

USC School of Dramatic Arts

SDA #305A Directing

Fall 2020 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 8-9:50a.m.

Location: Online

Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer

Office: MCC 204

Office Hours: Mon. 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. (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

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

Course Notes, Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Textbooks: (all are available at the USC Bookstore or online)

- *A Sense of Direction*, by William Ball (req.)
- *The Person I Once Was*, by Cindy Lou Johnson (req.)

- *Florence* by Alice Childress (req.)
- *Steal Like An Artist* by Austin Kleon (req.)
- *A play of your choice* for your vision project. (req.)
- *Notes on Directing: 130 Lessons in Leadership from the Director's Chair* by Frank Hauser (rec.)

Materials:

- A notebook (to serve as your Directors Journal) is required. It needs to have the ability to hold inserts and handouts that will be accumulated across the semester. Portions of this notebook will also be part of your Directors Book/Paper Packet to be handed in at your midterm and final showings of scenes.
- 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.
- The syllabus is posted on Blackboard. Necessary day to day updates and communications will be done via USC email.

Description and Assessment of Assignments and Schedule (And Due Dates)

In Class Observed Rehearsals of First Scene. Due: Sept. 22nd, 24th, 29th and Oct. 1st

Observed rehearsals average 20-25 min. of the student director and their actors working in class so that the encounter can be viewed by instructor and peers.

- Short feedback/question session follows.
- All costumes, props, set pieces are required.

Midterm. Presentation of First Scene. Due: Oct. 6th & 8th

Director's Book #1 Due: Oct. 6th & 8th

In addition to all class notes, observation responses to class exercises, your Directors Book includes (for both midterm and final project option one) the following components:

1. Vision Cornerstones
2. Director's journaling of your rehearsals and process.
3. Reference and research pertinent to the play.
4. Ground plan/environment sketches.
5. Your character descriptions and prop lists.
6. Director's rehearsal script with margin notes and beat breakdown.
7. A 2-3-page typed summary discussion of your directing experience and development of a process.

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. Make use of references from *A Sense of Direction*, *Notes on Directing*, *Steal Like An Artist* and pertinent classroom discussions documented in your notebook.

Vision Presentations for Second Scene Due: Oct. 20th, 22nd

Following the Cornerstones of Success from William Ball's *A Sense of Direction*, research, compile a Director's Vision Presentation to be presented in class that articulates your concept/approach/vision for a production of a play of your choosing.

- Use of Visuals, Power Points, Audio Files is encouraged.
- Length of presentation is 5 min. Five-minute feedback/discussion session follows.
- Peer Observation Notes begin and carry on for the remainder of the semester's work. (These are turned in at the Final, Nov. 17th)

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Environment Set-up Lab for vision play Due: Oct. 27th, 29th

Observed Rehearsals of Vision Project Due: Nov. 3rd, 5th, 10th

Observed Rehearsals will be a briefing on the "voice" of your playwright. To deepen the knowledge base toward the end of grounding vision concept in playwright's intent and parameters of genre, we will use this opportunity to know more of the playwrights whose stories you are envisioning in 305a.

Talk to us about:

- Their heritage as a writer. If all artists steal as Austin Kleon, author of *Steal Like An Artist*, posits...who influenced your playwright? Then who influenced them?
- Other plays in their body of work? Screenplays? Teleplays? Novels?
- Prepare for a five-minute reading of your text exemplifying the playwright's use of language. Your classmates will be happy to be cast in the moment as the actors!

Final Project for your Vision Play- 3 Options- Due: Nov. 17th

Option One-

You will submit a director's book for your vision project. It will be submitted online and will exhibit your pre-production work readying you to enter the rehearsal hall.

Include:

- Cornerstones of Success
- References and research that source your World of Play
- Ground plans for your venue of choice
- Character Descriptions
- Virtual Casting
- Universal and Super Objectives for major characters
- Summary paper (2 pages) "Why this Play Now?"

Option Two-

Pick one aspect of your production concept and actualize it in a "deliverable" that can be shared with the group through the Zoom meeting platform.

For example:

- Build a model of your world of play or design costumes. Choose three moments in the play and "stage them" with figures of the characters utilizing tools of picturization and composition to "tell story without words". Document in a format we can observe virtually
- Cite references and research that source your work.

- Submit script with beats marked and status shifts documented for moments “staged”
- Summary paper (2 pages) “Why this Play Now?”

Option Three

Dramaturgical Portfolio in support of your Vision Play.

Include:

- Research in depth the work of the playwright. Synthesize the zeitgeist of the period in which the playwright wrote. Does the piece define a genre?
- Cite references and research that source your work.
- Compile and evidence a list of art, music, film that can be used to inspire collaborators on the project.
- Whatever else you find applicable for dramaturgical relevance.
- Summary Paper (2 pages) “Why this Play Now?”

