Improvisation and Theater Games (122)
SPRING 2018

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Office hours by appointment only

This is a workshop course, in which each student actively participates in every class. There are no midterms or exams. However, students <u>must</u> attend class for the Final Exam period during its regularly scheduled time.

GRADING
Grades are based on the quality of participation (i.e. frequency of attendance (5%), supportiveness of fellow students (20%), commitment to the exercises (50%), enthusiasm for learning and improvement (25%), at each student's own capability.) Students are NOT judged on their mastery of each exercise, but on their willingness to COMMIT ENTHUSIASTICALLY to each game or scene. Use this class as an opportunity to have fun and take risks!

ONE absence is permitted per semester, excused or unexcused, other than documented medical explanations. Each absence after the first will result in a 1/2 point grade drop (e.g. from an A to an A-). Lateness is not allowed and two lates are recorded as an absence.

CLASS RULE #1: Be supportive and respectful of each other. During other people's scenes, please do not talk. DO NOT TEXT.   Do not check cellphones. Do not do other class homework. These actions will cause your grade to drop immediately.

This course will cover the basic concepts of improv: trust, teamwork, listening, commitment and clear communication.

Some of the improv concepts covered will include:
- Yes And/Teamwork
  "Yes And" is a fundamental concept in improvisation. A scene can only move forward when the actors agree on the facts and build on them.
- Emotion
  Strong emotional choices and reactions add information, and propel scenes forward.
- Commitment
  The audience can only invest in a scene when the actors are committed to it. Without commitment there is nothing at stake and scenes are not believable.
- Character
  A character is someone with a clear point of view, whose way of looking at the world colors everything they say and do. Playing characters generates interesting and unexpected information.
- Being Specific/Choosing to know
  Specific labels are more interesting and vivid than general information. "Choosing to know" leads to a greater flow of specific information.
- Relationship
  A clear relationship (who the characters are to each other and how they feel about each other) is the cornerstone of any good scene. If there is no relationship, the scene becomes superficial.
- Give & Take
  When scene partners Give & Take, they share the workload and the scene is more vital, because of the constant back and forth dynamic.
- Justifications
  Because actors are working without a script, they often say or do things that seem like mistakes. As long as they work together to clarify and make sense of those "mistakes", anything goes.

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://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety. This is important for the safety of the 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 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 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.