

THTR 122 Improvisation and Theatre Games

Units: 2 Section: 62633

Fall 2020—Tuesdays—4-5:50pm

Location: Online via Zoom

Instructor: Judith Shelton

Office: Zoom

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm, or by appointment

Contact Info: You may contact me Tuesday-Friday, 9am-5pm

Email preferred judiths@usc.edu

I teach all day Friday and will not respond until Tuesday

On Fridays, in an emergency only, text 626.390.3678

Course Description

Individual and group exercises to free the actor physically and emotionally and stimulate creativity, imagination, and self-expression. Each class will be a series of playful and thoughtful exercises to help the student discover more about themselves, their unique impulses, and humanity in general. Students will feel more comfortable with surprises and spontaneity, and more flexible and stable in unknown situations. Show up, each week, ready to explore and play. Leap, and the net will appear!

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Execute the concept of “Yes, and...”
- List the guidelines for successful improv
- Describe the elements of an improv scene
- Demonstrate various theatre games and improv exercises
- Create unscripted relationships and scenes in the moment, with only a 1-word suggestion

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Truth in Comedy: The Manual of Improvisation by Charna Halpern, Del Close and Kim “Howard” Johnson (required)

Improvisation and the Theatre by Viola Spolin (required)

Daily Rituals: How Artists Work by Mason Currey (suggested, but not required)

Art and Fear: Observations on The Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking by David Bayles and Ted Orlando (suggested, but not required)

Recommended Preparation Read the suggested chapters or watch the suggested videos for discussion. Be on time. Turn your camera on. Find a small space where you feel free to play. Wear clothing you can move in. Come willing to be silly, inquisitive, and supportive.

Course Notes on Attendance

This is a performance class, all “the good stuff” happens in class. Missing class means missing points for the in-class exercises and discussions, which will impact your grade. Also, being late or leaving early will cost you a participation point. I do offer an option to make up 12 points if the need to miss class/arrive late/leave early arises. Use those missed classes wisely. We are in a pandemic and things might come up. 12 points is all I offer, so make the effort to stay healthy and present in class. Please inform me immediately if you have **any injuries or conditions** that prevent you from participating fully in class. Just come to class, we can IMPROVISE a solution!

Description and Assessment of Assignments and Exercises

Grades are not dictated by the success of scenes and exercises or the instructor's subjective opinion of talent, intellect or sense of humor.

Grades are dictated by:

Points. Each aspect of class has a point value: participation, in-class exercises, Midterm and Final. I provide options to make up 12 points max per semester. Details listed under "Make-Up Options".

Participation (13 points, total):

- In-class active student analysis of presented materials such as text and video clips
- Constructive feedback on classmates' work
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and the other students to one's own work
- Total focus on the work at hand
- If a student is late or leaves early, they will lose their participation point for that day

Classwork (52 points, total):

- Due to the performance aspect of improv and theatre games, exercises and homework assignments will be presented "live" during class time
- If a student misses an exercise/assignment, student accepts that they have missed their opportunity to play and will lose points which will impact their grade
- Student invests fully, striving to be open and honest and improve over time
- Student regularly "steps out" to join scenes and support their classmates

Midterm (15 points):

- The Midterm is a video worth 15 points, due at the beginning of the Midterm period, and should be no less than 4 minutes and no more than 5
- The Midterm is submitted electronically, via Blackboard or Google Drive (TBD)
- Tech problems happen. Please plan ahead and give yourself time to handle any surprise situations. No late videos accepted, I will check the time stamp.
- Not posting a video on time will result in a loss of 15 points, which will impact your grade

Final (20 points):

- The Final paper is worth 20 points, due at the beginning of the Final period.
- The Final will be submitted electronically, via Blackboard.
- Tech problems happen. Please plan ahead and give yourself time to handle any surprise situations. No late papers or electronic submissions accepted.
- Not posting a paper on time will result in a loss of 20 points, which will impact your grade.