Semester Wrap-up. Nov.12th
Vision Projects Share. Due: Nov. 17th
Peer Observation Notes Due: Nov. 17th

Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

30 points	Classwork and observed rehearsals.
20	First Scene
10	Directors Book #1
25	Vision Project
15	Directors Book #2 (includes 5pts for peer observation notes)
<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 grading of classwork. Scenes are graded based on clear evidence of preparedness and clear objective in each presentation effort.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Classwork	30	30%
First Scene	20	20%
Directors Book #1	10	10%
Vision Project	25	25%
Directors Book #2	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

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

Assignment Submission Policy and Grading Timeline

- Assignments due as described above.
- All paper-work submissions must be printed, compiled into portfolio form and turned in to me in hard copy.
- Instructor and peer feedback for in class exercises and scene work is regular practice in our synchronous class sessions.
- Formalized grading of performance and written work can be expected within 3 class sessions from the due date.

Additional Policies

Attendance:

- 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.
- There are no excused absences. Three tardy episodes constitute one absence.

Time Requirements:

- Rehearsals outside of scheduled class time are required for a successful outcome in 305a. Be aware, scenes need often be cast with students outside of this section’s enrollment. You may not act in your own directing scene.
- Logistical prowess in terms of time management for self and others is required.
- Attention to essential props, costumes, and set pieces for scene work is encouraged. Lack of attention in this area will affect your grade.
- Each student will maintain a **Director’s Journal** containing; classroom notes, observations and comments upon viewing other students in class rehearsals and scene presentations. This referenced during observed rehearsals and is turned in as a major component of your written work (Director’s Book) for each project completed at midterm and final periods. *See “Hint” below*
- **Written Work (Directors Book)**-Includes the **Directors Journal** *and all additional pertinent material* specific to your rehearsal process for midterm and final projects: Due at the time of student director’s scene/project presentation.
- Peer Observation Notes from in class exercises, observed rehearsals and presentations.

Classroom Rules:

- 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.
- 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 is submitted electronically thru USC email, Blackboard and or Google Document Folder.
- 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*.

- Acting in a classmates 305a scene is encouraged and will count as 1-point of extra credit toward your final grade. If this occurs in another section of 305A, please bring documentation of participation. A maximum of 2-extra credit points possible per semester.
- Check your USC email regularly. Scheduling changes and other timely information will be sent via email.
- Cell phones are to be turned off for the duration of class.

Hint about the Written Work of a Director (Your Class Notebook/Directors Book/Peer Observation Notes)

- 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 sitting down to write 24 hours (or 8 weeks) after you had an idea or thought is a sure way to lose it.
- Don't know what to write about in your entries? Write about what you observe in the work of others.
- How effective is the work in final sharing? Is what they set forth to accomplish evidenced? Why or why not?
- Watching and then analyzing the result of other processes is a sure way to clarify your own.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week 1	8/18 8/20	Introduction. Course outline. Discussion: the role of the director. Assignment: Read <u>The Person I Once Was</u> and <u>Florence</u> by Thurs. Aug. 27 th .
Week 2	8/25 8/27	Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. Read: <u>A Sense of Direction</u> pages 3 through 44. Text work on <u>The Person I Once Was</u> and <u>Florence</u> .
Week 3	9/1 9/3	Auditioning. Casting. Read: Sense of Direction, pages 44 through 69. Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage them to talk to each other? Read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 70 through 92.
Week 4	9/8 & 10	Rehearsal. The journey of storytelling begins. Sense of place and time. Your rehearsal environment. Objectives. Read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 93 through 124.
Week 5	9/15 & 17	Shaping the scene or stages in rehearsal progression "blocking". Begin search for second scene.
Week 6	9/22 9/24	Observed rehearsals. Continued search for second scene. Observed rehearsals. Continued search for second scene.
Week 7	9/29 & 10/1	Observed rehearsals. Continued search for second scene.
Week 8	10/6 & 8	Presentation of first scenes. Text for second scene green-lighted by instructor. Director's Book #1 Due. Midterm Evaluation.

Week 9	10/13 & 15	The World of the Play. Technical elements. Director's vision. Read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> pages 125 to end of text.
Week 10	10/20&22	Vision Presentations
Week 11	10/27&29	Environment Set-up Labs (for vision play)
Week 12	11/3 11/5	Observed Rehearsals Vision Scene. Observed Rehearsals continued.
Week 13	11/10 11/12	Observed Rehearsals continued. Semester Wrap-up. Questions/Observations/Trouble shooting.

Process and Progression is subject to change based on the needs and requirements of the group

Final Exam Period: Tues., Nov. 17th 8:00- 10:00 a.m. Peer Observation Notes for Vision Projects due. (Director's Written Work #2 due at time of students' final presentations)

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, Fall Semester 2020****