

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**THTR 464: An Actor's Reel**

**Units: 2**

**Spring 2020**

**Tuesdays, 9am-11:50am**

**Location: SHRINE(SHR), Room 105**

**Instructor: RODNEY TO**

**Office: MCC Adjunct Office**

**Office Hours: Hours available upon request**

**Contact Info: [rodneyto@usc.edu](mailto:rodneyto@usc.edu) / (917) 445-1040 m.**

## **Course Description**

This course is designed to gain a secure understanding of all creative, business, and marketing tools that are fundamental to the Actor's portfolio - with an emphasis on the actor's demo reel. We'll explore all areas of the "business" end of the "show business" and uncover truths and myths regarding what is necessary to contend in today's artistic marketplace. The course intends to properly build a strong philosophical base to the Actor's mindset in order to construct a personal, unique, specific, and accurate portfolio that will become the foundation of the actor's marketing toolkit.

## **Learning Objectives**

- Discuss and understand the overall business trajectory of show business as it has evolved over the past several decades and how current personal marketing has become an essential tool to compete in Entertainment.
- Understand the various positions (agent, manager, casting director, etc.) involved in the Actor's career, how they function, and how they use portfolio tools (headshot, reel, etc.) in helping to (hopefully) procure work for the Actor.
- We will watch and discuss a myriad of current demo reels and various other tools and discuss their effectiveness on marketability.
- Explore on-camera acting technique and understand commonalities and differences from other theatrical forms.
- We will work on various scenes and monologues and, through constructive discourse, understand specifics that make each actor's work unique and how this information must translate in their marketing materials.
- Film and tape monologues that may (potentially) be used as the initial base of the Actor's reel.
- We will finish the course with an entry-level reel that meets basic industry standards and expectations, but is also specific, unique, creative, and personal so as to "stand out" and remain competitive in casting.

**Prerequisite(s):** As per the Schedule of Classes, either THTR 315A or 340A is required before taking this class.

## **Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

Students will need internet access as well as access to a working digital camera. Mobile phones or tablets are desirable for easy mobility and access (*see MOBILE PHONE & TABLET POLICY below*). Basic editing software (ie iMovie, Movie Maker, etc.), access to basic sound and lighting equipment may also be useful, but *not* required.

### In-class Mobile Phone & Tablet Policy:

This is tricky because (clearly) this course is dependent on content that students will be creating, learning, and editing from personal devices. That said, while in class, all devices are solely for those purposes ONLY. Any intentional use of your devices for non-class purposes (such as texting, emailing, viewing of non-class related materials, etc.) will negatively reflect your participation grade. **\*\*\*I pride myself in treating all students like professionals-in-training. It's important that you begin your journey to becoming professionals by behaving as such throughout this course which, at the very least, begins with proper, respectful usage of your devices in class\*\*\***

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

No textbook required. Coursework and assigned reading will be conferred throughout the semester.

### Description and Assessment of Assignments

**\*\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES\*\*\***

#### Grading Breakdown

- Weekly assignments: 5pts x 15 weeks = **75pts\*\*\***
- Final Reel: **20pts**
- Class participation: **5pts †** (*see Participation breakdown below*)

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**Total: 100 points**

#### Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

#### † *Participation Breakdown:*

† **5pts EXCELLENT participation.** Demonstrates active, everyday engagement. Shows willingness & enthusiasm in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **4pts GOOD participation.** Frequent active participation. Engaged, willing semi-regular participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **3pts AVERAGE participation.** Semi-regular, but active participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

#### Further Participation Notes:

All aspects of a life in the Entertainment Industry is nothing short of a fully collaborative, immersive process. I cannot emphasize enough how much (more) you will learn by listening to, working with, and supporting your fellow classmates. Therefore daily participation and active engagement in class (discussions, classwork, etc.) is essential and *will* factor into your final grade. **Therefore no absences or late arrivals will be allowed.** *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*

### Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be discussed in detail at the end of each class period. Assignments will be either emailed, uploaded, or presented in class per Rodney's instruction.

### Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date & time. Grades on late assignments will be deducted appropriately. I reserve the right to not accept late assignments at my discretion.

