University Of Southern California

### Course Syllabus

**SOT #305B**

**Course Name: Directing**

**Title:** #305B

**Units:** 4

**Session:** Spring 2017

**Instructor:** Stephanie Shroyer

**Email:** [shroyer@usc.edu](mailto:shroyer@usc.edu)

**Office Phone:** (213) 740-8904

**Office Hours:** Tues. and Thurs. 12-1pm in MCC 204 and by appointment please. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to speak privately with the instructor about the individual’s class progress.

**Class Meets**

Time: 10:30a.m. -12:20 p.m.

Days: Mondays and Wednesdays

Location: PED 208

## Final Exam Monday, May 8th, 8:00 -10:00 a.m.

**Course Description**

A continuation of the examination of basic directorial principles: Pre-production analysis, casting, rehearsal procedures; relationship of the director to actor; integration of technical aspects of production. Course focus will emphasize conception of a director’s vision as well as deepening strength and confidence in the areas of communication and collaboration in the production process.

## Learning Objectives

1. To deepen the basic understanding of skills and procedures required of a stage director to mount a theatrical production as introduced in 305A.
2. To identify, cultivate and individualize the leadership skills necessary in the creation of an ensemble.
3. To explore the role of the director as a collaborative individual, able to articulate and shape vision while embracing the creativity of the design team and actors.
4. To explore and codify the directors obligation to an audience.
5. To develop a viable production concept for a full theatrical performance. Concepts are explored and exemplified through class discussion, exercises, rehearsals and scene presentations.

## Process and Progression

## \*\*\* Reading assignments should be completed by the day listed. Additional reading may be assigned as necessary \*\*\*

Week 1 1/9 Introduction. Course outline. The role of the director. Begin Search for your Vision play. What is Director’s Vision? Briefing of a director you admire and why…

1/11 Read: Article by Louis Jouvet, “The Profession of the Director”

Assignment: read and research *No Exit* by Jean Paul Sarte for Wed. Jan.22nd.

#### Week 2 1/16 Martin Luther King Day. University Holiday.

1/18 The Directors Toolbox and The Cornerstones of Success. Play analysis, World of Play, Given Circumstances and Dialogue, Dramatic Action, Character, Beats, Idea/Initial instinct, Objectives…*Vision*! Read: Article by Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, “The Three Faces of the Director” & *A Sense of Direction*, pages 3 through 36. Discuss a directors’ primary study of text.

Week 3 1/23&25 Read: Chapters 2-6 in HodgeMcLain

Group work on *No Exit*

Week 4 1/30 Group work on *No Exit*

2/1 “Staged” readings of *No Exit*

Week 5 2/6&8 **Begin Vision Plays!** Vision Presentations. General Beauty/Design Concepts/Logistics. Vision project production teams assigned. .

Read: Articles by David Belasco, “Creating Atmosphere”,

Nikolai Okhlopkov, “Creative Interplay”,Chapter 17 “Directing is Designing” HodgeMcLain.

Week 6 2/13 **Midterm**. Creative Expansion Discussions

2/15 **Midterm**. Creative Expansion Discussions

Week 7 2/20 Presidents Day. University Holiday. In preparation & support for rehearsal read: A Sense of Direction, pp.44-69

#### 2/22 **Midterm**. Creative Expansion Discussions con’t

Week 8 2/27 **Midterm.** Creative Expansion Discussions con’t/completed.

2/29 **Midterm.** (An if needed date**)** C. E. Discussions completed.

#### Week 9 3/6&8 Begin Observed Rehearsals. Table Reads.(Include director’s play analysis discussions)Read pp. 154-163 in HodgeMclain. Focus on working with actors. Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage and support their creative impulses? At your leisure peruse *A Sense of Direction*, pages 70 through 92 and Part II, “Communication”, and pp.57-154, HodgeMcLain

#### **Midterm: Creative Expansion paper due: Mon.3/6**

\*\*\*Spring Break March 13th – 15th \*\*\*

# Week 10 3/20&22 Directing as a Career and Collaboration with Acting/Design Artists. Guest Panels (TBA).

Read:“Your Future as a Director” pp.373 HodgeMcLain

#### Week 11 3/27&3/29 Observed Rehearsals Composition/Picturization

#### Week 12 4/3&4/5 Observed Rehearsals Composition/Picturization

#### Week 13 4/11&13 First Showings Vision Project Scenes

#### Week 14 4/10&12 First Showings Vision Project Scenes con’t.

#### Week 15 4/17&4/19 Semester Wrap-up. Round table discussion and feedback from first presentation of vision scenes. Troubleshooting session for rehearsal questions.

#### **Final Exam: Monday, May8th 8:00**-**10:00a.m. Final Presentation of Vision Projects. Directors Journal due.**

#### **\*\*\*Process and Progression subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group\*\*\***

## Grading

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 30 points | Class-work and observed rehearsals. |
| 20 | Creative Expansion Discussion |
| 10 | Creative Expansion Reflection Paper |
| 25 | Vision Project |
| 15 | Directors Journal |
| *100* | *Total points possible[[1]](#footnote-1)\** |

Grading is done on a curve using a 100-point scale. In class rehearsals are graded in concert with grading of class-work. Scenes are graded based on clear evidence of preparedness and intended objective in each presentation effort.

