes over in costume stock, grabbing lunch, or having a wander-around on this beautiful campus.



Grading and Response Times: All assignments are due at the start of class, unless stated otherwise. I do accept late work, provided you connect with me, ahead of time whenever possible, to explain the challenges preventing you from completing the assignment on time. I also reserve the right to lower your grade due to lateness (I don't have a specific policy about how much – but generally speaking, if it's not in by the time I am grading it, you can expect to lose a few points). I will do my best to complete grading and feedback in a timely manner.

We will be engaging in critique of your work/ your peers' work in class. Lateness is particularly challenging on peer critique days, and impacts the room's ability to learn. Please be in touch with me, ahead of time whenever possible, if a situation arises where you are unable to attend/submit during a critique day.

You are welcome to re-do and re-submit work if you wish me to evaluate it for higher grade, at any point in the semester, for any reason. If you learn something from my feedback, or the feedback of your peers, and you wish to take the extra time to re-submit for a higher grade, I encourage you to do so! Just drop me a line / stay in touch with me if this is something you are interested in exploring.

My expectation is that missed/late assignments are the exception, and not the practice; it can be difficult to catch up once you fall behind.

My hope for you is that you take this course at a time when it can be enough of a priority that you have a meaningful learning experience. It's never my assumption that this class is your top priority, nor should it be – but it is my hope that this course is a part of a well-balanced student experience, one in which you have the time and space required to tackle new skills with enthusiasm.

Things We'll Need to Acquire (in order to succeed!)

Course Textbook:

***The Costume Designer's Handbook*, by Rosemary Ingham and Liz Covey**



Ok. A note about the textbook publishing industry. This is a great book – one that I have used as an invaluable resource for nearly 20 years. Rosemary has since passed away, but Liz is currently working towards a 3rd edition with new collaborators, hypothetically to be published later this year. But... that now means that the publisher has yanked it from circulation and it's a lot harder to find a copy – they're trying to push us towards buying the new edition when it's released.

The book is available in the bookstore. It's also available on Thriftbooks and other secondhand stores. There's also a copy at the library in the stacks, and another copy in the stacks at Swarthmore. I can also leave a personal hard copy in our classroom for the semester. Digital copies: There's a copy on Scribd and another on the Internet Archive, as well as an e-book edition available directly from the publisher. Between all of those sources, I hope that we can find a way for all of us to access this material. Any of the previous editions are fine; there are minimal differences between the first and second editions.

We will also read some other plays as a group. They are uploaded to Moodle:

- *I Dream Before I Take the Stand*, Arlene Hutton, 1995
- *Wine in the Wilderness*, Alice Childress, 1969
- *Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea* by Nathan Alan Davis, 2014
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, William Shakespeare, 1594(ish)

I'll also assign a few essays, articles, and shorter readings. Those will be uploaded to Moodle.

Art Supply List. Please note: You'll need to purchase art supplies in order to take this course. I know that financial considerations are valid and real. Please come talk to me as soon as possible if the cost of these supplies is an obstacle to your success. Think of this as part of your course textbook fee – these are the tools that you need in order to complete assignments, learn, and grow. We'll have some minimal supplies that live in our classroom, but you'll need your own in order to complete your projects.

The ones you'll use most often:

- **Sketchbook** (8.5 x 11 or 9 x 12, please!)
- **Pencils** Please bring a pencil to class. Mechanical is my preference, classic #2 is also fine.
- **Ruler** Regular 12" ruler.
- **Eraser** Please purchase an actual eraser separate from your pencil. (Treat yourself! You'll thank me later). I'm good with kneaded or unkneaded; experiment with both to see which you prefer to use. Kneaded erasers are better for detail work and removing in layers; regular erasers leave eraser grimples but are better for completely erasing your marks.

You will also need:

- **Brushes** You don't have to buy anything too expensive. A small craft detail set is fine.
- **Palate** These are cheap. A plastic plate works, too.
- **Micron Pen / Fine Tip Pen** At least one, black. 0.5 is a good width if you're only buying one.

Depending on some factors, I will give you a choice between these two options:

- **Watercolors:** This is what I typically use to teach this course. If you are a beginner, please purchase a set of decent quality watercolors. I'll put a link on Canvas to a decent yet affordable set. Tube watercolor is generally safer than palate watercolor for beginners.
- **Gouache:** Please purchase these only if I OK it first. This is for the person in the room who might already have a bit of technique under their belt, and who wants to explore a more pigmented, saturated option.

