

Dramaturgy and Design for Digital Technologies in Story-Based Theater

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor	Melissa Foulger	Class	LMC-4602
Email	melissa.foulger@lmc.gatech.edu	Pre-req	ENGL 1102
Office		Satisfies	
Office Hours	Tuesday: 2:00 – 3:00 pm or Wednesday: 1:00 – 2:00 pm	Class Time	3:30 – 4:45 pm
	Or by appointment/email me	Location	DramaTech Theatre

General Course Information

Course Description

This course is designed as an experiment in integrating undergraduate coursework with current research. The course is organized in three phases that emulate the process of design development common in many research groups: foundational work, project pitches, and project development.

The skills learned and practiced in this course will extend beyond the immediate subject matter of digital technology in theatre. Ideation, teamwork, iterative design, project management, and feedback skills are applicable across many disciplines.

In the first phase of the course, *Foundation Work*, student will be introduced to the basics of teamwork, iterative design, design for the theatre, and the basic theoretical debate about the role of digital technologies in performance. Students will also become familiar with the play “anthropology” by Lauren Gunderson.

In the second phase of the course, *Project Pitches*, students will first develop individual design concepts for the play that integrate digital media, and then work collaboratively in teams to develop design concepts.

In the third phase of the course, *Project Development*, each team of students will work together to bring a single design concept from paper prototype to fully functioning demo.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this class, students will be able to:

- **Analyze** the role of digital technologies in contemporary theatre by evaluating theoretical perspectives and their application to performance.
- **Apply** principles of iterative design and collaborative workflows to develop creative solutions for theatrical production.
- **Develop** and **present** original design concepts that integrate digital media into a theatrical context, both individually and as part of a team.
- **Collaborate** effectively in groups by demonstrating project management strategies, including task delegation, timeline creation, and iterative feedback integration.
- **Construct** a functional prototype or demo that translates a conceptual design into a realized digital performance element.
- **Evaluate** peer and self-generated work using structured feedback processes to refine design ideas and improve project outcomes.

Required Course Materials

Available Support Services

In addition to the instructors and guests to the class, the following are available:

- Georgia Tech AI Makerspace (see studio website: <https://coe.gatech.edu/academics/ai-for-engineering/ai-makerspace>)
- The Allen-Davidson-Coleman XR Makerspace (see studio website: <https://xr.isye.gatech.edu/>) The studio is located in the Milton ISYE building.
- The Georgia Tech Invention Studio (see studio website: <http://inventionstudio.gatech.edu>) The studio is located on the second floor of the MRDC building in room 2102.
- The Hive Makerspace (see studio website: <https://hive.ece.gatech.edu/>) The studio is located in the Van Leer Building.
- The Mill (see studio website: <https://mill.mse.gatech.edu/>) The MILL is located on the first (and third) floor of the J. Erskine Love Building. Before using any of our spaces, please first sign in at the Main Lab (Love 176)

Grading

This course uses an alternative grading model that prioritizes learning, engagement, and reflection over traditional grading metrics. Students are expected to focus on the quality and completeness of their work rather than numerical scores.

Assessment Structure

- Feedback is provided through written comments and detailed rubrics
- Each assignment includes clear expectations and evaluation criteria
- Students are responsible for completing all work according to assignment guidelines
- Any assignment can be resubmitted after receiving feedback for a better grade

Self-Reflection

Students will complete structured reflections at designated points during the semester to assess their learning, progress, and overall performance in the course.

Module Evaluation Scale

Each module is evaluated on a completion scale:

- **3** – Exceeds expectations
- **2** – Meets expectations
- **1** – Incomplete or below expectations
- **0** – Not submitted

These scores provide ongoing feedback; final course assessment is based primarily on student reflection and demonstrated engagement.

A – 90 – 100%
B – 80 – 89%
C – 70 – 79%
D – 60 – 69%
F – 59% or below

Description of Graded Components

Individual Pitches – Each student will prepare a design concept for a piece of technology related to *anthropology*. The individual pitch should include research, conceptualization, and visualizations. All choices should be supported by material from the script and readings from class.

Team Pitches – Two to three individual pitches will be selected to move forward. Each student will join one of those teams to create a more fully fleshed out team pitch. This pitch will include

extended details about the project, a project timeline, research, conceptualization, and visualizations. All choices should be supported by material from the script and readings from class.

Paper Prototypes – Students will create a low-fidelity paper prototype for the theatrical production of *anthropology* by Lauren Gunderson. The prototype may include sketches, storyboards, interface mockups, or models that simulate how digital elements function in performance.

Project Workflow Report – This report will be submitted during the second half of the semester after several team iteration meetings. It must include:

- Title of the Project
- Names of Team Members
- Roles of Each Team Member (i.e., Concept Sketch Artist, Software Programmer, Hardware Specialist, Welder, etc.)
- Project Description
- Project Sketches
- Detailed Budget with Links to Sources
- Set of Steps Necessary to Complete Project
- Dates by which to Complete Each Step

Final Project – Students will complete an example of a show-ready version of the project and present it. The project will include the following elements:

- A working model of the project that is show-ready.
- A presentation that describes the process of creation, research used, hard and software used.
- Response to questions from the panelists.