## \*\*\* Two extra credit points can be achieved by acting in a classmate’s scene. \*\*\*

## Assignments and Schedule

**1) Creative Expansion Discussions**: Throughout the first six weeks of the semester conduct an ongoing perusal/survey of creativity principles as outlined in a book addressing such (I suggest but don’t demand, you select from *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, *Art and Reality* and *The Art Spirit)* draft a question after selecting a topic, principle, idea about creativity, imagination or collaboration that intrigues you. Bring your question, principle, and/or idea etc. to class and be prepared to facilitate a group discussion/idea exchange around your intrigue. **Due: Feb.13, 15, 22, 27 and (if needed) 29Th.**

The director as collaborative theatre artist must above all else be able to consider multiple ways to view possibility in order to avoid rigidity in creative thinking. The purpose of this presentation/leadership exercise is to:

* Expand our notion of the creative process.
* Facilitate provocative yet useful discussion/action ignited by your question. The challenge is to create a “room” where all have been heard, valued and the group has moved “forward” surrounding the notion. (Please consider that “forward” doesn’t necessarily mean agreement or resolution).

**2) Creative Expansion Reflection Paper:** After you’ve lead your class discussions take time to reflect, and then distill your thoughts into a paper addressing the following:

* Theorize value at conclusion of (and in the aftermath of) your discussion. Did the process of this discussion *expand* rather than *contract* creative thinking?
* Do you see creative value in the challenging of (or disagreeing with) the idea/thought as well as its embrace? How so or how not so?
* Articulate what have you learned about your groups (or ensemble) dynamic through this process.
* Finally, are you able to put into words a process for expanding *your* creativity? Feel free to embrace or reject (or anything in between) the sourcebook that began this midterm adventure!
* **Due: Mon. March 7th.**

**3) Vision Project**: For a play of your choice, conceptualize and articulate a directors’ vision. Cast, rehearse and present a five-minute excerpt from the vision play at the end of the term. Final sharing will be part of your **Final Exam: Mon. May 10th 8-10a.m.**

**4)** **Director’s Journal**: While working on your Vision Play you will keep a notebook journaling the vision process. This notebook is due at the final scene showing.

Your journal for the vision project has the following components:

* + Vision/concept statement.
  + Play analysis.
  + Design guidance for World of Play.
  + Your character descriptions, objectives and prop lists.
  + Director’s rehearsal script with margin notes and beat breakdowns.
  + Ground plan/environment sketches and prop lists.
  + A journaling of your rehearsals.
  + Any and all pertinent materials from your semester Director’s notebook.
  + Reference materials and research pertinent to your project.
  + A summary discussion (see note below) of the directing experience and development of process. Consider how your work in the theatre might be affected after this experience in Directing 305b.

\***Note**\* for your summary discussion…what surprised you? Was anything exactly what you expected? What did you find “easy”? What provided the greatest challenge? Be sure to also include ideas/projections as to how your own discipline might be affected now that you have some insight into the director’s role in collaboration. Make use of references from your assigned readings, required texts and pertinent classroom discussions. **Due: at the Final, Mon., May 10th 8-10a.m.**

**Hint about the Written Work of a Director**

Be diligent about documenting your curiosities. Don’t put off jotting down thoughts!! An idea may seem so vivid at the time it occurs to you but you’ll find setting down to write 24 hours (or 8 weeks) after you had the idea is a sure way to lose it. Don’t know what to write about? Write about what you observe in the work of others. How effective is the work in final production? Watching, assessing the result of other processes is a sure way to clarify your own.

**Textbook and Materials**

Required Texts:

*A Sense of Direction*, William Ball

*Play Directing,* Francis Hodge-Michael McClain

*Notes on Directing,* *Lessons from a Directors Chair*, by Frank Hauser

*Scripts for class work and for your vision/concept play*

*Steal Like An Artist,* by Austin Kleon (also check out the PDF online)

Recommended Texts:

*Directors on Directing*, by Toby Cole and Helen Chinoy

*The Art Spirit*, by Robert Henri

*Lateral Thinking,*Edward De Bono

*Art and Reality* by Joyce Cary

(Feel free to recommend other relevant books on aesthetics, the creative process, and artistic collaboration)

Materials:

A notebook is required that has the ability to hold inserts and handouts that will be accumulated across the semester. Students are responsible for providing necessary props, costumes, and set pieces for scene work. Lack of preparation in this area will seriously weaken your grade.

## Attendance, Time Requirements and Additional Policies

1. This is a *process-oriented* class. Attendance is imperative. Class exercises and discussions are experiential in nature and “make-up” work is not possible. Scheduled in class rehearsals that are missed will not be rescheduled.
2. Late work will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor and then will be docked no less than 2-points per day past due. Written work that is accepted after the due date must be date stamped by Michele Medina in the DRC administrative office before being placed in the instructors’ mailbox.
3. To give yourself the most positive experience in 305b; be punctual, prepared, and responsible, as other students are depending on you. Remember, you are the Director.
4. There shall be no unexcused absences. Three tardy episodes constitute one absence.
5. Acting in a classmate’s scene is encouraged and will count as 2-points of extra credit toward your final grade.
6. Check your email and Blackboard regularly. Scheduling changes and other timely information will be communicated in this manner.
7. Cell phones are to be turned off for the duration of class.
8. Electronic Capture of any portion of class is strictly prohibited without prior approval of the instructor.

## Notes on Staging

No actual weapons can be used in scenes, and if you intend to use a prop weapon, please discuss this with me. Anything resembling an actual weapon must be cleared with Els Collins and the USC Dept. of Safety.

## Note from the Instructor

Directing is a process that takes time to experiment with, absorb and understand. Do not become impatient. Remain positive and curious about the work. Remember the results are not instantaneous. Your commitment to the directing process is of much greater importance than a definitive result. Each student works, learns and leads in a unique manner.

**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](mailto: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](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.htmlp) 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/* will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

*\*\*\*This syllabus serves as your contract for course 305B, Spring Semester 2017 \*\*\**

1. \* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)