**THTR 427-AUDITION TECHNIQUE FOR FILM, TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA**

**USC**School of Dramatic Arts

**(2.0 Units)**

**Fall 2019-Friday-2:00-4:50 PM**

**Shrine (SHR)-Room 105**

**Instructor: DAN SHANER**

**Office:** Jefferson #206A

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Contact Info:** [dshaner@usc.edu](mailto:dshaner@usc.edu)

**323-533-2463**

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**Course Description and Overview**

This course develops and perfects auditioning skills needed to successfully build a career as an actor and compete at a professional level in a variety of film, television and new media venues. Focus includes:

* Identifying type, essence and age range as it applies to choosing roles and branding and marketing
* Breaking down and analyzing sides and scenes to discover emotional complexity and uniqueness of character to aid in making bold, unique choices
* Sharpening cold reading and on-camera skills, including practical technical aspects of filmed auditions
* Developing professional etiquette and decorum
* Learning the art of researching, self-taping and self-submitting on projects
* Demystifying pilot season casting
* Assessing personal habits and fears that might inhibit effective auditions
* Collecting and preparing appropriate audition materials
* Integrating acting skills into fully realized audition pieces

**Learning Objectives**

To provide each actor-student with practical as well as skills-based preparation for a professional career, to integrate instructors’ direction, criticism and feedback in a positive and professional manner, and develop confidence, presence and professional decorum on-camera and in a collaborative environment.

**Prerequisite: THTR 101 and THTR 252B**

**Grading Scale and Criteria:**

**A** indicates work of excellent quality **(100 to 90%);** **B** of good quality **(90 to 80%);** **C** of average quality **(80 to 70%);** **D** of below average quality **(70 to 60%);** and **F** indicates inadequate work **(50% and below)**

A= In addition to technical competence, student has demonstrated creativity,

originality and imagination in his/her approach to the work.

B = Student has achieved the goals stated for the course, certain skills being stronger than others, but without consistent application.

C = Student comprehends the goals intellectually, but is not able to apply them on a consistent basis and does not use his/her creativity and imagination fully. Student may not fully demonstrate a professional and disciplined approach to the work.

D = Student lacks comprehension of the goals and/or is inadequate in achieving them. Student has serious problems with professionalism and/or discipline.

F = Student fails to comprehend the goals stated for the semester.

The instructor reserves the right to consider studentship in determining the final grade.

+/- may be added to any grade

**Grading Breakdown:**

Course will contain **three written homework assignments:**

1. What’s My Type? Exercise- **(5%)**-Due beginning of Week Two
2. List of uploading video sites and self-taping studios- **(5%)-**Typed and turned in. Due beginning of Week Six.
3. Deadline Hollywood Pilot Panic Research- **(5%)**-Typed and turned in. Due beginning of Week Ten.

**AND four practical application assignments:** The analysis and breakdown of scenes given in class. Grades will be based on assessment of understanding the six basic principles of diagramming a scene illustrated in the syllabus: What, How, When, Where, Why and Who in:

1. Guest Star scenes performed in Week Three- **(17.5%)**
2. Co-Star scenes performed in Week Eight- **(17.5%)**
3. Mock casting session scenes in Week Nine- **(17.5%)**

AND

1. Appropriateness of scenes chosen based on age range, character type and overall suitability in Week Fifteen- **(17.5%)**
2. Studentship (Attendance, Professionalism, Discipline, Responsibility and Participation)- **(15%)**

**For Course Assignments:**

**All assignments must be typed and printed out and are due when requested. HAND WRITTEN WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Please do not email assignments unless prior arrangements have been made.**

**Required Textbook:** How To Audition on Camera: A Hollywood Insiders’ Guide for Actors-Second Edition By Sharon Bialy (2016) Available on Amazon and USC Library.

**Suggested Additional Textbook:** Working Actor by David Dean Bottrell (2019) Available on Amazon.

**Sides/Scenes:** Will be distributed ahead of time, via email, unless otherwise specified.

**Additional Policies:**

* All students will be expected to bring and keep a separate notebook or tablet for lecture notes. Please keep all assignments and homework returned to you.
* **CELL PHONES ARE NOT ALLOWED IN CLASS** except for students with emergency situations discussed privately and approved by instructor, or when being used for a specific exercise.
* Students are requested to arrive on time (which means early) to class.
* **ATTENDANCE IN CLASS IS MANDATORY.** If you must miss class, please notify me AHEAD OF TIME, preferably in writing.
* University guidelines prohibit eating in classrooms.
* Professionalism in class is paramount. This includes talking or leaving the room while others are speaking or performing scenes and treating others with courtesy and respect.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

