

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DRAMA

# BACKSTAGE LABORATORY HANDBOOK

---

THEATRE AND DRAMA 161, 361 & 561

## TO ALL BACKSTAGE LABORATORY STUDENTS....

This handbook describes the framework of three of the Backstage Laboratory courses: T&D 161, 361 and 561. Read the contents carefully and examine your overall schedule of classes and commitments to be sure that you can meet all course requirements. If you have any questions, please share your concerns with either your direct supervisor or me.

Our goal is to provide you with an opportunity to experience the technical and performance aspects of the theatre in a positive and supportive environment. There are many interesting and useful skills to be learned working in any theatre studio. If you have a particular interest you would like to pursue, let us know!

Cordially,

David S. Stewart  
Backstage Lab Coordinator

---

### UNIVERSITY THEATRE STAFF

---

Director of University Theatre	Tony Simotes	263-3357
General Manager	Michele Traband	262-6551
Production Manager	David S. Stewart	263-6559
Resident Technical Director	Dan Lisowski	263-3359
Box Office Manager	TBD	262-1582
Costume Studio Supervisor	Jim Greco	263-3331
Scenery Studio Supervisor & UT Asst. TD	Chuck Mitchell	263-3330
Electrics/Sound Supervisor	Casey Martin	265-3662

---

**COMPLIMENTARY TICKET POLICY FOR CAST AND CREW MEMBERS**

---

When there are PREVIEW performances, cast and crew members may receive two complimentary tickets for the night of the Preview performance ONLY. Tickets may be picked up the Vilas Hall Box Office (east side of building) beginning the Monday of opening week; tickets must be picked up by 7:00 PM on the day of the preview..

Everyone entering the theatre MUST have a ticket. The House Manager has been directed to deny entry to anyone without a ticket. Please do not ask to be an exception.

Preview performances can be viewed at [www.utproduction.com](http://www.utproduction.com) under calendar > production calendar

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

---

**Theatre 161 - 2 credits**                      Not repeatable for credit

BACKSTAGE LABORATORY I - Laboratory instruction and supervision in one or more of the following areas: building and painting scenery, gathering properties, making costumes, stage electrics, sound experience. Students assist in the mounting of University Theatre productions. No experience is required.

**Theatre 361 - 1 or 2 credits**                      Not repeatable for credit

BACKSTAGE LABORATORY III - Laboratory instruction and supervision in all phases of theatre production with greater emphasis on expanding the student's responsibility and involvement as a crew head for either the construction and load-in or the run and strike of one (or more) productions. In general, one credit is given per assignment.

**Theatre 561 - 1 or 2 credits**                      Repeatable for credit

BACKSTAGE LABORATORY IV - In addition to laboratory instruction the student will be given a major production responsibility supervised by teaching assistants or shop supervisors. These assignments include (but not limited to) such positions as Master Carpenter, Property Master, Wardrobe Supervisor, Master Electrician, etc. Roles approved by the Acting Specialist Program will also receive credit. In general, one credit is given per assignment.

---

**REQUIREMENTS**

---

**Fulfill Req. A, B & C.****REQUIREMENT A:**

**161** Construction lab:

**361/561** Choose **One** of three options:  
(Requirements are for 1 credit. For 2 credits, double 1 credit amounts)

**Option 1 Construction Lab:** Assist in one of the shops for approximately 50 hours

**Option 2 Major Production Assignment:** Complete a major assignment for a single production. The time commitment is flexible and dependent upon the show's requirement. Job descriptions and assignments are available from any studio supervisor.  
Cast members sign up for 561; performance credit is not given for 361.

**Option 3 Run Crew:** Participate on the run crew of a show plus eight [8] hours of load-in (scenery) or finishing (costume) time. Assignments can be reserved through David S. Stewart, 1174 Vilas Hall, 263-6559, dstewart@wisc.edu.

**REQUIREMENT B:**

**Participate in ONE (1) strike**, at end of a performance run. You must sign up for this requirement. See your TA or Studio Supervisor for details. There are only a limited amount of slots for each show strike. So this is a first come, first serve basis. Please see your studio supervisor.

