

**THTR 482 Stand Up 2**

Spring 2020—Wednesdays—6pm to 8:50pm

Location: MCC 112

**Instructor: Judith Shelton**

**Office: MCC 214 or mutually agreed upon UPC location**

**Office Hours: 4:55-5:55pm Weds. by appointment only**

**Contact Info: judiths@usc.edu – Mon. - Fri. 9am-5pm  
626.390.3678 – Weds. (1-9pm text only)**

**Course Description and Overview**

This course continues where THTR 474 left off, getting up in class and performing over and over to create longer, more effective sets. You will also engage in the non-performing, but just as important, work of the comic by actively pitching, producing and promoting your own stand up show.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course, the student will have additional writing tools and techniques, as well as hosting and headlining experience throughout the semester. You will move from studying the “classic” comics to the comics of today, writing for them and each other as you explore other career opportunities for comics, such as punch up, writing for late-night and awards shows, etc. Students will leave with a greater understanding of what other work is possible, where to head next in their comedy careers and, hopefully, an additional 5-7 minutes of material.

**Proposed Objectives**

- To revisit and refine the skills you learned in Intro to Stand Up
- To develop additional jokes, bits, chunks, sets
- To find comfort in the silences, calm in the conflict
- To develop material via pitch sessions and the “Writer’s Room”
- To learn to write for other comics and perform material from other comics
- To experience script “punch up” in collaboration with a USC SCA screenwriter or similar
- To create material for specific events and themes
- To participate in constant, constructive evaluation of work
- To “try on” other points of view and personae
- To flesh out the characters in your act and bring them to life
- To view and discuss the history, style and contributions of contemporary comics
- To map a personal care plan, focusing on mental health and longevity in the business
- To take confident control of your career
- To produce a show (hopefully on campus) in which to showcase your work

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

*How to Succeed in Business Without Really Crying* by Carol Leifer (Audiobook recommended)  
*Comedy Writing for Late-Night TV* by Joe Toplyn

Various stand up clips to be viewed and discussed in class

The Jackie and Laurie Show, Podcast, with Jackie Kashian and Laurie Kilmartin

Two Dope Queens, Podcast, with Phoebe Robinson and Jessica Williams

The History of Stand Up, Podcast, with Wayne Federman and Andrew Steven

## **Recommended Reading**

*The Comedians: Drunks, Thieves, Scoundrels and the History of American Comedy* by Kliph Nesteroff (Audiobook available)

*Daily Rituals: How Artists Work* by Mason Currey

*Funny on Purpose: The Definitive Guide to an Unpredictable Career in Comedy: Standup + Improv + Sketch + TV + Writing + Directing + YouTube* By Joe Randazzo

## **Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Exercises and Assignments:**

***Grades are not dictated by*** the success of comedy presentations or the instructor's subjective opinion of talent 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 8 points total per semester. Details listed under "Make-Up Options".

### **Participation:**

- No more than 15% of your final grade may be based on participation
- In-class active student analysis of presented materials such as text and video clips
- Constructive feedback on classmates' comedy presentations
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and other students to one's own presentations
- If you are late or leave early, you will lose your participation point for that day

### **Exercises and Assignments:**

- Due to the live performance aspect of stand up comedy, exercises and homework assignments will be presented in class, no electronic submissions accepted
- Student invests fully, striving to parse feedback and improve over time
- If you miss an exercise or assignment, you have missed your opportunity to perform (stage time) and will lose points which will impact your grade

### **Presentations:**

- All presentations are given in class, no electronic submissions accepted
- If you miss a presentation or the show, you will lose valuable points

### **Midterm and Show:**

- The Midterm is worth 15 points, the Show is worth 9 points
- The Midterm is presented in class with no paper component
- No electronic submission of Midterm accepted
- Missing the Midterm, or Show, will greatly impact your grade
- The policy for tardiness/leaving early (pg. 4) applies to the Midterm and Show, as well

### **Final:**

- The Final is a paper worth 10 points, due by the end of the 2-hour Final period, 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 week. 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 10 points, which will impact your grade.