The project will be assessed by guests who are theatre designers and digital media designers and their thoughts will be taken into account as part of the instructor response.

Critical Performance Review – View a performance by the Builders Association or the Wooster Group on [Digital Theatre Plus](#). (You must be on campus or use the VPN to access this site). Watch the performance and write a review of the technology in how it helps to enhance the experience through integration rather than decoration. Discuss what moments were effective and why. Research to learn more about the iteration process of making the tech for that specific performance.

Iteration Journal – Maintain a journal documenting your work. Reflect on exercises, note feedback received, and track your progress. Entries should consider how class activities and outside experiences influence the development of your project.

Midterm Reflection – Write a 2 – 3 page reflection on your participation and progress in the course up to midterm. Identify strengths as well as areas for growth.

Final Reflection – Write a 2 – 3 page reflection on your overall participation and development in the course. Assess your strengths, areas for improvement, and assign yourself a final course grade.

Discussions – Participate in online discussions via Canvas. These forums provide a space to engage with course material, ask questions, and extend class conversations. You are expected to post substantive responses on the dates listed in the syllabus. Posts should either initiate or contribute meaningfully to discussion of course topics.

“Substantive” means a well-developed paragraph rather than a brief response. Individual posts will not be graded for content, but full credit is awarded for timely, meaningful participation. Posts should respond to ideas, raise questions, and deepen discussion rather than summarize material. Missing a deadline or submitting an insufficient response will result in a grade of 1, with an opportunity to revise for credit. Each discussion is tied to a specific module, and posts should primarily engage with that module’s material.

Homework – Complete assignments related to script analysis, iteration, and reflection on class exercises.

Participation – As a project-based course, consistent attendance and active participation are essential and will factor into your final grade.

Teaching Philosophy

I believe that access to quality education is a fundamental human right. As an educator, my goal is to foster an environment in which knowledge expands perspectives and inspires curiosity and creativity. I am committed to supporting students in the development of critical thinking skills, empowering them to question, interpret, and create meaningful narratives both individually and collaboratively. Central to my teaching is the belief that every student’s voice has value, and I strive to help students recognize and effectively use that power.

My pedagogical approach emphasizes active and applied learning. I believe students learn most effectively when material is introduced in manageable segments and then reinforced through practical application. I also value the importance of engagement and enjoyment in the learning

process. Striking a balance between rigor and creativity encourages deeper understanding and sustained motivation. Theatre, in particular, offers a dynamic framework for developing transferable skills such as collaboration, communication, organization, and relationship-building—competencies that are essential across professional fields.

I am dedicated to creating a learning environment that is inclusive, supportive, and respectful of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences. I view the unique identities and lived experiences that students bring to the classroom as strengths that enrich the collective learning experience. Course materials and activities are designed to reflect all members of the class. I welcome and encourage student feedback and suggestions, and I am committed to continuously improving the course to better meet the needs of all learners.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Success in this course program depends heavily on your health and well-being. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. Your instructors and I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the term, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you. A [comprehensive list of wellness related resources](#) has been compiled and maintained by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being ([student-resource-guide \(gatech.edu\)](#)).

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance Requirement. You may miss a total of **three (3)** classes over the course of the semester without penalty. If at all possible, please contact the instructor when you know you will not be in class.

- **Reasons for absences.** The attendance policy does not make any distinction about the reasons for your absences. [Absences for any illness count against the three permitted absences.](#) Only absences officially exempted by the Institute (e.g., due to participation in official GA Tech athletics, to religious observance, to personal or family crisis confirmed by documentation from the Dean of Students) will not be counted among your allotted absences.

- **Responsibility for missed work.** Students are responsible for finding out what they may have missed while absent from class and what policy the instructor has for making up missed work. However, **if you are not present to participate in a group presentation, it will severely effect your grade.**
- **Lateness/Absence.** If you are more than 20 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for the day.
- **Absence penalties.** Each additional absence after the allotted number deducts one-half of a letter grade (5 pts.) from your final grade. Please click [here](#) to see Georgia Tech's updated institutional attendance policy.

Communication is crucial. If you are unwell or face any situation that will keep you out of class for an amount of time greater than the three permitted absences, be certain to contact the Dean of Students as stated above. You should contact me as well so that we can work out an arrangement, but your situation becomes official only when the Dean of Students contact me.

Please note that Georgia Tech policy requires you to wait twenty minutes for an instructor to arrive before concluding that the class is not meeting (this policy is included here primarily for your information).

Accommodations for Religious Observances

I respect your right to observe your religion and will do what I can to accommodate your needs. With this in mind, you are permitted to be absent from class to take part in religious observances. For planning purposes, I ask that you provide me with written notice of your upcoming absence as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

All work you turn in for this class must be your own work, with all outside reference sources, including AI-generated text and information, properly cited and acknowledged.