**(NOTE: Dates and discussions subject to change, especially regarding availability of Guest Stars. Assignment due dates will not change without advanced notice.)**

**WEEK ONE**

**8/30**

**TELLING YOUR STORY, DISCOVERING YOUR ESSENCE, AND TYPECASTING IN FILM AND TV**

* Teacher introduction. Review of syllabus and materials.
* **HANDOUT: “**What Is Your Type?”
* **EXERCISE:** Introducing yourself, being comfortable in the room, telling “your” story. Standing out in the crowd, presenting yourself “dynamically.”
* **DISCUSSION:** “The Business” and what it takes to succeed as an actor.
* Review types of Auditions and Casting Situations.
* Discovering your type, age range, and essence. Self-perception vs. how others perceive you.
* Choosing roles that are “right” for you.
* The differences between “miscast” and “typecast.”
* **HANDOUT:** Watchlist-374 great films.
* **HOMEWORK:** “What’s My Type” exercise and handout. Due beginning of Week Two.
* **TEXTBOOK:** Forward, Authors Note, Introduction.

**WEEK TWO**

**9/6**

**DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION OF HOMEWORK FROM WEEK ONE**

**ANALYZING MATERIAL**

**DISCUSSION:** Identifying style/tone/genre/pace of scenes and shows. Dissecting the six basic principles of analyzing and breaking down a scene:

1. WHAT does your character want?
2. HOW are they going to get it?
3. WHEN in the narrative does the scene take place?
4. WHERE does the scene take place, and what impact does environment have?
5. WHY is the scene in the script?
6. WHO is the character, based on their behavior/actions/dialogue?

* Making bold and surprising choices every time.
* Bringing your personality and inherent uniqueness into a character.
* Finding the transitions, subtext, and action words of the scene. What does punctuation mean?

**RESEARCHING THE SHOW/SHOWRUNNERS/FILMMAKERS**

* **DISCUSSION:** Who are the principals or “elements” in the project, how to find out more about them, and why it matters.
* **HOMEWORK:** Analyze and break down scenes given out in class.
* **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 1-4

**WEEK THREE**

**9/13**

**PREPARING TO AUDITION-Starts the minute you enter the building**

* **DISCUSSION:** Preparing material.
* **HANDOUT:** 21 Things That Make Casting Directors Happy.
* What to wear.
* Arrival and waiting room etiquette.
* Entering the room with purpose, confidence and calm.
* What to bring with you.
* Dos, don’ts and questions to ask.
* Appropriate use of props, costumes, furniture and pantomime.
* The three Ps: Professionalism, Punctuality, Preparation.
* The reader.
* The camera.
* Re-directs. What they mean, how to handle them, or the absence of them.
* Translating Casting Director and Director-speak.
* The Actors Survival Kit.

**ON-CAMERA AUDITIONS**

* **EXERCISE:** Begin auditioning homework scenes assigned in Week 2
* **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 5-12 (Chapters are short)

**WEEK FOUR**

**9/20**

**ON-CAMERA AUDITIONS CONTINUED**

* **EXERCISE:** Call-backs. What to do differently or the same. Wardrobe choices.
* The finer points of re-directs and adjustments.
* Each student will have the opportunity to perform scene twice with feedback.
* Playback of film and critique.
* **SPECIAL GUEST STAR: TALENT AGENT OR MANAGER TBA**
* Will assist in shaping auditions and call-backs.
* **HANDOUT:** Cold-reading tips.
* **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 13-20

**WEEK FIVE**

**9/27**

**COLD-READING TECHNIQUES FOR FILM, TV AND NEW MEDIA**

* **DISCUSSION:** Analyzing material on a moment’s notice.
* Shaping your auditions.
* Things to know fast and first.
* What to expect in a cold-read and why they happen.
* Re-directs and adjustments.
* **EXERCISE:** Each student will perform twice on-camera.
* Playback and critique.
* **HOMEWORK:** Research uploading video sites and self-tape studios in preparation for Week Six. Typed and printed out.

**WEEK SIX**

**10/4**

**SELF-SUBMITTING AND SELF-TAPING**

* **DISCUSSION:** Finding auditions.
* Choosing worthwhile projects and ones to avoid.
* Dos and don’ts of self-submitting.
* **EXERCISE:** Shooting, editing and uploading of self-tapes, including lighting, framing, clothing, coloring, readers, sound and slates.
* Each student will shoot a self-tape audition with material they have chosen. Bring your cell phones to class. Make sure you have enough storage.
* **REVIEW:** Research homework from Week Five.
* **HOMEWORK:** Submit to me via email, Dropbox, Hightail, We Transfer, Google Drive, etc.
* **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 20-25

**WEEK SEVEN**

**10/11**

**REVIEW OF SELF-TAPES (**This assignment will serve as a mid-term assessment to gauge understanding and application of skills learned thus far)

* **EXERCISE:** Feedback, critique and re-directs. Re-shoots as necessary.
* **HOMEWORK:** Prepare co-star and featured “one-liner” roles.