**Make-up options:**

- If you miss an exercise, assignment or presentation, you may make up 8 points.
- You must post your make-up work via the specific blog on Blackboard by Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:59pm.
- You may make up 8 points by doing a booked standup show (only), OFF CAMPUS ONLY.
- You may make up 4 points by doing a standup mic OFF CAMPUS ONLY.
- You may make up 2 points by doing an ON CAMPUS standup show or mic.
- You must audio record your set and photograph the space, video will count as both.
- You must post both items AND a hearty paragraph (5 sentences) to the blog on Blackboard.
- Technical/posting issues will result in a loss of points, leave time to figure it out.
- You may make up 4 points by *observing the speakers* in Wayne’s class, Mondays, 6-8:50pm, MCC 111 and posting a picture and two full paragraphs to the blog on Blackboard. Date and times of speakers TBD.
- You may make up 2 points by *observing* Wayne’s class, and posting a picture and full paragraph (5 sentences) to the entire class, via the blog.
- You may make up 2 points by watching a live stand up show or mic and posting a picture and full paragraph (5 sentences) to the blog.
- Make-up points cannot take you over 100 points, 100 points is the maximum.

**Points Breakdown:**

• Week 1, in-class improvised exercise	1 points
• Week 2, 1 <sup>st</sup> assignment: First Set	3 points
• Week 3, 2 <sup>nd</sup> assignment: 7 topical jokes	8 points
• Week 4, in-class exercise, Characters	3 points
• Week 5, 4 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Writer’s Room - Pitching	4 points
• Week 6, 5 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Second Set	5 points
• Week 7, in-class exercise, Hot Topic Bucket	4 points
• MIDTERM: Comedy in The Style Of	15 points
• Week 9, 6 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Third Set	6 points
• Week 10, 7 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Writer’s Room - Punch Up	6 points
• Week 11, in-class exercise, Awards Show Banter	4 points
• Week 12, 6 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Fourth Set	7 points
• Week 13, 7 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Head Writer	8 points
• Week 14, 8 <sup>th</sup> assignment: Final Set, Show Rehearsal	7 points
• Week 15, <b>**SHOW**</b> April 29 <sup>th**</sup>	9 points
• FINAL: Paper Due: Critical Analysis, Self	10 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 points</b>

**Grading 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**

**Further Grading Notes:**

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W, April 5th. I will discuss your work at any time.
- Auditing students attend class strictly as an observer and will not participate.

**Assignment Submission Policy**

This is a performance class, no electronic submissions of papers, presentations or exercises. No late work accepted under any circumstance.

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Absences:**

Developing stand up material and style depends on consistent writing (usually as homework) and “getting up” (performing in class). Each class helps you build and refine material over time. **Be advised, no absences are excused in this class, regardless of reason. Points awarded for performing your stand up material in class/being an active, supportive audience member will be lost.** No percentage of a final grade may be based on attendance only so you must come to class prepared and ready to participate.

**Tardiness/leaving early:**

Everyone gets up each class. Names are picked “lottery” style. When you are late or leave early it is unprofessional, disruptive, and unsupportive. Committing to this class means being here from 6pm to 8:50pm. **If you arrive after 6pm you will lose your participation point for the day. Students arriving late are put at the end of the lottery and may not get up, depending on time. I take the late people last, in the order they arrived. Students choosing to leave early lose their participation point and risk not getting picked before they have to leave. If you do not get up before you leave, you lose all the points for the day.** Be mindful of days that have more points, such as the 7 Topical Jokes class and Midterm, for example. I end class at 8:40pm to give homework. Everyone who comes to class on time and stays the duration will get up. Anyone who is late/leaving early may or may not get up, depending on time and running order. If you are not in class for the homework do not contact me, refer to your syllabus. Make the choice to be in class on time, and stay.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

Text in **bold** indicates assignment requiring preparation.

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Readings and Homework</b>	<b>Deliverable/ Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Review of syllabus (our contract) Introduction and discussion of personal goals for the class In-class improvised exercise and stage time	<i>Begin reading/listening to: How to Succeed... <b>Homework: 2-minute set, due class 2</b></i>	<b>Due week 2 Jan. 22, 2020</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>First assignment* - First Set</b> Students perform first 2-minute set Plus, brainstorming show and creating tasks	<b>Homework: 8 Headline/Topical Jokes, due class 3</b>	<b>Due week 3 Jan. 29, 2020</b>

