

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## **THTR 397/497 Theatre Practicum**

Fall/Spring—MTWThF—6-10PM and other times as assigned, SA & SU 10AM-10PM (1 week)

Location: SDA Theatres & Labs

<http://dramaticarts.usc.edu/theatres-labs/overview.aspx>

**Section: 63153**

**Instructor: Christopher Shaw**

**Office: JEF 211**

**Office Hours: by appointment**

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### **Course Description and Overview**

Substantive participation in productions—produced by the School of Dramatic Arts. Productions are anchored by faculty collaborations from SDA and involve students who will prepare—a theatrical text to culminate in public performance. All productions presented in the School of Dramatic Arts main-stage season are the—efforts of students enrolled in—sections of THTR 397/497 the faculty collaborators. - Design, technical direction, stage management assignments are made by the SDA faculty and acting assignments are by audition. THTR 397/497 projects are directed and graded by the SDA Faculty of record for each respective section.

### **Learning Objectives**

Our undergraduate programs are anchored by principles aimed at developing artists who can exercise their interdependence of artistic practice and understand theatre as a collaborative art form with a social impact. This course provides each population of artists the opportunity to develop their specific skillset within the context of a shared collaborative project. These are stated below:

Actors are expected to:

- Obtain and hone a working knowledge of the interface between the actor, text, theatrical event and audience across a range of social contexts, historical periods, performance styles and cultures.
- Acquire and hone a practical understanding of rehearsal processes and performance protocol in live theatre.
- Apply their developing physical, vocal and emotional skills to performances in productions that are mounted in the School's performing venues.
- Apply diverse artistic regimens and expertise toward the common goal of the actualization of a theatrical production in one of SDA's performance venues.

Designers are expected to:

- Show a fundamental proficiency in the current technology and understanding of the materials, methods and techniques utilized both in the shops and onstage.
- Acquire and hone the practical ability to actualize their designs from concept to realization, while exhibiting a working knowledge of the

interface between actor, text, theatrical event and audience across a range of social contexts, historical periods, performance styles and cultures.

- Document work for inclusion in his/his **professional design** portfolio. The portfolio serves as the designers' calling card to obtain work in their selected field or to gain admittance to graduate school

Stage Managers are expected to:

- Acquire and hone the logistical and intuitive abilities to manage people, schedules, communication, and the organization of space, ~~people~~ time and, materials necessary to realize a theatrical production.
- Gain a practical understanding of the relations between a stage manager and all artistic staff (designers and technicians) and the ability to facilitate communication among the members of the staff in day-to-day and emergency situations.
- Be able to collaborate with directors and actors throughout the rehearsal process, to support the creative life of rehearsals, and to maintain a production after the director's departure.
- Read and interpret production paperwork and drawings: schedules, scenic ground plans, sections, and elevations, light plots, and magic sheets; costume renderings and plots; and sound plots. Practical familiarity with computer programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel.
- Create a working production prompt book, which accurately records all production details from actor movement to tracking of props, scenery, costumes and placement of all ephemeral design cues.

Technical Directors are expected to:

- Improve and hone their skills in managerial functions required in the technical operations of a theatre, including supervision of personnel, scheduling of facilities and personnel, budget development, materials and equipment acquisition, record keeping, and maintenance of equipment and facilities.
- Improve their ability to translate designer plans, renderings, models, and/or sketches into realized production elements and to develop and communicate technological solutions via technical drafting sketching, and structural analysis, both by hand and with appropriate computer software.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

**Co-Requisite (s):** None

**Concurrent Enrollment:** None

**Recommended Preparation:** None

### **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

The play's script to be presented and such research materials as the director may deem necessary for a particular project. Students are informed which specific texts are to be used and are provided the publishing information to acquire these texts. Both actors and

production designers and stage managers will be provided with a copy of the text prior to the start of rehearsals.

### **Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments**

Grading will be determined by the following as defined below and according to the appropriate grading matrix and timeline for your discipline which is an addendum to this syllabus:

1- Participation and preparation	10%
2- Professionalism	20%
3- Rehearsal Process	30%
4- Public performance	40%

Separate Grading matrices are available for Design, Stage Management, and Technical Direction students.

### **Grading Breakdown**

**These expectations constitute the bulk of your graded experience. In addition to these may be other assignments that happen out of the specific rehearsal process.**

The final letter grade is awarded based on the following percentages (A>94%>A->90%>B+>87%>B>84%>B->80%>C+>77%>C>74%>C->70%>D+>67%>D>64%>D->60%>F)

### **Participation and preparation 10%**

#### **Actors are expected:**

- To arrive at rehearsals on time, ready to work, focused on the work at hand.
- Unscheduled conflicts will be considered absences

#### **Sound Design and Design Students are expected:**

- To read the script prior to design meetings
- To be prepared at initial design meetings to discuss verbally or schematically the needs of the script and to discuss the scope of the production
- To be prepared with ideas for design and production meetings
- To attend 8-10 hours of rehearsals in the first week of rehearsal.
- To attend tech and dress rehearsals

#### **Technical Directors are expected:**

- To read the script prior to design meetings
- To be prepared with ideas for design and production meetings
- To attend 8-10 hours of rehearsals in the first week of rehearsal.
- To facilitate technical elements at tech and dress rehearsals

#### **Stage Managers are expected:**

- To attend and facilitate all rehearsals
- To facilitate scheduling of initial design meetings

- To attend and facilitate production meetings
- To attend the THTR 130 class on the appropriate day for the Stage Manager meeting

**Professionalism 20%**

**Actors are expected:**

- To attend all costume measurement and fitting appointments as scheduled
- To learn lines by the deadlines required by the director
- To be quiet and respectful when their colleagues are rehearsing
- To be attentive to entrances and exits.
- To be responsible for all blocking and movement as presented by the director
- To acknowledge and incorporate director's notes
- To be in costume and make-up by the time the house opens
- To be quiet when not on stage
- To be responsible for their individual entrances and exits
- To be responsible for all personal props and wardrobe

