

USC School of Dramatic Arts

SOT #305B Directing

Spring 2020 – Mon. and Wed. – 10:30a.m. until 12:20p.m.

Location: PED 208

Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer

Office: MCC 204

Office Hours: Tues and Thurs. 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. 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

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Course Description

A continuation of the 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 conception of a director's vision as well as deepening strength and confidence in the areas of communication and collaboration in the production process.

Course Objectives

- 1) To develop a production concept for a full theatrical performance.
- 2) To actualize said concepts through classroom exercises and in the presentation of scene-work (from published plays).
- 3) To research, compile and present a director's book that documents and supports the artistic choices and processes used to actualize the presentation of scene-work.

Learning Aspirations

- 1) To deepen the basic understanding of skills and procedures required of a stage director to mount a theatrical production as introduced in 305A.
- 2) To identify, cultivate and individualize the leadership skills necessary in the creation of an ensemble.
- 3) To explore 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.
- 4) To explore and codify the director's obligation to an audience.

Assignments and Schedule

- 1) **Creative Expansion Discussions:** Throughout the first six weeks of the semester conduct an ongoing perusal/survey of creativity principles as outlined in a book addressing such (I suggest but don't demand, you select from *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, *Art and Reality* and *The Art Spirit*) draft a question after selecting a topic, principle, idea about creativity, imagination or collaboration that

intrigues you. Bring your question, principle, and/or idea etc. to class and be prepared to facilitate a group discussion/idea exchange around your intrigue.

Due: March 2nd and 4th.

- The director as collaborative theatre artist must above all else be able to consider multiple ways to view possibility in order to avoid rigidity in creative thinking. The purpose of this presentation/leadership exercise is to:
- Expand our notion of the creative process.
- Facilitate provocative yet useful discussion/action ignited by your question. The challenge is to create a “room” where all have been heard, valued and the group has moved “forward” surrounding the notion. (Please consider that “forward” doesn’t necessarily mean agreement or resolution).

2) Creative Expansion Reflection Paper: After you’ve led your class discussions, take time to reflect, and then distill your thoughts into a paper addressing the following:

- Theorize value at conclusion of (and in the aftermath of) your discussion. Did the process of this discussion *expand* rather than *contract* creative thinking?
- Do you see creative value in the challenging of (or disagreeing with) the idea/thought as well as its embrace? How so or how not so?
- Articulate what have you learned about your groups (or ensemble) dynamic through this process.
- Finally, are you able to put into words a process for expanding *your* creativity? Feel free to embrace or reject (or anything in between) the sourcebook that began this midterm adventure!

Due: Wed. March 11th.

3) Vision Project: For a play of your choice (and greenlighted by the instructor), conceptualize and articulate a directors’ vision. Then cast, rehearse and present an excerpt from the vision play at specific intervals throughout the term (length of excerpt TBD). Final sharing will be part of your **Final Exam: Mon. May 11th 8-10a.m.**

4) Director’s Journal: While working on your Vision Play you will keep a notebook journaling the vision process. This notebook is due at the final scene showing.

- Your journal for the vision project has the following components:
- Vision/concept statement.
- Play analysis.
- Design guidance for World of Play.
- Your character descriptions, objectives and prop lists.

- Director's rehearsal script with margin notes and beat breakdowns.
- Ground plan/environment sketches and prop lists.
- A journaling of your rehearsals.
- Any and all pertinent materials from your semester Director's notebook.
- Reference materials and research pertinent to your project.
- A summary discussion (see note below) of the directing experience and development of process. Consider how your work in the theatre might be affected after this experience in Directing 305b.

Course Notes

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 your own discipline might be affected now that you have some insight into the director's role in collaboration. Make use of references from your assigned readings, required texts and pertinent classroom discussions. Due: at the Final, Mon., May 11th 8-10a.m. as part of the directors book.

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.

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.

Note from the Instructor

Directing is a process that takes time to experiment with, absorb and understand. Do not become impatient. Remain positive and curious about the work. Remember the results are not instantaneous. Your commitment to the directing process is of much greater importance than a definitive result. Each student works, learns and leads in a unique manner.

Textbook and Materials

Required Texts:

A Sense of Direction, William Ball

Play Directing, Francis Hodge-Michael McClain

Notes on Directing, Lessons from a Directors Chair, by Frank Hauser
Scripts for class work and for your vision/concept play
Steal Like An Artist, by Austin Kleon (also check out the PDF online)
The Maids by Jean Genet (also check out PDF online-
web.mit.edu/jscheib/Public/phf/themaids.pdf)

Recommended Texts:

Directors on Directing, by Toby Cole and Helen Chinoy
The Art Spirit, by Robert Henri
Lateral Thinking, Edward De Bono
Art and Reality by Joyce Cary
(Feel free to recommend other relevant books on aesthetics, the creative process, and artistic collaboration)

Materials:

A notebook is required that can 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.