**Requirement C:**

Participate in ONE (1) lab clean-up session, at end of session.

---

**PROCEDURES AND RULES**

---

**1. Run Crews (361 or 561):**

If you are involved in a show assignment, (you will be contacted regarding no later than one week prior to the initial call for the project.) Requirements are:

- a. **Participate in ALL technical rehearsals, performances, and crew meetings** for the production you are running. You may be asked to attend a run-through rehearsal previous to tech week. You will be notified of the dates that they occur.
- b. **Attend the STRIKE** of the show you are running.

It is your responsibility to meet all scheduled commitments. If you must miss even one rehearsal or performance you can't be on a run crew. Your grade (in part) depends on this! Production calendars and job descriptions are available from [www.utproduction.com](http://www.utproduction.com) as well as department heads.

**How Assignments Are Made:**

If you are interested in a run crew position, note this on the information sheet that is at the end of this packet. If you have questions, contact David S. Stewart, 1174 Vilas Hall, 263-6559 or email at [dsstewart@wisc.edu](mailto:dsstewart@wisc.edu). You can also talk to any of the studio supervisors.

**Run crew assignments will be emailed to you.**

**2. Attendance (161 & 361)**

**Labs are structured around a four-hour session.** Each session includes a 15-minute break and clean-up time at the end. You must attend the entire lab period to be given credit for lab that day. Exceptions are allowed for doctor appointments, etc. Discuss this with your supervisor.

- a. Backstage Lab is a class that involves hands-on instruction: You need to be here in order to learn. Like any other class, you are expected to be here for the entire class each day. If you need to miss class, follow the excused absence procedure described below.
- b. **Daily attendance will be recorded.** If you arrive late, be certain that your presence has been noted.
- c. **Excused absences** are granted when students call their appropriate Studio **by noon** of the day of the absence. You may request an excused absence for a whole or half lab, but not less. Excused absences may be made up.
- d. **Unexcused absences** are for all other situations. If you do not call by noon, if you leave before lab ends (except for illness and family emergencies). Even if you attend lab until 5:30 and then leave, **IT WILL BE COUNTED AS UNEXCUSED FOR THE DAY**. People in shows or on run crews should follow the excused absence procedure. Unexcused absences can't be made up and the student receives a 0 attendance grade for the day.

- e. A 15 minute break is scheduled each day. You should be back in your work area ready to go 15 minutes after break has been started. The TA's should not need to come find you at the end of break.
- f. Your attendance affects your grade.

### 3. Construction Lab Procedures (161 & 361)

**Orientation Session:** These are given during the first lab meeting to provide every student a hands-on introduction to the relevant major tools, spaces, and operation systems we use. By the end of the orientation session you will not have mastered the use of the equipment, but you will be familiar with it the next time you use it. Ask your supervisor for clarification whenever you need to. **Students must complete the UW Lab Safety Agreement Form** at the end of orientation, which is then kept on file in each studio. This form must be updated each subsequent year. See your Studio Supervisor to be certain you have met this requirement.

**All students must observe the University Shops Safety Rules** when working in the studios. These will be discussed at your orientation session and reviewed often by your supervisor.

**Each construction period will begin with attendance**, followed by a brief discussion to familiarize you with the production, the desired visual impact, and the complexity of the project you will be working on during that lab or series of labs. Ask questions and become as familiar as possible with the elements.

**Backstage Lab is an activity class; dress accordingly.** Your Studio Supervisor will discuss this with you.

### 4. Supplies You must Furnish:

**Scenery Studio** (includes Paint, Props and Scenery labs):

- All students engaged in scenery construction are required to wear eye protection at all times. Goggles or safety glasses are acceptable; Goggles must be fog-free and provide indirect ventilation, with “Z87” impact resistant lenses. Safety glasses need side shields and impact-resistant lenses. See Chuck Mitchell for suggested vendors.
- Also bring a 16' or longer tape measure
- # 2 Pencils.
- Bring work clothes. Shorts and sandals are not allowed. Hair must be tied back and dangling jewelry removed.