Depending on some factors, I will give you a choice between these two options:

- **Colored Pencils:** These are for you to augment your painted work. Faber-Castells and Caran d'Ache are the really boujie ones. Prismacolors are the next artists-grade tier down and what I advise you purchase, if you can afford it. If you're on a budget, go Crayola over RoseArt.
- **Art Markers:** Please purchase these only if I OK it first. This is for the person in the room who already has technique under their belt, and who wants to explore their work using alcohol-based inks.

Are there other art supplies that could be helpful in your work this semester? Absolutely – and you're welcome to buy more if the mood strikes. But these are the essential ones.

If you're more of a visual person, I've made this whole page into a graphic. Turn the page if this is an easier way to break this all down.

art supply checklist

everyone needs:

sketchbook 8.5 x 11
or 9 x 12



pencil(s)



fine tip ink pen (s)



palette



(a plastic plate
works, too)

brushes



eraser



ruler



NOW, STOP! CHOOSE ONE:

I am a beginner!

Yay! Please buy
Tube Watercolors
and Colored
Pencils.



I am more advanced!

Yay! Please talk to Katherine
before you buy any other
supplies. She is
tentatively OK with gouache
paints and/or alcohol-based
acrylics, but you need to get
your skill level assessed first.

EXTRA STUFF:

NOT REQUIRED, but could be fun to
explore if you have time and money to play)

★ Try different papers
for different projects.

Sketchbook paper is a good
beginning. You can explore other papers
like watercolor paper or Bristol vellum;
you can explore papers in other colors
or sizes.

★ Other art supplies
as you might desire.

Too many options to write
them all down! See where your
eye takes you. Just be sure to check
with me before you go
totally rogue.

★ Try Photoshop.

Bryn Mawr students have access
to the Adobe Creative Suite
for **free**. You can of course
use Canva or other moodboard
software, but challenging
yourself to learn/explore
Photoshop could be really valuable.

Where to shop: The Bookstore will maybe have some of this, but not a lot.

The closest place to buy some of this: Main Line Art Center - 746 Panmure Road · Haverford, PA. It is located about a 20-minute walk from campus. It is not really an art supply store, *but* it has newly started offering supplies in their gallery/gift shop space. I gave them a call: they've got you covered on watercolor, brushes, sketchbooks, and erasers, but *not*, alas, on colored pencils or micron pens.

However, with a SEPTA pass, you can make a day of it. May I recommend?

Artist + Craftsman 307 Market St, Philadelphia. On the Market-Frankford Old City stop. It's great – an independent, employee-owned store. Ask the employees and they will help you find what you need. Better yet, it's around the corner from the Arden – take yourself on a date to see a play then buy your art supplies. Always ask about student discounts and coupons.

Blick 1330 Chestnut St, Philadelphia. On the Broad Street Walnut/Locust stop. It's great – spacious, helpful employees. Better yet, it's around the corner from so many theatres – PTC, the Wilma, and all the touring companies that come through the Kimmel, Academy of Music, etc. Take yourself on a date to see a play then buy your art supplies. Always ask about student discounts and coupons.

Michaels – 57 E City Ave, Bala Cynwyd, PA. For those with access to cars, it's about a 16-minute drive from campus. They'll have all of this. Download the app and bring your student ID; there are always discounts and coupons.

Amazon Well, it's not as ethical as we might hope, but it's cheap and convenient. You can find these things online if buying them in person isn't possible; there are plenty of folks for whom the act of moving around the city is more of an obstacle than others – your personal mileage may vary. But. If you can swing it, if it is possible for you to do this with relative ease – go on a field trip to buy your items in person. The act of walking around the store to look at art supplies is sometimes very psychologically helpful in reminding you, regardless of whether you identify as a beginner or someone more advanced, that you are an artist and deserving of the right tools. The act of browsing the shelves and puttering around a bit has a truly unique ability to spark new discoveries and ideas. Buying online doesn't have the same impact, alas.

Course Policies (All the stuff you should know about how this class will work)

Attendance and Engagement is really important to me. This is a class where we'll do a lot of group discussions and projects in the room together and it's just hard to make that up. I also, secretly, have this hope for you – that when I set the standard of 'my expectation is that you'll come to class,' and hold you to that standard, it is helping you on your journey towards learning how to better 'show up' in our lives moving forward.

