

USC School of Dramatic Arts

SOT #305A Directing

Spring 2020 – Mondays and Wednesdays– 8 until 9:50a.m.

Location: PED 208

Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer

Office: MCC 204

Office Hours: Tues and Thurs. 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in MCC or by appointment please. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to speak privately with the instructor about individual in-class progress

Contact Info: shroyer@usc.edu; (213) 740-8904

Course Description

Examination of basic directorial principles: Pre-production analysis, casting, rehearsal procedures; relationship of the director to actor; integration of technical aspects of production. Course focus will emphasize developing strength and confidence in the areas of communication and collaboration.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course the student will have:

- Researched, cast, rehearsed and completed in class presentations, excerpts from two theatrical texts.
- Gained practical experience in the role of director through classroom exercises and in the presentation of scene-work (from published plays).
- Assembled a notebook of process and procedures employed by stage directors.
- Compiled and presented two books that document and support the director's artistic choices and processes used in the actualizing and presentation of scene-work.

Learning Aspirations

- To acquire a basic understanding of the skills and procedures required of a stage director to mount a theatrical production.
- To encourage the cultivation of the leadership skills necessary in the creation of an ensemble brought together for the purpose of play production.
- To embrace the role of the director as a collaborative individual, able to articulate and shape vision while embracing the creativity of the design team and actors.
- To gain practical experience in the role of director through classroom exercises and in the presentation of scene-work directed by the student.

Prerequisite(s): Admittance to the BFA in Acting for Stage, Screen and New Media

Co-Requisite (s): THTR 120A, THTR 140A and THTR 125

Concurrent Enrollment: THTR 120A, THTR 140A and THTR 125

Recommended Preparation: N/A

Assignments and Schedule

February 24, 26 and March 2,4	Observed Rehearsals of First Scene (from <i>Snow Angel</i> or <i>Final Placement</i>)
March 9 & 11	Midterm. Presentation of First Scene and Director's Book #1 due.
March 30 & 4/1	Vision Presentations for Second Scene.
April 6 & 8	Environment present for second scene
April 13,15,20,22	Observed Rehearsals of Second Scene
April 29 & May 11	4/29 shares during final class period 8-9:50a.m. 5/11 shares during our University Final 11a.m.-1p.m. Director's Book #2 due with presentation of scene.
May 11	Peer Notes Due.

Textbook and Materials

Required Text:

- *A Sense of Direction*, William Ball
- *Cages* by Lewis John Carlino
- *Win/Lose/Draw* by Ara Watson and Mary Gallagher
- *Notes on Directing: 130 Lessons in Leadership from the Director's Chair* by Frank Hauser
- *Steal Like an Artist* by Austin Kleon
- *A text of your choice* (for your vision project).

Materials:

- A notebook to serve as your Director's Book for the semester.
- Class notebook. It must have the ability to hold inserts and handouts that will be accumulated across the semester.
- Students are responsible for providing necessary props, costumes, and set pieces for scene work. Lack of preparation in this area will seriously weaken your grade.

Practical Assignments

Midterm: As the director... rehearse and present a 5-minute scene from either *Snow Angel* or *Final Placement*.

Final: As the director...rehearse and present a 5-minute scene from a play of your choice.

Written Assignments

- A. **305A Class Notebook:** Throughout the semester each student will maintain a notebook containing; classroom notes and observations, copies of the working texts, pertinent research source material related to scene work and rehearsal notes. This may be checked and referenced during observed rehearsals. You will find that portions of this notebook will be part of your Director's Book turned in at the final sharing of your scenes.
- B. **Director's Book:** This is to accompany the final share of each scene (midterm and vision plays). Your Director's Book for each scene has the following components:
1. The Cornerstones for Success.
 2. A journaling of your rehearsals (Dates, Goals for session, Account of the session process and Plans for next rehearsal).
 3. Your rehearsal script.
 4. Objectives, character descriptions, beats, ground plans, prop lists.
 5. Any and all content from your class notebook pertinent to your process.
 6. Peer observation notes.
 7. Reference materials and research pertinent to the play (playwright and world of play).
 8. A summary discussion (see* below) of the director's experience and development of process. This is your opportunity for "20/20 Hindsight".

*For your summary discussion...what surprised you? Was anything exactly what you expected? What did you find "easy"? What provided the greatest challenge? Be sure to also include ideas/projections as to how you would fine-tune the process next time. Remember that looking back is a viable way to see forward! Make use of references from *A Sense of Direction* and pertinent classroom discussions.

Director's book #1 due with the first scene presentation.

Director's book #2 due at time of your Vision Scene Final Presentation.

Vision Scene Peer Notes Due at Final May 11th, 2019.

Course Notes

Hint about the Written Work of a Director

Be diligent about documenting your curiosities. Don't put off jotting down thoughts!! An idea may seem so vivid at the time it occurs to you but you'll find setting down to write 24 hours (or 8 weeks) after you had the idea is a sure way to lose it. Don't know what to write about? Write about what you observe in the work of others. How effective is the work in final production? Watching, assessing the result of other processes is a sure way to clarify your own.

