

THTR 464: An Actor's Reel

Units: 2

Fall 2020

Tuesdays, 9am-11:50am

Location: Online

ZOOM LINK: (located on class Blackboard page)

Instructor: RODNEY TO

Office Hours (via Zoom): 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 an intricate, yet holistic understanding of all creative, business, and marketing tools that are fundamental to the Actor's portfolio. By using the Actor's demo reel as a business prep the baseline, 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 competitive portfolio that will become the foundation of the Actor's unique marketing toolkit.

### Learning Objectives:

- Detail how business affairs have evolved over the past few decades and how current personal marketing has become an essential tool to compete in Entertainment.
- Define the various positions (agent, manager, casting director, etc.) involved in the Actor's career, fully understand their function and how they use portfolio tools (headshot, reel, etc.) to aid in (hopefully) procuring work for the Actor.
- By watching and discussing a myriad of current demo reels and various trade tools (websites, headshots, social media, etc.), be able to discuss their effectiveness on marketability.
- Fully master on-camera acting technique; its commonalities and differences from other theatrical forms.
- Have both a theoretical and practical understanding of self-taping: why we self-tape, the current trend in its use, and how to create a professional tape *efficiently* and *economically*.
- After working on various scenes and monologues, be able to pinpoint technique and performance details that make each actor's work unique and competitive and how their marketing materials reflects their work.
- Create an initial base for the Actor's reel by filming monologues that may (potentially) be used to start their entry-level portfolio.
- Complete an entry-level reel clip that meets basic industry standards and expectations, but also 'stands out' and remains competitive in casting.

### Prerequisites :

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, Premiere, Movie Maker, etc.), access to basic sound and lighting equipment may also be useful, but not required.

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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

## DESCRIPTION OF GRADING CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS

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

Since this course is both practically and artistically based, grading will focus on quantitative and qualitative aspects of the curriculum and assignments: proficiency of course concepts, critical thinking, assignments, class participation, collaboration, deadlines, attendance, and of course, the final project.

### Grading Breakdown:

- Weekly assignments: 65pts\*\*\*
- Final Reel: 25pts
- Class participation: 10pts † (*see Participation breakdown below*)

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**Total: 100 points**

### † Participation Breakdown

† **10pts EXCELLENT participation:** Demonstrates active, everyday engagement. Shows willingness & enthusiasm in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **8pts GOOD participation:** Frequent active participation. Engaged, willing semi-regular participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **6pts AVERAGE participation:** Semi-regular, but active participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **4pts BELOW AVERAGE participation:** Infrequent participation. Predominately passive and rarely demonstrates willingness to contribute to discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **2pt POOR/INSUFFICIENT participation:** Does not participate willingly. Extremely passive and lacks enthusiasm. Poor, if any, contribution to discussions, class activity, and collaborations

### Further Participation Notes:

All aspects of this course are fully collaborative and immersive. I cannot emphasize enough how much you will (also) learn by listening to, working with and supporting your cohort. 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.

### 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

### **Further Grading Notes:**

- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with excellent in-class participation. Grades will be weighted towards the negative end of the scale for those with poor in-class participation.

*I am available to discuss work and progress at anytime. I encourage you to open a dialogue with me at any point during the semester.*

### **Assignment Submission Policy**

Most of the required assignments will be emailed to the instructor, posted on Blackboard or uploaded to Google Drive - provided free for all enrolled students - with the link emailed to the instructor.

### **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.

### **USC Technology Support Links :**

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

### **Additional Policies:**

#### **NETIQUETTE**

**The online learning modality for the Arts & Entertainment Industry is somewhat of a new frontier for everyone. We are discovering how to best navigate these newer practices together. While certainly not ideal, let's embrace this as an opportunity.**

- I will be expecting that you do your best to treat this as a traditional classroom. Do your best to find a quiet space in your home where you can sit up comfortably and focus with little-to-no distractions or disturbances. No outdoor spots unless you discuss it with me first. I am acutely aware (and sensitive to the fact) that everyone's circumstances vary, so if you're unable to find a reasonable working spot for class, please contact me privately to discuss.
- Even though we will be online and in your homes this semester, students must wear appropriate, casual, classroom clothes - no pajamas. Be professional, mature, and respectful; wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Please log-on from a desktop (or laptop) if possible. Oftentimes, I find when students log-on from their phone or tablet, the smaller nature of these devices lends itself to the student being too casual, less alert and easily distracted.

- Remember safety at all times. Do NOT drive while in class. Yes, I've seen it all. You will be logged- off and marked with an unexcused absence if you attempt to take class while driving or exercising or shopping or cleaning or babysitting - you get the idea.
- No 'other' technology during class. Phones must be on silent and put away. Unless I invite you to do so, phones may only be taken out during breaks. I am aware when you are reading your phones unnecessarily - trust me. Any intentional use of your devices for non-class purposes (texting, emailing, viewing of non-class related materials, playing video games, etc.) will negatively reflect your participation grade.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- No pets or any other distractions such as toys, video games, etc.
- Do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class. We will be working hard to establish trust with each other. Respect is paramount. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently, but always be respectful, mindful, mature.