**Sound Design and Design students are expected:**

- To collaborate with faculty, staff, peers and advisors
- To acknowledge and incorporate director's notes
- To meet all design deadlines as outlined by production faculty and staff
- To be interested and involved in design execution and the needs of the production

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To collaborate with faculty, staff, peers and advisors
- To acknowledge and act upon notes from the designer, stage manager, and director, referring design notes from other sources to the designer before acting on them
- To meet all deadlines for budgets, working drawings, layouts, scenery movement plots and special effects as outline by production faculty and staff
- To be available, on time, present and ready to work on the production at all times possible during the production period

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To set and maintain levels of courtesy and discipline
- To have an excellent working relationship with the shops

**Rehearsal Process 30%**

**Actors are expected:**

- To be flexible and open in the rehearsal process

- Rehearse in attire suitable to the ongoing physical/ psychological development of the role assigned at his/her casting (for ex: rehearsal skirts, proper footwear)
- To be willing to investigate alternative solutions and ready to offer their own ideas
- To work as needed with dialect and vocal coaches and fight choreographers

**Sound Design and Design students are expected:**

- To attend selective rehearsals including the designer run-through and scheduled meetings with the director and design faculty
- To be actively involved in the technical execution of deliverables
- To understand and support the script and the director's vision

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To faithfully execute the design as approved by the designer and the director
- To attend the designer run-through, all production meetings, and design meetings as invited or necessary
- To attend all technical rehearsals and dress rehearsals, or for productions with minimal tech and pending the agreement of the stage manager, to be on-call at a location no more than 3 minutes from the theatre after completing any notes.
- To train the stagehands in the safe and effective use of the set and any backstage systems or effects
- Create any needed scenery movement pots with the designer and stage manager

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To run all auditions and rehearsals including technical rehearsals
- Take roll
- To be effective in tone and information conveyed in rehearsal reports
- To record all blocking, movement and potential cues
- To keep updated paperwork – contact sheets, calendars, props lists, etc.
- To serve as prompter as needed or to train another student to prompt
- To provide a final blocking/calling script to the Director of Production for review and grading

**Public Performance/Quality of Design/Performance 40%**

**Actors are expected:**

- To integrate all of the rehearsal process to include physical, vocal and dialect work as appropriate to the production
- To execute the themes, tone and style of the play
- To perform as a member of the ensemble
- To attend and participate in the strike

**Sound Design and Design students are expected:**

- To attend the opening night performance and will hopefully enjoy seeing their work in front of an audience
- To have understood and fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of the design assignment to the best of their abilities
- To provide presentation/portfolio level documentation of designs
- To have demonstrated growth as an artist and storyteller
- To attend and participate in the strike

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To have understood and fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of a technical director to the best of their abilities
- To run any particularly complicated or dangerous special effects during rehearsals and performances
- To be available from the Stage Manager's call time until "places" for last minute notes
- To provide portfolio quality documentation of the assignment
- To have demonstrated growth as a project manager, engineer, artist and craftsman
- To attend and participate in strike

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To run all performances to include coordination with the house manager and actors
- To oversee the assignments of the crew to facilitate the smooth running of the performance
- To attend and participate in the strike

**All students participating in the production are required to attend and participate in the strike.**

**Proposed Schedule:**

**Actors:**

- The normal rehearsal period for a THTR 396 is 6-8 weeks including the week of performance.
- Rehearsals take place 6:00pm-10:00pm Monday-Friday and 5 hours TBD on one weekend day
- Students in the THTR 397/497 project are "on call" for all scheduled rehearsals.

**Design Students:**

**Sound Design and Design students**

- Will be given due dates for drawings, renderings, lighting and speaker plots, etc. as appropriate by design faculty in consultation with SDA production staff.

- Designers are required to attend all tech rehearsals and dress rehearsals for their project.

**Design Students:**

**Production Assistants in all areas of Design:**

- Production Assistants for Set, Costume, and Lighting Design are required to attend all tech rehearsals and dress rehearsals for their project.
- The normal rehearsal period for a THTR 397 is 6-8 weeks including the week of performances. During these weeks the Production Assistant will be asked to help out the Designer in areas related to their assignment. Model building, purchasing supplies, checking in with shops or area heads, and keeping paperwork updated are all valid. Mostly though, it is intended for the PA's to 'shadow' their designers in order to learn the process of designing and communicating during SDA productions.
- PA's should also complete 5 tutorials each for Vectorworks and Photoshop on Lynda.com . PA's can choose between a test on these tutorials or proof of successfully using the programs in any class project or production work.

**Stage Managers:**

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To attend all auditions and rehearsals
- To help facilitate all areas of the production

**Guidelines on Grading**

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation and Preparation	10	10
Professionalism	20	20
Rehearsal Process	30	30
Public Performance	40	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	100

**Assignment Submission Policy**

Assignments will be submitted according to the guidelines provided by the design and stage management faculty mentors and directors.

**Additional Policies**

Acting students will be penalized for missing rehearsals. Design and stage management students will be held accountable for their deadlines in submitting paperwork, drawings, plots, etc.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

The weekly schedule varies according to the discipline of the student taking this class and to the section. Because of the variety of dates associated with each section and the range of activities of the students, the materials needed for each week necessarily varies in nature and timing.

Assignments for designers and stage managers are spelled out in timeline documents which are provided to each student at the beginning of the class.

### **Final Examination Date:**

The final for this class is the final performance, or portfolio review in the case of designers and stage managers.

### **Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

## **Statements 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](http://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.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/will>



provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.