

THTR 499 – Directing Voice Talent for Animation
Fall 2018 - Wednesday 4:00 – 5:50 PM
Locations: MCC 112 / SCB B115 (aka Sound
Production Suite)

Instructor:

John DeMita

Associate Professor of Theater Practice in Acting

Office: JEFF 201a, 2nd Floor

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 8-10 AM (ALL
OFFICE APPOINTMENTS MUST BE SCHEDULED).

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Text).

Course Description and Overview

Every animator will eventually find him or herself directing voice talent. Whether it's a short film, a personal project, or a piece of animation for a client, you will eventually need your characters to speak. And for this, unless someone else does it for you, you will need to direct actors. So how does an animator or director go about getting a great performance from an actor? And what are the specific tools a voice actor needs not only to get the job, but also to offer the highest level of service to the animator by delivering a top-notch performance?

Learning Objectives

Through exercises, improvisations, and scenes, animation students will learn to:

- Articulate your vision with the voice actor, a person who knows far less than you do about the character, story, or concept.
- Create a recording session environment that is conducive to the highest quality product.
- Offer clear, concise, and helpful adjustments to an actor's performance, enabling them to be free and collaborative.

Through exercises, improvisations, and scenes, acting students will learn to:

- Adapt the fundamentals tools of scene and character analysis to the specialized world of voice acting for animation.
- Construct a strong physical and vocal presentation.
- Define and execute strong intentions with the voice.
- Develop the vocal tools and techniques to make choices and adjustments efficiently in the recording studio.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- *Acting and Character Animation*, by Rolf Giesen and Anna Khan
- *The Magic Behind the Voices: A Who's Who of Cartoon Voice Actors*, by Tim Lawson and Alisa Persons
- *Actions, the Actor's Thesaurus*, by Marina Caldarone and Maggie Lloyd-Williams
- Research Material, Articles, and Scripts to be downloaded from Blackboard.

Assignments

Performances, exercises and written assignments will be assessed using the following guidelines:

1. Four in-class simulated recording sessions, requiring preparation demonstrating effective use of the techniques discussed in class. 10 points each.
2. 3-5 written page character analysis, to be completed by both directing and acting students demonstrating shared terminology and mastery of techniques of individual animation/voice character creation. 15 points.
3. 3-5 written page scene analysis, to be completed by both directing and acting students demonstrating shared terminology and mastery of techniques of story structure. 15 points.

Description of Grading Criteria

- Responsible performance of all in-class assignments; and the collaborative participation in preparation of material both in and outside of class time. A pattern of absences or disinterested, uncooperative behavior can lower your final grade by as much as one full grade.
- Credit will be given for any in-class exercise performed on or before the scheduled deadline, and in a manner that reflects thoroughness of preparation.
 - “Excellent” work reflects the student’s high level of preparation, creative problem solving, and initiative. The student has fully committed to his or her choices, and risks have been taken in the performance.
 - “Good” work meets the minimum standards of confident blocking, memorization, and fully realized production values (costumes, props. etc.) This is safe, but uninspired.
 - “Fair” work is indicated when students are “going through the motions,” uncertain of lines and cues, speaking inaudibly, and physically disengaged. The student takes no risks and has made no distinctive choices.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Class will meet in accordance with the USC Final Examination Schedule. The date and time of our Final Examination Session is given on this syllabus; **make all travel plans with this date in mind!**

Assessment of “Participation”

15% of the final grade is earned through class participation. This will be defined as:

- Show up on time – students who are more than 5 minutes late are considered tardy.
- Openness to new methods of working and eagerness to attempt them.
- In class active student analysis and commentary on text.
- Constructive feedback on classmates’ acting presentations.
- Energized support of all classmates’ work.
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and fellow students on one’s own work.
- Meeting all assignment deadlines.
- Memorization of assigned material.

Grading Policy

Grades are not dictated by the instructor’s subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference.

Grades are dictated by active engagement in the class at all times.