That said. We're also all humans. Everyone in this room, myself included, occasionally face challenges and obstacles that make it difficult to come to class. Accidents, injuries, deaths in the family, and other life stuff happen – I understand that completely. And if it's a situation where you're carrying germs into the room, do us all a favor and please stay home!

Here is what I ask of you when it comes to the attendance policy:

- I ask that you communicate with me, ahead of time whenever possible, if you will not be in class.
- I ask that you check the course calendar to make sure you know what was covered, and what the homework is for the next class.
- I ask that you ask a classmate for their notes.

Because this course only meets one day a week, missing more than one class presents a significant barrier towards your learning. You can miss one class without impact to your final grade. Your grade will drop after two absences. Three absences, or 20% of the course, is the threshold for failure.

I say that with the caveat that I do not want you attending class if you are on your deathbed – in situations where life intervenes and you are asking for my humanity, I am willing to be flexible if you can meet me with a concrete, proactive approach to make up the learning goals in another way. (In other words: if you miss three classes without a particularly compelling reason for your absence, that is an automatic failure of the class. If you miss three classes because you are struggling with a situation entirely out of your control, you likely won't receive an A, but I will be open to hearing you out and working with you to find a solution to fill in the gaps in your experience).

A Note On Notes

I've realized, the longer that I've taught this class, that some of you are less practiced in the art of note-taking because it's fallen out of favor in many classrooms. I get it – screens and keyboards moved in, paper and pencils moved out -- so hopefully this doesn't make me sound like I'm one trillion years old, *but*.

Lecture slides can be helpful; I post those when I use them. But it's not often. We use the whiteboard much more often. If something is written on the whiteboard – write it down! We'll often spend class engaged in discussion. If something strikes you as important to write down – write it down! Keep your notes in the same sketchbook, if you choose. It can be valuable to have your archive for the semester in one contained place. *Why do I think this is important?* Among other things, there's a ton of research to suggest that the mechanical act of note-taking is great for our brains, and it strengthens the muscles in our hands and eyes. We are going to use all of those things – hands, eyes, and brains! – in our work as costume designers this semester! So, if it's possible, consider note-taking an extension of the same skills we'll be growing throughout our time together.

A Note On Time: *For every hour of class, expect to spend 2-3 hours in study/projects/homework.*

This is the sort of 'universal advice' given to incoming college students. Our class meets for 2.5 hours each week, which looks like about 5-7.5 hours per week outside of class expected on reading, researching, moodboarding, rendering, etc. If you find yourself spending way more or way less time than this, come find me to discuss what's working and what's not.

A Note On Energy: I know that I tend to arrive to class with a certain amount of bounce, pep, and muppet-like enthusiasm for this subject area. Please know that *I know I'm a lot*. Please know that I never, ever, come to class with the expectation that *your* energy and enthusiasm must mirror my own – but I *do* ask that your investment in your own learning be real and important to you, and that you find your own ways to convey that investment to me throughout the semester. Thoughtful responses to discussion questions, engaged participation, etc need not have my own flavor of 'Muchness' (the world would implode if we were all This Much). Please trust that I am pretty good at finding the ways that your curiosity and enthusiasm shows up in quieter ways; please give me feedback if my Muchness is preventing you from expressing yourself rather than inviting or encouraging you.

Building a Classroom for All of Us to Learn We will spend some time together during our first class to come to community consensus about how to negotiate issues around our shared comfort levels and boundaries. Some of our course material may include discussion of sensitive topics regarding gender, race, sexuality, or other issues – and it is imperative that these discussions be facilitated in ways that allow mutual respect, generosity, and our shared commitment to understanding the experiences of others. We will tackle new and challenging ideas bravely and ferociously ... but always in ways that deeply respect one another's beliefs and perspectives. Please give me feedback if I'm not living up to that promise.

Devices and Technology: Generally, please plan to bring a laptop, tablet, or other similar electronic device to class with you – it will be useful for research and in-class projects. However – I ask that you keep it closed or pointed away while we are engaged in discussion, and that you take notes by hand whenever possible. (Better yet, keep it in your bag until such time as I request you to get it out). Please be sure to silence notifications and remove other distractions while class is in session.

For any students familiar with digital sketching/rendering tools such as Photoshop or Procreate, I'm happy to consider digital tools **on a case-by-case basis** for rendering and sketching assignments. We will also be utilizing our devices to create collages and image boards throughout this course; please reach out if your device is not capable of utilizing, at minimum, Google Slides.

