DESIGN THESIS GUIDELINES

**Prerequisites:**
- Practicums: Assistant Stage Manage and Stage Manage a mainstage production
- Courses: Scenography or Special Studies in Design
- Experience: Work in a shop as a Graduate Assistant, or (with approval) work in a shop as a Work-Study student or in fulfillment of a practicum.
- Approvals by: Supervisor in design area
  - Director of production, after an interview and discussion about the play

**Deadline:**
Proposals must be submitted in Design Thesis Advisor-approved form no later than one week before the faculty meeting at which the proposal will be discussed. Ideally, this would be the first faculty meeting of the year.

**Length:**
While there is no specific length required, both the proposal and the portfolio will be substantive, as they include visuals, dramaturgy, and extensive script and conceptual analyses.

**Budget:**
The Theatre Department maintains a modest budget for the reimbursement of Design Thesis production costs. Students whose projects have been approved should contact the Business Manager to ascertain the current budget allocation, which kind of expenses can be reimbursed, and how to document expenses for reimbursement.

**WRITTEN PROPOSAL**

Write and submit a proposal that includes consideration of the following areas.

1. **PERSONAL CONNECTIONS**
   a. Why are you interested in being a designer?
   b. Define your relationship to the project, why you wish to undertake the design and how the project may represent the culmination of your education as a Master of Theatre.
   c. What do you expect to accomplish in terms of growth and development through this project?

2. **SCRIPT ANALYSIS**
   a. Describe the action of the play.
   b. Describe the given circumstances of the play. Visual imagery evoking time and place, or the society of the play, is especially important.
   c. Describe the style inherent in the text, including physical, visual, and textual characteristics of the style.
3. DRAMATURGICAL RESEARCH

   a. What background material do you need to approach the production design? Please consider the world of the playwright and the world of the play, with reference to cultural concerns of the historic moment. Also consider the production history of the play.

   b. Include a partial bibliography of proposed research materials.

4. DESIGN CONCEPT

   a. Articulate your understanding of the director’s concept for the production as it applies to potential design choices.

   b. Outline or somehow convey your visual idea for the play.

   c. Define the overall scale of the design project.

AFTER THE PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

Abide by the requirements listed in your design contract.

Meet weekly with your Design Thesis Advisor.

During the entire design process, keep a comprehensive and detailed journal. Include notes from meetings with the director beginning with the initial introductory meeting; notes from meetings with the Technical Director or Costume Shop Manager; notes from Production meetings; shopping trips, prop lists, costume fittings, and anything else that is relevant to the process. The use of photography is encouraged.

Maintain an updated bibliography of visual research and a record of all design/concept changes and their respective justifications.

AFTER THE PRODUCTION OPENS

Review all your design material and re-do anything that is not portfolio ready. For example, if a costume or set piece changed during tech, redraw the sketch to reflect what it looked like on opening night.

Prepare a professional portfolio including all design materials to bring with you to your Thesis defense, including archival photographs of the production.

Complete the journal, including the record of design and concept changes, and prepare the relevant visuals, research, and bibliography. Bring these materials to the defense.
THE DESIGN THESIS PROJECT DEFENSE

Arrange a date with your Design Thesis Advisor for your Thesis Project defense within two weeks of the closing performance.

Prepare a 10-15 minute presentation on all of your work on the project. Include a discussion of the process and a self-critique. Be prepared to answer questions from the committee that will arise in response to this presentation and to the work seen in the production.

The Committee votes Pass or Fail at the end of the Thesis Project defense, but may choose to wait a week before issuing the decision in order for one or more Committee members to write a response to be issued along with it. A response may also be written even if a Pass or Fail is issued at the conclusion of the Thesis Project defense.