Grading Breakdown

Feedback, assessment, and grading of the course will be based on the successful completion of the following assignments by their assigned due dates:

Written Scene Analysis	15 Points
Written Character Analysis.....	15 Points
Recording Sessions (10 Points Each).....	40 Points
Final Exam.....	15 Points

Cumulative Class Participation 15 Points

Total 100 Points

Grading Scale

The final course grade is determined according to the following scale:

Excellent:	A (4) = 100-96	A- (3.7) = 95-90	
Good:	B+ (3.3) = 89-86	B (3) = 85-84	B- (2.7) = 83-80
Average:	C+ (2.3) = 79-76	C (2) = 75-74	C- (1.7) = 73-70
Poor:	D (.7-1.3) = 60's	F (0) = 59 and below	

Excellent = clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight

Good = class material has been understood clearly

Average = class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain

Poor = there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material

Failure = gaps in the completion of work is coupled with poor understanding of class material.

When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been excellent or good and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Further Grading Notes

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W.
- If you are confused or concerned about your performance or the work we are doing in class, please request a meeting to discuss this with me.

COURSE WEEK BY WEEK BREAKDOWN

(This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace and unpredictability of the creative process of the class.)

Week 1 MCC 112	TOPIC: INTRODUCTION TO ANIMATION VOICE ACTING / DIRECTING. BASIC TOOLS OF COLLABORATION AND VOCAL VARIETY.
Week 2 MCC 112	TOPIC: VOCAL CREATION OF CHARACTERS PART TWO. PLACEMENT, TEXTURE, RHYTHM, INFLECTION.
Week 3 MCC 112	TOPIC: SIMULATED AUDITION – “THE LADY BUG” ASSIGN: WRITTEN CHARACTER ANALYSIS.
Week 4 MCC 112	TOPIC: PROFESSIONAL ANIMATION VOICE ACTOR CATHERINE CAVADINI (INCREIBLES 2, POWERPUFF GIRLS) Q & A AND WORKSHOP.
Week 5 MCC 112	TOPIC: ACTOR / DIRECTOR SWITCH – ANIMATION STUDENTS MUST TEACH THE BASICS TO THE ACTING STUDENTS AND VICE VERSA. READ: SELECTED CHAPTERS <i>Actions, the Actor’s Thesaurus</i> ASSIGNMENT DUE: WRITTEN CHARACTER ANALYSIS
Week 6 MCC 112	TOPIC: PROFESSIONAL ANIMATION VOICE DIRECTOR WENDEE LEE Q & A. WENDEE WILL REVIEW ALL CHARACTERS PRIOR TO OUR FIRST SESSION IN STUDIO.
Weeks 7, 8 SCB B115	MIDTERM: WORKING WITH THE MIC. RECORDING SESSIONS – DETAILED CHARACTER CREATION. ADJUSTMENTS TO DIRECTOR’S NOTES.
Week 9 SCB B115	TOPIC: DUBBING WORKSHOP. ANIME AND LIVE ACTION.
Week 10 SCB B115	TOPIC: ADR, LOOPING, BREATHS AND EFFORTS. CHASING A SEQUENCE.
Week 11	TOPIC: ORIGINAL ANIMATION TABLE READ AND PERFORM.

SCB B115	
Week 12	TOPIC: REALITIES OF THE PROFESSIONAL MARKETPLACE. GUEST SPEAKER: PROFESSIONAL VOICE CASTING DIRECTOR. SIMULATED RECORDING SESSION – REALISM VS EXTREME CHARACTERS AND STORIES.
Week 13	TOPIC: INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE CAPTURE GUEST SPEAKER: RICHARD DORTON “MOCAPMAN” DIRECTORS/ACTORS SPLIT OFF WITH RESPECTIVE INSTRUCTORS FOR INDIVIDUAL WORKSHOP AND CRITIQUES. PREPARE FOR FINAL RECORDING SESSIONS
Weeks 14, 15 SCB B115	FINAL: RECORDING SESSION ASSIGNMENT DUE: WRITTEN SCENE ANALYSIS
Week 16	FINAL EXAM Date TBA

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” policy.usc.edu/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>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu