**USC** School of Dramatic Arts

## **THTR 122 Section 62638R**

## **Improvisation and Theatre Games**

## USC FALL 2016 Thursdays 12:00 – 1:50

**Location:** MCC 112

 **Units:** 2

**Instructor:** Zach Steel

**Office:** JEF 209

**Office Hours:** available by appointment

**Contact Info:** **zsteel@usc.edu**

347-546-0298

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**Course Description and Overview**

Through improv-based theatre games, this class explores how to quiet our inner critic, access our most organic and imaginative impulses, and create inspired, collaborative, unscripted theatre.

**There is no prerequisite for this course.**

**Learning Objectives**

The goals for this course are as follows:

* To learn the fundamental ingredients of an improv scene and how to be spontaneous within one.
* To become familiar with the structure of various theatre games.
* To harness listening and reacting skills and hone the performers ability to be present.
* To develop physical and spatial awareness and to be able to perform with our whole bodies.
* To approach performance with a compassionate heart and emotional sensitivity.
* To experience the range and flexibility of the voice and body.

**Recommended Readings and Supplementary Materials**

Impro by Keith Johnstone

Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin

# The Upright Citizens Brigade Comedy Improvisation Manual by Besser, Roberts, Walsh

Free Play by Stephen Nachmanovitch

**Your grade is assessed according to**

Class Work – 40%

Written Assignments – 20%

Midterm – 20%

Final – 20%

***Grading Scale for SDA:* A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

No unexcused absences.

**Regular Weekly Attendance** is the only way to get high points for participation, comprehension, and application in Improv class. This is an activity course, missing even one class will lower your participation grade. Arriving at the start of class ready to work is part of your participation grade. If you are to be absent, e-mail the instructor to verify the reason. Please inform the instructor immediately if you have **any injuries or any conditions** that might prevent you from participating fully in the class. No cell phone use in class unless instructed.

Wear clothing and shoes that don’t impair your ability to move freely.

## **Weekly Course Schedule**

### **Classes 1-5**

For the first five weeks, we will focus on the basics of improv and get acquainted with the rules, ie “**Say YES**”, “**Listen**”, “**Don’t Think, Do!**” We will begin to explore how to establish the “**Who, What, Where**” and a “**Base Reality.**”

**Assignment: Self-Assessment #1** due Class 4(1-2 pages typed double spaced)

### **Class 6-10**

This section will focus on “**The Anatomy of a Scene**,” “finding “**The Game**.” We will also play various “**Story Games**” and continue to explore “**Short Form Improv**.”

**Assignment: Improv Report** due Class 9 (1-2 pages typed double spaced)

### **Class 11-14**

The structure of “**Long Form Improv”** is introduced as we start creating improv teams. We play “**Character Games**” and review earlier exercises.

**Assignment: Self-Assessment #2** due Class 14 (1-2 pages typed double spaced)

**Class 15**

A live jam for invited guests!

**Final Exam –** Enjoy watching the playback of our Improv Show, write an honest evaluation of your own work, how you have improved? What areas can you still improve on? Where have you grown the most?

**Final Examination Date: Tuesday, December 13th, 11am - 1pm**

*This information can be found online at USC’s site for the Schedule of Classes.*

***NOTE:*** *All undergraduate classes must meet for the Final Examination as established by the University. You may not hold your final examination on the last day of classes.*

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences.  Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>.  Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable.  See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university.  You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.  This is important for the safety whole USC community.  Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person.  *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

## **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing.  Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.  Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs* <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html>provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.  If an officially  declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* [*http://emergency.usc.edu/*](http://emergency.usc.edu/)will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if you are having difficulty with the class, I will be happy to meet with you and guide you toward improvement.