Note on Staging

No actual weapons can be used in scenes, and if you intend to use a prop weapon, please discuss this with me. Anything resembling an actual weapon must be cleared with Els Collins and the USC Dept. of Safety.

Attendance, Time Requirements and Additional Policies

- 1) This is a *process-oriented* class. Attendance is imperative. Class exercises and discussions are experiential in nature and “make-up” work is not possible. Scheduled observed rehearsals that are missed will not be rescheduled.
- 2) Late work will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor and then will be docked no less than 2-points per day past due. Written work that is accepted after the due date must be date stamped by personnel in the DRC administrative office before being placed in the instructors’ mailbox.
- 3) To give yourself the most positive experience in 305A be punctual, prepared, and responsible, as other students are depending on you. Remember, you are the Director.
- 4) There shall be no unexcused absences. Three tardy episodes constitute one absence. Acting in a classmate’s scene is encouraged and will count as 1 point of extra credit toward your final grade. A maximum of 2 extra credit points are possible per semester.
- 5) Check your email and Blackboard regularly. These tools will be used to communicate scheduling changes and other timely information.
- 6) Cell phones are to be turned off and put away for the duration of class.
- 7) Electronic capture of any portion of class is strictly prohibited without prior approval of the instructor.

Grading Breakdown

30 points	Class-work and observed rehearsals.
20	First Scene
10	Director’s Book #1
25	Second Scene
15	Director’s Book #2 (10pts) Peer Notes (5pts)
<i>100</i>	<i>Total points possible</i>

Grading is done on a curve using a 100-point scale. Observed rehearsals are graded in concert with the point value of class-work. Scenes are graded based on clear evidence of preparedness and attention to objectives set forth by class discussions and the observed rehearsal.

* An extra credit point can be achieved by acting in a classmate’s scene. —A maximum of 2 scenes per semester are allowed.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Classwork & Rehearsals	30	30%
First Scene	20	20%
Director's Book #1	10	10%
Second Scene	25	25%
Director's Book #2	10	10%
Peer Notes	5	5%
TOTAL	100	100%

Process and Progression

Week 1	1/13	Introduction. Course outline.
	1/15	Discussion: the role of the director. Assignment: Read <u>Snow Angel</u> from <u>Cages</u> and <u>Final Placement</u> from <u>Win/Lose/Draw</u> by Wed., Jan. 16 th .
Week 2	1/20	Martin Luther King Day. University holiday. Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. The Cornerstones for Success. Have read; <u>A Sense of Direction</u> pages 3 through 44.
	1/22	Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. The Cornerstones for Success. Have read; <u>A Sense of Direction</u> pages 3 through 44. Assignment: Answer questions for Directors Play analysis for <u>Snow Angel</u> and <u>Final Placement</u> .
Week 3	1/27	Auditioning. Casting. Have read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 44 through 69.
	1/29	Casting cont.
Week 4	2/3	Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage them to talk to each other? Have read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 70 through 92.
	2/5	Rehearsal. The journey of storytelling begins. Sense of place and time. Your rehearsal environment. Introduce beats/objectives. Have read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 93-124.
Week 5	2/10 & 12	Continue work on objectives. Composition and Picturization. Directorial shaping of the scene. Stages in rehearsal progression. ** Note: Begin search for second (vision play) project. **
Week 6	2/17	Presidents Day. University Holiday.
	2/19	Physicalizing of Action in "Blocking". Secondary activity and physical action that supports story and character objectives.
Week 7	2/24	Observed Rehearsals. Search for second project (Vision play).
	2/26	Observed Rehearsals (<u>Snow Angel</u> & <u>Final Placement</u>). Vision play chosen.
Week 8	3/2 & 3/4	Observed rehearsals. Script for Vision play green-lighted by instructor.
Week 9	3/9 & 3/11	Midterm share. Presentation of <u>Snow Angel</u> and <u>Final Placement</u> scenes. Director's Book #1 Due.

**** Spring Break March 15th –22nd ****

Week 10	3/23 & 3/25	Director's Vision. World of the Play. Technical elements. Have read: <u><i>Sense of Direction</i></u> pages 125 to end of text.
Week 11	3/30 & 4/1	Vision Presentations
Week 12	4/6 & 4/8	Presentation of Vision play environment set-up and use of playing areas. Group feedback/discussion.
Week 13	4/13 & 15	Observed Rehearsals. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
Week 14	4/20 & 22	Observed Rehearsals continued. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
Week 15	4/27	Semester Wrap-up. Class discussion of notes from first presentation of second scenes. Troubleshooting session for rehearsal questions.
	4/29	Begin final presentation of second scenes, Wed. April 24 th and cont. Mon., May 6 th 11:00a.m.- 1:00 p.m. (Director's Paper Packet #2 due at time of students' scene presentation).

Final Exam: Mon., May 11th 11:00 until 1:00p.m. Director's Book #2 due at final presentation of vision scene.

***** Reading assignments should be completed by the day listed. *****

***** Process and progression subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group *****

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

*****This syllabus serves as your contract for course 305A, Spring Semester 2020*****