The evaluation process for assignments includes evaluation of your writing ability. For this reason, for the purposes of this class, any student found to have used AI technologies or programs (e.g., ChatGPT) to compose part or all of the submitted work will face the same penalties as a student who submits plagiarized work.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who feels that he/she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see the instructor during office hours. Students with disabilities should also contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The Student-Faculty Expectations articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Flexibility may be granted in cases of extenuating circumstances; however, this requires **timely and proactive communication**.

Late work without prior communication will incur a **5% deduction per week**

Technology and Classroom Conduct

- Devices should not be used for non-course activities
- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated

Students are expected to maintain a respectful and professional learning environment:

- Engage respectfully in discussions
- Avoid disruptive behavior
- Dispose of food waste properly

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

This course adheres to Georgia Tech's official inclement weather and emergency procedures.

- If campus closes: all course activities are canceled or rescheduled
- If operations are modified: activities may shift online or be adjusted
- If campus remains open but conditions are unsafe: students should prioritize safety and notify the instructor

Students are responsible for monitoring official Institute communications and course announcements.

Attendance and Participation

Absences due to hazardous weather conditions, travel disruptions, or safety concerns will be treated with flexibility. Students will be given reasonable opportunities to make up missed work or participation.

Institute Approved Absences

As per Georgia Tech policy, you are permitted to be absent from class to participate in athletic events, official field trips, and religious observances. For planning purposes, please provide me with written notice of your upcoming absence as soon as possible. When I receive this notice, you and I will discuss opportunities to make up work you will miss in your absence.

Use of Generative AI

I have no objection to your using generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) as a research tool to identify sources and topics. However, the ideas you convey and the way they are expressed in all your writing for this course must be 100% your own. If you wish to use text generated by AI, you must treat it as you would any other research sources: you must quote or paraphrase it and provide a citation to identify the source. To present ideas or expression generated by AI as if they were your own (that is, without specifically identifying them as produced by AI) is plagiarism and will be treated as such.

Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions

Classes may not be recorded by students without the express consent of the instructor unless it is pursuant to an accommodation granted by the Office of Disability Services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other material posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources:

Academic Success and Advising (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free support for your courses. Students can attend scheduled supplemental review (PLUS) sessions, stop by Drop-In Tutoring, or schedule a one-on-one appointment through Knack. To explore what options work best for you, please visit success.gatech.edu/tutoring or email tutoring@gatech.edu.

Course Schedule

8/25	Course Introduction	
8/27	Team Building	Read Romanska, “Dramaturgy Student Handbook”, p. 4 - 13 Read Shutt, Martin, Coetze “The Theatre of Development” Read Newton, “ Dramaturgical Analysis ”
9/1	Dramaturgy	Read “anthropology”
9/3	“anthropology” Discussion	Read Horn, Ch. 2
9/8	Script Analysis – Given Circumstances	Read Horn, Ch 4
9/10	Script Analysis – Setting	Read Horn, Ch. 5 HW #1 Due by 10 pm
9/11		Discussion #1 Due by 10 pm
9/15	Script Analysis – Structure	Read Baugh, Ch. 3 - 5 HW #2 Due by 10 pm
9/17	Scenography	Read Baugh, Ch. 6 - 7 HW #3 Due by 10 pm
9/22	Lighting	Read Baugh, Ch. 10 - 11
9/24	New Theatre Technologies	Read excerpts from Auslander and Phelan HW #4 Due by 10 pm
9/25		Discussion #2 Due by 10 pm
9/29	Implications of Technology in Performance	Read Johnson Essay, “Aesthetics, Artificial Intelligence, and Search-Based Art”
10/1	Aesthetics	Read Gervás Essay, “Computational Models of Narrative Creativity”
10/6	Fall Break – No Class	

10/8	Narrative	Watch Lerman, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFugLSJX_Nc Midterm Self-Reflection Due by 10 pm
10/13	Critical Response Process	
10/15	Individual Pitches	
10/16		Discussion #3 Due by 10 pm
10/20	Individual Pitches	Conceptual Collage due by 10 pm
10/22	Team Creation and Building	
10/27	Project Development – details TBA	
10/29	Project Development – details TBA	
10/30		Discussion #4 Due by 10 pm
11/3	Project Development – details TBA	
11/5	Present Paper Prototype	
11/10	Present Revised Paper Prototype	
11/12	In class peer and self-evaluation/ discussion	
11/13		Discussion #5 Due by 10 pm
11/17	Project Development – details TBA	
11/19	Project Development – details TBA	
11/24	Project Development – details TBA	Critical Performance Review Due by 10 pm
11/26	Thanksgiving – No Class	
12/1	Team 1 final in-class presentation and Demo, feedback.	Team 1 Project Materials due in Class

12/3	Team 2 final in-class presentation and Demo, feedback.	Team 2 Project Materials due in Class
12/8	Debrief Day	Journal due Final Self-Reflection Due by 10 pm