Make-up options:

- If you must miss an in-class exercise or assignment, you may make up 12 points, total, by Friday, November 13 (last day of classes) at 11:59pm. I will check the time stamp.
- You may make up 6 points by performing in an improv show, online.
You must submit a clip of one of your scenes and two hearty paragraphs on the experience via the specific discussion board on Blackboard in order to receive credit.
- You may make up 4 points by attending an improv show, online.
You must post a screenshot AND two hearty paragraphs on the experience via the specific discussion board on Blackboard
- You may make up 4 points by interviewing someone or improvising a character monologue and posting the clip to the specific discussion board on Blackboard
- Technical or link issues will result in a loss of points, double check your submission
- Make-up points cannot take you over 100 points

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	13	13
Class Exercises	52	52
Midterm Video	15	15
Final Paper	20	20
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following 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

Assignment Submission Policy

All exercises are presented in class, no electronic submissions of in-class exercises accepted. Make up work, Midterm videos, and Final papers will be submitted online via Blackboard or Google Drive, TBD.

Grading Timeline

I will review your Midterm videos by October 6th. I will review your make up work within 48 hours of submission. I am happy to discuss your grade with you at any time, please make an appointment.

Additional Policies

Absolutely no distractions while in class. No eating, social media, visiting with roommates or family members while in class. We need to focus and shut out the noise so we can make our own! (Corny? You betcha!)

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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

(This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace and unpredictability of the creative process of any given class. Being in class ensures you are aware of any changes.)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Warm-up, introductions and discussion of syllabus (our contract)	Ch. 1 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> What is Improv, Anyway?	To discuss in week 2
Week 2	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 1 <i>Improvisation for the Theatre</i> Creative Experience	To discuss in week 3
Week 3	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 2 <i>Improvisation for the Theatre</i> Workshop Procedures-page 18-21	To discuss in week 4

Week 4	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 2-3 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> But, Seriously Folks... Support and Trust	To discuss in week 5
Week 5	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 2 <i>Improvisation for the Theatre</i> Workshop Procedures-page 21-35	To discuss in week 6
Week 6	Discussion of reading In-class exercises Review what is needed for the Midterm	Create Midterm video assessing progress in class and goals going forward Post to Bb Discussion Board	Due by the beginning of your Midterm period, week 7, Sept. 29th
Week 7	MIDTERM Discussion of video discoveries and insights In-class exercises	Ch. 4-5 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Agreement Initiations and Game Moves	To discuss in week 8
Week 8	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 6-7 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Moment to Moment to Moment Building a Scene	To discuss in week 9
Week 9	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 8-9 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> One Mind, Many Bodies Environmentally Aware	To discuss in week 10
Week 10	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Watch Episode 1 Middleditch & Schwartz	To discuss in week 11
Week 11	Discussion of video In-class exercises	Post on Bb Discussion Board: Favorite Games and scenes Watch Episode 3 Middleditch & Schwartz	To discuss in week 12
Week 12	Discussion of video First Improv Jam- Games and scenes Decide which games and scenes we'd like to play	Ch. 2 <i>Improvisation for the Theatre</i> Reminders and Pointers-page 36-46	To discuss in week 13
Week 13	Second Improv Jam- Games and scenes Finalize which games and scenes we'd like to play	Write Final Paper: What are your new skills? How do you plan on using these skills going forward? How could they be helpful in school, work and relationships, for example?	Due by the beginning of your Final: Nov. 24th at 4:30pm
FINAL	FINAL Improv Jam- Guests encouraged and welcomed!	Ch. 2 <i>Improvisation for the Theatre</i> Reminders and Pointers-page 36-46	

KEY DATES

Friday, Sept. 4: Last day to add, or drop this class without a “W”, or to select “P/NP”

Friday, October 2: Last day to change “P/NP” to letter grade

Friday, November 6: Last day to drop this class with a mark of “W”

Friday, November 13: Fall semester classes end

Saturday – Monday, November 14-16: Study days

Tuesday – Tuesday, November 17-24: Exams

Wednesday – Sunday, November 25-January 10: Winter Break

Additional Notes

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

Welcome to Improv and Theatre Games, dear students! It is a joy and privilege to get to know each of you through our collaborative and creative exploration of what happens at the intersection of humanity and circumstance. Let’s do good work, endeavor to know ourselves better, risk a little, support each other, make lasting friendships, and reveal our true selves in our work and play. We are going to have a blast!

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. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.