THTR 122  Improvisation and Theatre Games
Units: 2  Section: 62633R
Fall 2019—Tuesdays—4-5:50pm
Location: MCC 109

Instructor: Judith Shelton
Office: MCC 214 or mutually agreed UPC location
Office Hours: Tues. 2:55-3:55pm, please make an appointment
Contact Info: judiths@usc.edu Monday-Thursday, 9am-5pm
626-390-3678 Fridays, via text 9am-9pm

Course Description
Individual and group exercises to free the actor physically and emotionally and to stimulate creativity, imagination, and self-expression. Each class will be a series of playful and thoughtful exercises to help the student discover more about themselves and humanity in general. Show up, each week, ready to play. Leap, and the net will appear!

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course:

- Students will be familiar with the concept of “Yes, and...”
- Students will become familiar with the components of an improv scene
- Students will feel more comfortable with spontaneity and surprises
- Students will feel more flexible and creative in unknown situations
- Students will experience various theatre games and improv exercises and games
- Students will discover the game of each scene and devise how to play it
- Students will explore more of their personal gifts, and work with what they have, joyfully and confidently

Prerequisite(s) none

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
Truth in Comedy: The Manual of Improvisation by Charna Halpern, Del Close and Kim “Howard” Johnson (required)
Improvisation and the Theatre by Viola Spolin (required)
Daily Rituals: How Artists Work by Mason Currey (suggested, but not required)
Art and Fear: Observations on The Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking by David Bayles and Ted Orlando (suggested, but not required)

Recommended Preparation Read the suggested chapters for discussion. Be on time. Wear clothing and shoes you feel comfortable in and can move in. Be willing to be silly, inquisitive and to have each other’s back. Allow not knowing. Just be in the moment and follow your impulses.

Course Notes on Attendance
This is a performance class, all “the good stuff” happens in class. There are no excused absences in this class, for any reason, this is my policy. Also, being late or leaving early will cost you a participation point. I do, however, offer an opportunity to make up 6 points if the need to miss class/arrive late/leave early arises. Please inform me immediately if you have any injuries or any conditions that might prevent you from participating fully in the class. Just come, we can adjust.
Description and Assessment of Assignments and Exercises

Grades are not dictated by the success of scenes and exercises or the instructor’s subjective opinion of talent, intellect or sense of humor.

Grades are dictated by:

Points. Each aspect of class has a point value: participation, exercises, assignments, presentations, Midterm and Final. I provide options to make up 6 points total per semester. Details listed under “Make-Up Options”.

Participation (15 points, total):
- In-class active student analysis of presented materials such as text and video clips
- Constructive feedback on classmates’ work
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and other students to one’s own work
- If a student is late or leaves early, they will lose their participation point for that day

Classwork (45 points, total):
- Due to the performance aspect of improv and theatre games, exercises and homework assignments/presentations will be presented in class, no electronic submissions accepted
- Student invests fully, striving to be open and honest and improve over time
- If a student misses an exercise/assignment/presentation, student accepts that they have missed their opportunity to play and will lose points which will impact their grade
- All presentations are given in class, no electronic submissions accepted

Midterm (20 points):
- The Midterm is a paper worth 20 points, due at the beginning of class, and should be two full pages, double-spaced, name on each page, and stapled
- The Midterm may not be submitted electronically, it must be handed in
- Printing problems happen during Midterms. Printing problems are not my problem, please plan ahead. No late papers or electronic submissions accepted.
- Not handing in a paper will result in a loss of 20 points, which will impact your grade

Final (20 points):
- The Final paper is worth 20 points, due at the beginning of class, and should be two full pages, double-spaced, name on each page, and stapled.
- The Final may not be submitted electronically, it must be handed in.
- Printing problems happen during Finals. Printing problems are not my problem, please plan ahead. No late papers or electronic submissions accepted.
- Not handing in a paper will result in a loss of 20 points, which will impact your grade.
- It is University policy that classes must meet for the Final Examination on the day and time established by the University. Plan ahead to avoid conflict with other Finals.

Make-up options:
- If you miss an exercise, assignment or presentation, you may make up 6 points, total, by Friday, Dec. 6th at 11:59pm. I will check the time stamp.
- You may make up 6 points by attending an improv show, OFF CAMPUS/NON-USC ONLY.
- You may make up 3 points by attending an improv show, ON CAMPUS.
- You must photograph the space
- You must email the photo AND two hearty paragraphs on the experience to the entire class, and me, via the specific class email chain I will create
- Technical/email/link issues will result in a loss of points, double check your submission
- Make-up points cannot take you over 100 points
Grading Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class exercises</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Paper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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Grading Scale
Course final grades will be determined using 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
**Fail:** F (0) = 59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy
Assignments are presented in class, no electronic submissions or late work accepted.

