

**Theatre 423: Magic**

**Units: 2**

**Fall 2018, Fridays**

**63033D 10:00 am - 12:50 pm**

**Location:** WPH 203

**Instructor: Jack Lovick**

**Office:** MCC Bldg 2nd floor

**Office Hours:** By appointment.

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

(323) 459-7671 (cell)

Will reply to emails/calls within 24 hours

**No Teaching Assistant**

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**Course Description**

The dramatic art of the performance of things that should be impossible. Students will learn to perform, and devise personal presentations for formal (and informal) close-up and stand-up magic tricks, including card tricks, coin tricks, mentalism, etc. There will also be a focus on the history of magic (particularly the “Golden Age” (1860 – 1930) and the 1970s to the present), and an attempt to instill an appreciation of magic, the various genres and styles, and ability to break down and analyze a trick or performance’s elements.

**Learning Objectives**

Students will gain a familiarity and ability with a variety of magic tricks, and a competence with a deck of cards, including handling, shuffling, controlling, and some flourishes. They will be able to create presentations and scripts for tricks and perform a fully rehearsed, 10 minute routined series of tricks. They will learn an overview of important performers innovators, trends, and developments in magic history. They will develop an ability to analyze and critique the components that comprise a magic performance.

**Prerequisite(s):** None.

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

**Concurrent Enrollment:** None.

**Recommended Preparation**: None.

**Course Notes**

N/A.

**Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

N/A.

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

“Hiding the Elephant” by Jim Steinmeyer. I have copies students can purchase for $15 (they retail for $26), or they can be purchased online or from used bookstores.

“Magic for Dummies” by David Pogue and “Card College 1” by Roberto Giobbi are recommended supplementary reading, but not required. Can be purchased online or from used bookstores.

Required supplementary materials include: 2 decks of Bicycle playing cards (1 red, 1 blue), a close-up pad, 10 feet of cotton rope, seven half dollars, a magic wand, 6 sponge balls, a Benson Bowl, a crazy cube, and a salt shaker. I will have assembled packages for students at a reduced rate ($35 for the above items, which would normally cost $40 - $50 if purchased individually), or they can supply their own. Items in the package will be distributed to students over the course of the semester. There will be additional household and office supplies that I will provide that are included in the package fee (for very common items, students will supply their own).

**Description and Assessment of Assignments**

By the evening of Monday August 27, each student will send me an email with their name, major, reason for taking the course, what they hope to get out of it, specific interest in magic, and previous experience with magic.

Most weeks (with a few exceptions), one to three magic tricks will be taught in class. They will then be rehearsed over the following week and reviewed during the next class.

Nearly every week, one or two chapters of “Hiding the Elephant” will be assigned. Student will write a short commentary/reaction to the chapter(s) read, and comments regarding how their practice sessions are going, and reactions to the guest performers. These are to be written in complete sentences with attention to spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

There will be a field trip to the Magic Castle on October 3 & 4 (students have a choice of which evening to attend).

Two papers will be written during the semester. The first is a subjective description of the field trip experience. (A substitute topic will be assigned if any students are unable to attend the field trip). The second is a research paper on a topic chosen by the student (and approved by the instructor).

**Grading Breakdown**

Including the above detailed assignments, how will students be graded overall? Participation should be no more than 15%, unless justified for a higher amount. All must total 100%.

**Assignment Points % of Grade**

Participation 15 15

Weekly Email Commentary 15 15

Field Trip Paper 10 10

Final Paper 20 20

Written Test 20 20

Card Handling 5 5

Benson Bowl performance 5 5

Final Performance 10 10

**TOTAL 100 100**

**Grading Scale**

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A 95-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F 59 and below

**Assignment Submission Policy**

Weekly reading assignment commentaries are to be emailed to me by Thursday evening of the week following chapter assignments.

The field trip description paper will be submitted in class, on paper, typed or printed, on the October 12 (the Friday of the week following the field trip).

The final paper will be submitted in class, on paper, typed or printed, on the Friday of week 13 of the class.

Card Handling Evaluation will be conducted on the Friday of week 11 of the class.

Benson Bowl Evaluation will be conducted on the Friday of week 13 of the class.

The final performances will be conducted on the Friday of week 15 of the class.

The final exam will be on Monday, December 10 at 8 a.m.

**Grading Timeline**

Grading and feedback of writing assignments will be given within two weeks of submission.

**Additional Policies**

Students are allowed two unexcused absences during the semester.

Students more than five minutes late will be marked tardy. Two tardies will equal one unexcused absence.

Texting, web surfing, cellphone usage, etc. is strictly forbidden in class.

Participation is defined as taking part in class discussions, offering opinions, asking questions, and a willingness to demonstrate/perform magic tricks as they are being rehearsed/taught.

To submit assignments past deadline arrangements must made in advance, and agreed upon.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown: SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

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|  | **Topics/Daily Activities** | **Readings and Homework** | **Deliverable/ Due Dates** |
| Week 1 Aug. 24 | Review Syllabus  Course Overview  Learn Packet Trick  Learn Basic Card Handling | Figure out why Packet Trick works. Send email.  Practice card handling skills |  |
| Week 2 Aug. 31 | Watch magic videos  Revisit Packet Trick  Learn 2 or 3 card tricks | Read Intro, Chapter 1 of “Hiding the Elephant” (HTE), email commentary. Practice card tricks |  |
| Week 3 Sept. 7 | Watch “The Story of Magic” documentary  Review card tricks  Learn 2 or 3 card tricks | Read Chapters 2 & 3 of HTE, email commentary.  Practice card tricks. |  |
| Week 4 Sept. 14 | Review card tricks  Learn 2 or 3 new card tricks. | Read Chapter 4 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 5 Sept. 21 | Review card tricks  Learn 2 or 3 new card tricks. | Read Chapter 5 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 6 Sept. 28 | Review card tricks  Learn Sponge Ball tricks. | Read Chapters 6 & 7 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 7 Oct. 5 | Review Sponge Balls  Learn 2 or 3 impromptu tricks. | Read Chapters 8 of HTE, email commentary. | Magic Castle Field Trip (Oct. 3 &4)  Submit possible final paper topics |
| Week 8 Oct. 12 | Watch performance videos  Review impromptu tricks  Learn 2 or 3 new impromptu tricks. | Read Chapter 9 of HTE, email commentary. | Field Trip Papers due |
| Week 9 Oct. 19 | Review impromptu tricks  Learn Benson Bowl. | Read Chapter 10 of HTE, email commentary. | Final Paper Topic Finalized. |
| Week 10 Oct. 26 | Review Benson Bowl  Learn 2 or 3 coin tricks. | Read Chapter 11 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 11 Nov. 2 | Card Handling Evaluation  Review coin tricks  Learn 2 formal tricks. | Read Chapter 12 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 12 Nov. 9 | Review formal tricks  Review Benson Bowl | Read Chapter 13 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 13 Nov. 16 | Benson Bowl Evaluation  Review semester’s tricks | Read Chapters 14 of HTE, email commentary. | Final Paper Due |
| Week 14 Nov. 23 | Thanksgiving Holiday | Read Chapters 15 & 16 of HTE, email commentary. |  |
| Week 15 Nov. 30 | Final Performances |  |  |
| FINAL Dec. 10 | Written Exam |  | Final Exam is at 8 a.m. |

**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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b](https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b/). 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](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university.  You are encouraged to report all incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity*/*Title IX Office* <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the *Department of Public Safety* [http://dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu/). This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

## **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://ali.usc.edu](http://ali.usc.edu/), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/) 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.