<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Second assignment* - 7 Topical Jokes</b> Please bring in 3 minutes of material inspired by news headlines, cultural events and pop culture within the last 7 days At least 7 jokes and 3 minutes max.	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Study character comics for discussion</i>	<b>Discussion and exercise week 4</b> <b>Feb. 5, 2020</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	Characters in Comedy Character Comedy Fleshing out the people in your act In-class discussion, exercise and stage time	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Bring in 3 jokes that could use some help</i>	<b>Due week 5</b> <b>Feb. 12, 2020</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Third assignment* - Writer's Room: Pitching</b> Students break into smaller groups and pitch on each other's jokes Writing session followed by stage time	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Work on second set</i>	<b>Due week 6</b> <b>Feb, 19, 2020</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Fourth assignment* - Second Set</b> Students bring in 3 minutes of best "bits" from weeks 1-5, creating a "set"	<i>Homework:</i> <i>What do you wish we could solve with comedy</i>	<b>Discussion and exercise week 7</b> <b>Feb. 26, 2020</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	Hot Topic Bucket. Can anything be funny? Let's find out! In-class discussion, exercise and stage time Students isolate an area in their own work that needs improvement	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Receive comic and prepare Midterm presentation</i>	<b>Due week 8</b> <b>March 4, 2020</b>
<b>Week 8</b> <b>MIDTERM</b>	<b>Midterm* - Comedy in the Style of</b> In class 6, you isolated an area in your own work that needs improvement. In class 7, students present a 3 to 4-minute comedy set inspired by the point of view and persona of a comic that embodies that strength. You are not writing for them, but using their style to lead us into new territory, previously uncharted as an artist, creating new and fearless, deeper material	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Bring in third set due class 9</i>	<b>Due week 9</b> <b>Mar. 11, 2020</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Sixth assignment* - Third Set</b> Students present third set, 4 minutes May include new material	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Find screenplays that need better jokes</i> ALSO:Enjoy your Spring Break <3	<b>Due week 10</b> <b>Mar. 25, 2020</b>  Remember to relax and recharge!
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Seventh assignment* - Writer's Room: Punch Up of selected screenplays</b> In-class exercise, break into smaller groups Staged reading of new and improved scenes	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Study examples of awards show banter</i>	<b>Discussion and exercise week 11</b> <b>April 1, 2020</b>

<b>Week 11</b>	Awards Show banter Class picks an Awards show and groups of two write 2-minute clean joke segments	<b>Homework:</b> <i>Bring in 5-minute set to present in class 12</i>	<b>Due week 12</b> Apr. 8, 2020
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Eighth assignment* - Fourth Set</b> Students perform a 5-minute comedy set Must choose from material presented in classes 1-11	<b>Homework:</b> <i>Receive comic you are writing for and get them 3-minutes of new material, by Sunday night, to present in class 13</i>	<b>Due week 13</b> Apr. 15, 2020
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Ninth assignment* - Head Writer</b> Students “tailor” and perform material written for them, 3 minutes max.	<b>Homework:</b> <i>Continue adjusting and improving set for final rehearsal during class time Finalize and promote show</i>	<b>Due week 14</b> Apr. 22, 2020
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Seventh assignment*</b> <b>“Final” Set, Rehearsal with Hosts</b> The act returns in an advanced, playful form, receiving feedback and notes Emphasis on beginning and ending, handling “mistakes”, nerves, boredom, etc. Finish last-minute show tasks and tidbits	<b>Homework:</b> <i>Prep for show, promote, arrange call time, etc.</i>	<b>Due week 15</b> April 29, 2020 (Last day to submit make-up work is May 1 <sup>st</sup> )
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Eighth assignment*</b> <b>YOUR SUPER-DUPER SUPERSHOW!</b>	<b>Homework:</b> <i>Write self-assessment Final paper</i>	<b>Due by the end of your Final period</b> May 13, 2020 7-9pm
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>Final*</b> <b>Critical Analysis, Self – Paper Due</b> Written paper due, self-assessing the student’s overall progress through the class; including personal challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and victories Two pages, double-spaced, name on each page, and stapled No emailed or late papers accepted		<i>Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 7-9pm, MCC 112 (room subject to change)</i>

### **Class Show, (hopefully) Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>**

Together, you will conceive, find and secure the location, produce, promote and perform a class show during our regular class period. Where? How? Comics devote a good portion of their time finding ways to perform. Being a good “hustler” will get you far in comedy, get creative!

#### **KEY DATES:**

January 31: Last day to add, or drop this class without a “W”, or to select “P/NP”

February 28: Last day to change “P/NP” to letter grade

March 15-22: Spring recess

April 3: Last day to drop this class with a mark of “W”

May 1: Spring semester classes end (last day to submit make-up work)

May 2-5: Study days

May 6-13: Final examinations

May 14: Spring semester ends

May 15: Commencement

#### **Additional Notes:**

- *Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class at any time.*

**Welcome back, dear students, and thank you for working with me once again!**

**Together you’ll take the next step in our journey, get better as comics, and more confident about your career.**

**Judith Shelton (Jude)**

#### **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](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)*