AI and Academic Freedom: Bryn Mawr College prohibits the use of generative AI to complete assignments unless otherwise the instructor has given explicit permission.

I also prohibit the use of generative AI tools in my classroom. For several reasons, but primarily because as the internet becomes less and less useful each semester that I teach, the harder it becomes to use it as a tool to gain valuable information and resources. More and more, I find that what would have been a fairly straightforward research query several years ago is now rife with misinformation, spam, advertisements, and generative AI nonsense. As we all navigate living through the increasing enshittification of the internet, the best solution seems to be intentionally curating extra time and space to work with care and thoughtfulness. If I find evidence that you've *intentionally* used ChatGPT, Nana Banana, MidJourney, etc without express permission from me, I will consider it a violation of the honor code, and will have an in-person conversation with you to determine whether alerting the Honor Board feels like the next appropriate step. (And what's more, I'll judge you for it a bit. College should be a time when you prioritize your learning and growth; don't allow these tools to hinder your growing brain for the sake of a deeply flawed shortcut).

Accessibility

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with documented disabilities. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first speak with Access Services. Students can email accessservices@brynmawr.edu to request an appointment to begin this process. If eligible for accommodations through Access Services, students should share their verification letters with the Director of Access Services and the instructor(s) for this course as soon as possible and discuss any appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. Because some students with a disability may be eligible to record lectures - and it is state law in Pennsylvania that individuals are given advance notice that they may be recorded - professors also need to include the following statement in their syllabus: Any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be found eligible to do so by Access Services and must share this eligibility with me, the instructor. Class members should be aware that this class may be recorded. The name(s) of the individual with permission to record should not be revealed to the rest of the class.

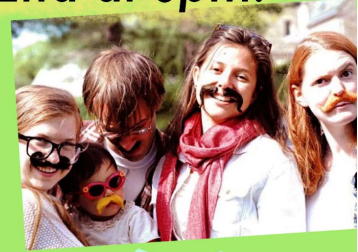
Honor Code/Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement I regard plagiarism as a very serious matter. In this class, plagiarism consists of work taken partially or entirely from an uncited source (online content, a peer, a published article, etc.) and assumed as your own. If I have reasons to suspect plagiarizing, I will ask that you report yourself to the Bryn Mawr Honor Board. See the Bryn Mawr Honor Code and Honor Board Hearing Process in the Student Handbook for more information.

ABOUT BI-CO THEATER

(NONE OF THIS is required for this course! But if you like what you learn here, you are welcome to become more involved in what our department does).

Our program is low-stress and fun. You should come to Theatre Games Night on Weds Sep 2nd at 5pm.

Come! We'll get a tour of the space, we'll play games (but not like, the intimidating kind where you ever feel pressured into doing anything you don't want to do). Maybe you'll feel as cool as these former students wearing moustaches. (Maybe the vibe will not be moustaches!) I 'moustache you' if you are interested in finding community on campus, learning more about what the theatre department does, and, if it feels right, getting involved further? Theatre works best when it's a group of people working together towards a shared goal. The first step is showing up and gathering together for fun. **Goodhart Hall, 5pm, Weds Sep 2nd.**



Audition for the play. Or volunteer to work as a technician on the production crew. Or both!



Lots of experience? Cool! No experience? Cool!

Auditions for this semester's play, *Sonnets for an Old Century*, will be held on:

Thursday September 3rd (Bryn Mawr) and Friday September 4th (Haverford).

Sonnets for an Old Century, by José Rivera, and directed by Jennifer Kidwell, is a play that examines what it means to be alive. (That's all I'll say about the play for the time being!) Auditions are no-stress and low-key. You don't need to prepare anything. Come wearing clothes you can move in. You DO need to sign up for an audition - here's a QR code that will link you to the Bi-Co Instagram (@bicotheater) - you can sign up for a time slot at the link in the bio.

If you are more interested in the technical side of theatre (ie: costumes, scenery, lighting, sound, props, or stage management - reach out to us and we'll chat.

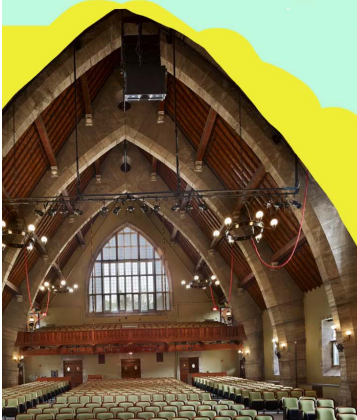
I want to work with costumes: kfritz1@brynmawr.edu

I want to work with scenery, lighting, sound, props, or stage management (or I have a question about the program):

aradbill@brynmawr.edu



if this interests you in any way, come on by. drop a line. say hi. 