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

**\*\*\*SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES\*\*\***

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverables/ Due Dates
Week 1 1/14	Intro to course / Begin discussion on the professional life of an industry professional and toolkit.	Collect and bring in marketing materials that you have thus far. Bring in things to describe who you are as an artist and be prepared to discuss in class.	Presentations will be made in class on Tuesday, 1/21.
Week 2 1/21	Business (cont'd): In-class individual presentations / continue business discussion / discuss individual marketing strategies	Pick 2 actors whose work you admire. Bring in 2 short clips to screen and be prepared to discuss their work and what makes their appeal.	Email choices to Rodney by Sunday, 1/26 at 12noon!!!
Week 3 1/28	Business (cont'd): Screen various reels / Discuss trends, successful reels, common mistakes, etc. / framing, lighting, and sound.	Read handout (given in-class) regarding on-camera technique and be prepared to discuss in class.	

<p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p>2/4</p>	<p>Begin On-Camera Technique: Introduce basic on camera techniques, concepts, commonalities &amp; differences to other theatrical platforms.</p>	<p>Assign scenes and scene partners and set schedule to rehearse individually outside of class.</p>	<p><b>Rehearse assigned scenes and be ready to present scenes in class on Tuesday, 2/11!</b></p>
<p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p>2/11</p>	<p>On-camera Technique (cont'd): Work on scenes in class and discuss. Work with adjustments and beat shifts, etc. / Begin on-camera monologue work.</p>	<p>Receive assigned monologues to present in class an on tape.</p>	<p><b>Rehearse monologue and be prepared to present monologue on tape in class on Tuesday, 2/18.</b></p>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p>2/18</p>	<p>On-camera technique (cont'd): Present monologues. Discuss framing (single/multi-cam framing), and what is presented within frame.</p>	<p>Research monologues for final reels and bring options to class</p>	<p><b>Bring monologue options to class on Tuesday, 2/25</b></p>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p>2/25</p>	<p>On-cam technique(cont'd.): Screen on-camera marketing materials and discuss. / Screen multi cam / Screen single cam and discuss differences / Auditioning on-cam</p>	<p>Receive assigned audition material</p>	<p><b>Rehearse and prepare assigned audition material in class on Tuesday, 3/3.</b></p>
<p><b>Week 8</b></p> <p>3/3</p>	<p>On-cam technique (cont'd): Present prepared auditions and discuss. / Begin discussion for final reels.</p>	<p>Finalize monologues for final.</p>	<p><b>Rehearse 1st monologue to present and discuss on Tuesday, 3/10.</b></p>

<b>Week 9</b>  3/10	Monologue 1 prep work / discuss what the actor would like to present and feedback	Finalize 1st monologue	Rehearse 1st monologue to be taped (OFF BOOOK!) in class on Tuesday, 3/24.
<b>Week 10</b>  3/17	<b>SPRING</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
<b>Week 11</b>  3/24	TAPING MONOLOGUES: Tape monologues / Work with Rodney individually / Discuss choices for second monologue	Research 2nd monologue	Rehearse 2nd monologue to present and discuss in class on Tuesday, 3/31.
<b>Week 12</b>  3/31	Present choices for 2nd monologue to class. Discussion.		Rehearse 2nd monologue to be taped (OFF-BOOK!) in class on Tuesday, 4/7.
<b>Week 13</b>  4/7	TAPING MONOLOGUES: Tape 2nd monologues / work with Rodney individually	Begin rough-cut of final reel	Work on rough-cut of final reel.

Week 14  4/14	Possible guest speaker / open business discussion / preparation for final reel discussion		
Week 15  4/21	Continue discussion of reel and final materials.	Continue work on rough-cut of final reel	
Week 16  4/28	Work with Rodney individually on final reel edits and locking cut in anticipation of final presentation.	<b>LAST CLASS OF SEMESTER!</b>	<b>FINAL REELS DUE BY END OF DAY FRIDAY, 5/8! NO EXCEPTIONS!</b>
<b>FINALS WEEK</b>  Week of 5/5	<b>FINALS</b>	<b>WEEK</b>	<b>FINAL REELS DUE BY FRIDAY, 5/8!!!! NO EXCEPTIONS!!!!</b>

**\*\*\*\*YOUR FINAL PROJECTS WILL BE SCREENED ON TUESDAY,  
MAY 12 from 8am-10am  
LOCATION 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](http://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](mailto: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:**

*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](http://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](http://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](http://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](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. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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)