**Lighting:**

- Bring an 8' adjustable (a.k.a. “crescent”) wrench.

**Costumes:**

- People who don't wear glasses need to bring safety glasses (with side shields) or goggles. See Jim Greco for suggested vendors.

---

## GRADING PRACTICES

---

The final grade for any of the Backstage Laboratory Series courses is based on two criteria: Attendance and Participation/Application. Students enrolled in T&D 161 will receive a daily grade in each of these categories. The grading scale is defined below. Students enrolled in T&D 361 are graded daily if they are working with a lab.

Students in 361 or 561 who are working on a show assignment should sign in daily to make sure your attendance is recorded. Because of the short period of time typically involved with each project or production, intermediate grades will not be given, but students can expect to be made aware of possible concerns by either the lab TA or the project supervisor.

Run crew activities are directly supervised by the stage manager of the production and the staff member who is in charge of the area involved. Both individuals will complete evaluation sheets which will be advisory in determining your final grade.

We make every effort possible to be objective in the grading process. If you have concerns, speak first to your project supervisor. If the problem cannot be dealt with satisfactorily, please contact your Studio Supervisor or the Production Manager.

### DAILY LAB GRADING CRITERIA:

#### **Attendance: Can you meet attendance and punctuality expectations?**

##### **1/3 of your grade**

- 4** - On time and ready to work
- 3** - On time but not ready to work
- 2** - No more than 15 minutes late
- 1** - 15 minutes to 1 hour late
- 0** - More than 1 hour late (without pre-notification) or unexcused absence

#### **Participation/Application: Do you come hoping to learn?**

##### **2/3 of your grade**

- 4** - Willing to participate in activities
  - Willing to interact with others (team player)
  - Eager and willing to learn
  - Respectful of peers and supervisor
- 3** - Participate; build upon previously learned skills
- 2** - Participates begrudgingly; simply "puts in time"; retains most skills and can apply them to assigned projects
- 1** - needs continual re-instruction of skills previously taught
- 0** - absent

Note the class absence policy under "Attendance".

Note also that missing the strike or clean-up requirement reduces your lab grade by one-half letter grade.

---

**USEFUL NUMBERS**

---

Scene Studio	263-3330	UT Box Office	262-1500
Costume Studio	263-3331	Mitchell Th. Booth	263-4563
Stage Management	265-0650	Hemsley Th. Booth	263-4561
Actors' Hotline	265-0650	University Police	262-4524
Department Office	263-2329	Security/Emergency	911
UT Business Office	262-1582		

---

**BACKSTAGE LAB INFORMATION SHEET**

---

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**CLASS:** 161 361 561 (Circle one)

**CREDITS** (361 & 561 only): 1 or 2

**PHONE** \_\_\_\_\_ (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (C)

**E-MAIL ADDRESS** \_\_\_\_\_

**STREET** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY** \_\_\_\_\_ **ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year:**

Fr.      Soph.      Jr.      Sr.      Grad      Special

**Major:**

Theatre major      Acting Specialist      Other (List) \_\_\_\_\_

---

**CONSTRUCTION AREAS OF INTEREST (361 & 561)**

---

One goal of this course is to involve students in more than one area of technical production

\_\_\_ Scenery Construction      \_\_\_ Props Construction      \_\_\_ Scene Painting  
 \_\_\_ Costume Construction      \_\_\_ Sound Design/Sp. Effects      \_\_\_ Electrics

---

**SKILLS**

---

Check [x] the areas where you have some experience; circle [o] those where you are very experienced.

\_\_\_ Woodworking      \_\_\_ Dyeing      \_\_\_ Fabric Painting      \_\_\_ Audio  
 \_\_\_ Metalworking      \_\_\_ Scene Painting      \_\_\_ Sewing Machine      \_\_\_ Electricity  
 \_\_\_ Plastics      \_\_\_ Calligraphy      \_\_\_ Jewelry      \_\_\_ Electronics  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_ Leather      \_\_\_ Special Effects