***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. No one in the history of the world has died or will die because of you paying attention in class.***

### 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  8/18	Intro to course / Begin discussion on the life of an Industry professional and the role of various elements of their toolkit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•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.</li> <li>•Pick 2 actors whose work you admire. Bring in 2 short pics or clips (via Youtube) to screen and be prepared to discuss their work, their appeal and similarities to your work &amp; essence.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Presentations will be made in class on Tuesday, 8/25. Be prepared to share your screens on Zoom.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

<p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p>8/25</p>	<p>In-class individual presentations / Continue business discussion: understanding type / the actor 'elevator pitch'</p>	<p>Write your own 'pitch': concise (3-4 sentences), reasonable, sell-points to who you are as an actor with 2 comparisons.</p>	<p><b>UPLOAD YOUR ASSIGNMENT TO GOOGLE DRIVE AND EMAIL ME THE LINK by 12noon, Sunday 8/30.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 3</b></p> <p>9/1</p>	<p>Business (cont'd): Screen various reels / Discuss trends, successful reels, common mistakes, etc. / framing, lighting, and sound.</p>	<p>Read handout (given in-class) regarding on-camera technique and be prepared to discuss in class.</p>	<p><b>Read DOG SEES GOD by Bert V. Royal</b></p>
<p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p>9/8</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 from DOG SEES GOD and be ready to present scenes in class on Tuesday, 9/15/2020!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p>9/15</p>	<p>On-camera Technique (cont'd): Work on scenes in class and discuss. Work with adjustments and beat shifts, etc. / Discuss framing (single/multi-cam framing) / Begin on-camera monologue work.</p>	<p>Receive assigned monologues to present in class.</p>	<p><b>Rehearse monologue and be prepared to present monologue in class on Tuesday, 9/22 .</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p>9/22</p>	<p>On-camera technique (cont'd): Present monologues. Discuss eyeline and what is presented within frame.</p>	<p>Receive assigned scenes</p>	<p><b>Rehearse and prepare assigned audition material in class on Tuesday, 9/29 .</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

<p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p>9/29</p>	<p>On-cam technique(cont'd.): Auditioning on-cam: Screen multi cam vs. Screen single cam / Begin self-tape discussion</p>	<p>Receive assigned scenes for self-tape</p>	<p>Self-tape scenes and upload to <b>GOOGLE DRIVE</b> and email Rodney link by, <b>SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 at 12noon!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 8</b></p> <p>10/6</p>	<p>Self-taping: Why? How? Dispel myths. / Present self-tapes and discuss observations and common mistakes.</p>	<p>Retape</p>	<p>Retape scene with notes and upload to <b>GOOGLE DRIVE</b> and email Rodney link by <b>SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11 at 12noon!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 9</b></p> <p>10/13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Compare/contrast self-tapes.</li> <li>•Begin discussion for final reels. Discuss what the actor would like to present in their reels and feedback.</li> </ul>	<p>Research monologues/ scenes to present in final reel.</p>	<p>Gather monologues and scenes and be prepared to present options in class on <b>9/20.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 10</b></p> <p>10/20</p>	<p>Present reel options to class. Discussion. / Breakout rooms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch assigned clips for Guest Speaker and have 3 questions prepared for them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to narrow down reel options and <b>REHEARSE.</b> Be prepared to present (rehearsed) option in class on, <b>11/13!</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Week 11</b></p> <p>10/27</p>	<p>GUEST SPEAKER (TBA)</p>	<p>REHEARSE REEL OPTIONS</p>	

Week 12	<i>LAST CLASS W/ EVERYONE!</i>		
11/3	Present and lock-in final reel option (scene, monologue) in class and receive final notes/feedback	PREPARE TO TAPE FINAL REEL OPTION	
Week 13			
11/10	Final One-on-Ones with Rodney. <b>MUST BE OFF-BOOK!!!</b> <i>Absolutely no excuses.</i>	Tape of final scene/ monologue.	<b>FINAL REEL UPLOADED TO GOOGLE DRIVE AND EMAIL LINK TO RODNEY BY EOD 11/15!!!</b>  <b>NO EXCEPTIONS!</b>
FINALS WEEK			
Week of 11/15	FINALS	WEEK	GOOD LUCK!!!!

**\*\*\*YOUR FINAL PROJECTS WILL BE SCREENED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19 from 8am-10am\*\*\*\***

### 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 GFS 120 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) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (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:**

*Campus Support & Intervention (CSI) – (213) 740-0411*

Campus Support & Intervention is an office within Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention. We are a team of professionals here to assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues. Whether you are here seeking support for yourself or someone else, we are available to help you problem solve, understand options, and connect with resources. <https://uscscsa.usc.edu>

*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: <https://titleix.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. <https://titleix.usc.edu/>

*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)

*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)