**WEEK EIGHT**

**10/18 FALL RECESS**

**WEEK NINE**

**10/25**

**HOW TO AUDITION FOR CO-STAR AND FEATURED ROLES ON CAMERA**

* **DISCUSSION:** How not to stand out.
* Tricks and techniques including S.L.A.P. (Say it like a person).
* Miscasting and typecasting, and the differences between them.
* **EXERCISE:** Auditioning scenes on camera.
* Feedback and re-directs.
* Second round of auditions will feature several actors reading the same role.
* **HOMEWORK:** Prepare scenes for mock casting session.
* **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 26-Conclusion

**WEEK TEN**

**11/1**

**MOCK CASTING SESSION AUDITIONS ON-CAMERA**

* **EXERCISE:** Two or more actors will receive the same material. The rest of the class will be the Casting Directors.
* Re-directs and discussion of actors.
* Call-backs. At least one actor from each group will be eliminated. The rest of the class and eliminated actors will be Producers.
* **DISCUSSION:** How is a cast assembled? How does type, look, essence, personality, physicality and talent come into play when choosing a cast? What happens when no one is chosen?
* **HOMEWORK:** Prepare scenes for pilot season auditions. Deadline Hollywood Pilot Panic. (Type Primetime Pilot Panic 2017 into search bar). Pick three pilots that interest you. Include all elements, storyline, and reason you chose it. Typed and printed out.
* **TEXTBOOK:** Glossary and Audition checklist.

**WEEK ELEVEN**

**11/8**

**PILOT SEASON -- PILOT PRE-READS AND CALL-BACKS ON CAMERA**

* **EXERCISE:** Two or more actors will receive the same material, (Distributed as Week Nine Homework). The rest of the class will rotate as Casting Directors.
* Re-directs and call-backs. Two or more actors will move to Studio Testing phase.
* **DISCUSSION:** Quotes, holds, contracts, and testing preparation.
* **REVIEW:** Pilot Panichomework assignment from Week Nine.
* **HOMEWORK:** Choose your own material for Film auditions in Week 13.

**WEEK TWELVE**

**11/15**

**STUDIO TESTS-AUDITION AT STUDIO OR PRODUCTION COMPANY LEVEL ON-CAMERA**

* **EXERCISE:** Director work session.
* Studio Executive casting session. We will attempt to re-create Studio Environment as much as possible. At least one actor per role will be eliminated and join Executive/Producer panel.
* **DISCUSSION:** What works, what doesn’t. Creating a cast. Dealing with stress, anxiety, nerves and rejection.

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

**11/22**

**NETWORK TESTS-AUDITION AT NETWORK LEVEL ON-CAMERA**

* **EXERCISE:** Network casting session. We will attempt to re-create actual Network environment as much as possible.
* One actor for each role will be chosen. Or not. As actors are eliminated, the will join the Executive/Producer Panel.
* **DISCUSSION:** What happens now? The ins and outs of Network casting, screen tests, self-tapes. Competing in the global marketplace.
* **HANDOUT:** The Big 10: Questions To Ask Your Head Shot Photographer

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

**11/29**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

**12/6**

**FEATURE FILM AUDITIONS ON CAMERA** (This assignment will serve as a final exam assessment to gauge understanding and application of skills learned throughout the semester)

* **DISCUSSION:** Similarities and differences to TV.
* Directors’ medium vs. writers’ medium.
* Tricks to use and traps to avoid.
* Processing feedback and demonstrating flexibility.
* **EXERCISE:** Each actor will audition with material they have chosen. (Week 10 homework).
* **SPECIAL GUEST STAR: CASTING DIRECTOR TBA**
* Will assist in shaping auditions and call-backs

**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](https://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.

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**Support Systems:**

*Campus Support & Intervention (CSI) – (213) 740-0411*

Campus Support & Intervention is an office within Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention. We are a team of professionals here to assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues. Whether you are here seeking support for yourself or someone else, we are available to help you problem solve, understand options, and connect with resources. <https://uscsa.usc.edu>

*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](https://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](http://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](https://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: <https://titleix.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](http://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. <https://titleix.usc.edu/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu/)

*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](https://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu/)