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 in class 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. Hard copy written work that is accepted after the due date must be date stamped in the DRC administrative office before being placed in the instructors’ mailbox.
- 3) To give yourself the most positive experience in 305b; 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.
- 5) Acting in a classmate’s scene is encouraged and will count as 2-points of extra credit toward your final grade.
- 6) Check your email and Blackboard regularly. Scheduling changes and other timely information will be communicated in these manners.
- 7) Cell phones are to be turned off and put away for the duration of class.
- 8) Electronic Capture of any portion of class is strictly prohibited without prior approval of the instructor.

Grading

30 points	Class-work and observed rehearsals.
20	Creative Expansion Discussion
10	Creative Expansion Reflection Paper
25	Vision Project
15	Directors Journal (10pts) Peer Notes (5pts)
100	Total points possible*

Grading is done on a curve using a 100-point scale. In class rehearsals are graded in concert with grading of class-work. Scenes are graded based on clear evidence of preparedness and intended objective in each presentation effort.

*** Two extra credit points can be achieved by acting in a classmate's scene. ***

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Classwork & Obs Rehearsals	30	30%
Creative Expansion Discussion	20	20%
Creative Expansion Paper	10	10%
Vision Project	25	25%
Director's Journal	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

Process and Progression

Week 1	1/13	Introduction. Course outline. The role of the director. Begin Search for your Vision play. What is Director's Vision? For Wed. Briefing of a director you admire and why...
	1/15	Have read: Article by Louis Jouvot, "The Profession of the Director" Assignment: read and research <i>The Maids</i> by Jean Genet web.mit.edu/jscheib/Public/phf/themaids.pdf for Wed. Jan.23 rd .
Week 2	1/20	Martin Luther King Day. University Holiday.
	1/22	The Directors Toolbox and The Cornerstones of Success. Play analysis, World of Play, Given Circumstances and Dialogue, Dramatic Action, Character, Beats, Idea/Initial instinct, Objectives... <i>Vision!</i> Have read: Article by Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, "The Three Faces of the Director" & <u><i>A Sense of Direction</i></u> , pages 3 through 36.

Week 3	1/27	The Directors Toolbox cont. Discuss a director's primary study of text.
	1/29	Have read: Chapters 2-6 in Hodge McLain Director's Cornerstones for <i>The Maids</i>
Week 4	2/3	Group work on <i>The Maids</i>
	2/5	Group work on <i>The Maids</i> . Vision Play greenlighted.
Week 5	2/10&12	Begin Vision Plays! Workshops on Vision. Be prepared to share initial instincts for your plays based on "Guidelines for a Director's Research." General Beauty/Design Concepts/Logistics. Character Iconography. Vision project production teams assigned. Have read: Articles by David Belasco, "Creating Atmosphere", Nikolai Okhlopkov, "Creative Interplay", Chapter 17 "Directing is Designing" Hodge McLain.
Week 6	2/17	Presidents Day (University holiday). In preparation & support for rehearsal read: A Sense of Direction, pp.44-69
	2/19	Vision Presentations for instructor greenlit play of your choice.
Week 7	2/24	Vision Presentations cont.
	2/26	Casting. Character Iconic Work shared.
Week 8	3/2&3/4	Midterm. Creative Expansion Discussions
Week 9	3/9&11	Begin Observed Rehearsals. Table Reads (Include director's play analysis discussions) Have read pp. 154-163 in Hodge McLain. Focus on working with actors. Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage and support their creative impulses? At your leisure peruse <i>A Sense of Direction</i> , pages 70 through 92 and Part II, "Communication", and pp.57-154, Hodge McLain Midterm: Creative Expansion paper due: Wed. 3/11

***Spring Break March 15th – 22nd ***

Week 10	3/23&25	Directing as a Career and Collaboration with Acting/Design Artists. Guest Panels (TBA). Read: "Your Future as a Director" pp.373 Hodge McLain
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Week 11	3/30&4/1	Observed Rehearsals Composition/Picturization
Week 12	4/6&4/8	Observed Rehearsals Composition/Picturization
Week 13	4/13&15	First Showings Vision Project Scenes
Week 14	4/20&22	First Showings Vision Project Scenes cont.
Week 15	4/27	Semester Wrap-up. Round table discussion and feedback from first presentation of vision scenes. Troubleshooting session for rehearsal questions.
	4/29	Begin final presentation of second scenes, Wed. April 24 th and cont. Mon., May 6 th 8a.m.- 10p.m. (Director's Paper Packet due at time of students' scene presentation).

Final Exam: Monday, May 11th 8:00-10:00a.m. Final Presentation of Vision Projects. Directors Journal and Peer Notes due.

- * **Process and Progression subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group.**
- * **Reading assignments should be completed by the day listed. Additional reading may be assigned as necessary.**

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 305B, Spring Semester 2020****