Grading Timeline
I will return your Midterm paper by October 22nd. I am happy to discuss your grade with you at any time, please make an appointment.

Additional Policies
Absolutely no phones, computers, gadgets in class. Of course, you may have them, but they must be closed and put away during class time. We will shut out the noise so we can make our own! (Corny? You betcha!)

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Homework</th>
<th>Deliverable/ Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up, introductions and discussion of syllabus (our contract).</td>
<td>Ch. 1 Truth in Comedy</td>
<td>To discuss in week 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What is Improv, Anyway?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion of reading In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 1 Improvisation for the Theatre</td>
<td>To discuss in week 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Creative Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion of reading In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 2 Improvisation for the Theatre Workshop Procedures</td>
<td>To discuss in week 4</td>
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<td>page 18-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion of reading In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 2-3 Truth in Comedy</td>
<td>To discuss in week 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But, Seriously Folks... Support and Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Discussion of reading&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 2 <em>Improvisation for the Theatre</em>&lt;br&gt;Workshop Procedures-page 21-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Discussion of reading&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 4-5 <em>Truth in Comedy</em>&lt;br&gt;Agreement&lt;br&gt;Initiations and Game Moves&lt;br&gt;Bring in questions for our visitors</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Visiting improv team performance and Q &amp; A&lt;br&gt;In-class exercise</td>
<td>Write Midterm paper&lt;br&gt;assessing progress in class and goals going forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>MIDTERM&lt;br&gt;Discussion of papers, discoveries and insights&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Enjoy your Fall Recess. Relax your mind and rest, that’s an order!</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Observations on rest and silence&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 6-7 <em>Truth in Comedy</em>&lt;br&gt;Moment to Moment to Moment&lt;br&gt;Building a Scene</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Discussion of reading&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 8-9 <em>Truth in Comedy</em>&lt;br&gt;One Mind, Many Bodies&lt;br&gt;Environmentally Aware</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Discussion of reading&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 11 <em>Improvisation for the Theatre</em>&lt;br&gt;Emotion-page 237-239&lt;br&gt;Ch. 12 <em>Improvisation for the Theatre</em>&lt;br&gt;Character-page 253-257</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Discussion of reading&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises</td>
<td>Ch. 2 <em>Improvisation for the Theatre</em>&lt;br&gt;Reminders and Pointers-page 36-46</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Discussion of reading&lt;br&gt;In-class exercises&lt;br&gt;Divide into groups</td>
<td>Groups conceive “New Game”&lt;br&gt;For classmates to play</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Teach and lead us all in your new games</td>
<td>Enjoy Thanksgiving Break.&lt;br&gt;You know the drill.&lt;br&gt;...There is no drill, just pie.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>First Improv Jam-&lt;br&gt;Games and scenes&lt;br&gt;Decide which games and scenes we’d like to play in the Final</td>
<td>Final paper due:&lt;br&gt;What are your new skills?&lt;br&gt;How do you plan on using these skills going forward? How could they be helpful in school, work and relationships, for example?</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL</td>
<td>FINAL Improv Jam-&lt;br&gt;Guests encouraged and welcomed!</td>
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KEY DATES
Friday, Sept. 13: Last day to add, or drop this class without a “W”, or to select “P/NP”
Friday, October 11: Last day to change “P/NP” to letter grade
Thursday – Friday, October 17-18: Fall Recess
Friday, November 15: Last day to drop this class with a mark of “W”
Wednesday – Sunday, November 27-December 1: Thanksgiving Recess
Friday, December 6: Fall semester classes end
Saturday – Tuesday, Dec 7-10: Study days
Wednesday – Wednesday, December 11-18: Final examinations

Additional Notes
• Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class at any time.

Welcome to Improv and Theatre Games, dear students! It is a joy and privilege to get to know each of you through our collaborative and creative exploration of what happens at the intersection of humanity and circumstance. Let’s do good work, endeavor to know ourselves better, risk a little, support each other, make lasting friendships, and reveal our true selves in our work and play. We are going to have a blast!

Judith Shelton (Jude)

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EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS AND ISPS

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, home work that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

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.

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 for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis
In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university’s site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.
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