Course Calendar and Due Dates

Date	Topic	What's Due Today
1 Sep	Welcome and introduction. What is design? What is design for theatre? Hands On! Overview / Discussion	
8 Sept	Costume Design Process Overview <i>A Visit to a Small Planet</i> discussion <i>I Dream Before...</i> discussion Read Like a Designer	Read: A Visit to a Small Planet Read: Chapter 1: The Playscript Read: I Dream Before... Due: I Dream Before project
15 Sept	Research Like a Designer Costume History Overview	Read: Chapter 2: The Production Read: Chapter 3: Research Due: Research Project 1
22 Sept	Sketches + Renderings: Anatomy + Croquis	Due: Research Project 2 Read: Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain Read: Chapter 4, Preliminary Sketching and Color Layout <i>Bring your art supplies!</i>
29 Sept	Sketches + Renderings: Methods + Technique	Read: Chapter 5, Final Sketches Due: Sketchbook Project <i>Bring your art supplies!</i>
6 Oct	Organize Like A Designer: Process + strategies Discuss: <i>Wine in the Wilderness</i>	Due: Read Wine in the Wilderness Due: Wilderness 1 + 2 <i>Bring your art supplies!</i>
13 Oct	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK!	<i>Rest! Great artists take breaks. <3</i>
20 Oct	Prepare for Crit Crit: <i>Wine in the Wilderness</i> Project	Due: Wilderness 3
27 Oct	"Good Designers Direct, Good Directors Design" Conceptualize like a Designer (or a director!) Discuss: <i>Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea</i>	Read: Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea
3 Nov	ELECTION DAY In-Class: Dontrell Group Project (Collaborate Like A Team)	Due at top of class: Dontrell Research
10 Nov	Crit/Share: Dontrell Renderings Discuss: <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> Review final project guidelines	Due: Dontrell Project Read: A Midsummer Night's Dream
17 Nov	Wardrobe, Wig, Costume Shop, and Other Jobs in the Field Final Project Check-In	Read: <i>It's all about Holding Hands and Stitching Hems</i> Read: Chapter 6, Pre-Production Read: Chapter 7: Production

24 Nov	Collaborate Like A Designer: Design as collaborative artform Financial Realities from the Field: What is the state of this art? Final Project Conference/Check-In	<i>Bring your art supplies!</i>
1 Dec	Final Project Conference/Check in Early Bird Presentations	<i>Bring your art supplies!</i> Last week to submit your Hands On! Assignment
8 Dec	Last Class! Crit/Presentations	Due: Final Project

Here's how our assignments are calculated in the final score of your grade:

I Dream Before	2.5%
Research Project 1.....	2.5%
Research Project 2.....	2.5 %
Sketchbook Project	2.5%
Wine in the Wilderness 1 (Analysis and Planning)	5%
Wine in the Wilderness 2 (Research)	5%
Wine in the Wilderness 3 (Renderings)	10%
Dontrell Project	10%
Final Project	20%
Hands On Project	10%
Attendance, Participation, and Community Engagement.....	30%
Total: 100 of 100 possible points	

There are rubrics for your work posted on Moodle. Please bear in mind that I am not assessing your work from the assumption that all of us have an advanced capacity for fine arts and human figure drawing. While you will need to submit sketches, roughs, and renderings for evaluation, we're not judging on raw artistic talent, but rather by your comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and your ability to articulate your choices. (In other words: are you feeling anxious about the hands-on drawing/rendering component? Relieve yourself of that burden! This is a course that expects that everyone is a beginner, and is happy to meet you where you are and support you as you grow).

You will do well in this class if you bring....

- Engaged participation in all activities, discussions, and in-class discussion questions;
- A sense of curiosity about the subject material;
- An ability to speak, read, and write critically;
- Self-motivated practice of rendering techniques and visual artistry;
- Detailed study of all required course readings and materials;
- Timeliness and thought to all assignments and projects;
- Your skills of communication, collaboration, and teamwork.

It will be a wonderful semester. I am very much looking forward to it. Reach out anytime with questions.