



## **School of Dramatic Arts**

**Stand Up 2: Becoming A Pro**  
**THTR 482**

**Fall 2020**  
**Monday Evening 6pm to 8:50pm PT**  
**Location: Online**  
**Prerequisite: THTR 474**

**Instructor: Professor Wayne Federman**  
**Office Hours: By Appointment**  
**Contact Info: WayneFed@usc.edu**

### **Course Description and Overview**

Stand Up 2: Becoming A Pro is geared towards students who plan to pursue stand-up comedy professionally and will primarily focus on techniques for creating new comedy material and onstage performance strategies.

Other career specific topics include: road gigs, bar gigs, open mics, college tours, mainstream vs. alternative, creating a five-minute late-night TV set, writing for other comedians, how to be an "opening act", rejection and stage fright, becoming a headliner, Sound Exchange, roast jokes/strategies, podcasting, NACA, social media, late-night joke writing, award show writing, getting a manager/agent, and comedy festivals.

Stand Up 2 will also explore the history of modern stand-up from Bob Hope to Dave Chappelle.

Past Stand Up 2 guest speakers have included: Beth Stelling, Margaret Cho, Judd Apatow, Sam Morril, Sarah Tiana, Brent Forrester, Brian Kiley, Kevin Pollak, Amy Silverberg, and Fahim Anwar.

## **Learning Objectives**

1. Acquire specific techniques for creating new material.
2. Identify stand-up comedic devices.
3. Acquire techniques to polish and streamline stand-up.
4. Understand the specific challenges and opportunities of professional stand-up.
5. Acquire a basic understanding of the history of stand-up.

## **Topics and Lectures**

- The importance of getting on stage
- The crucial three: Specificity. Clarity. Brevity.
- Point of view.
- The crucial first 30-seconds.
- The physical basics: microphone, stand, “the light,” and the stool.
- Recording your set/ Reviewing your set
- Writing techniques
- Your persona
- Truthfulness
- Exaggeration
- Getting rid of “ahhs” and “umms”
- Dealing with stage fright
- Punching up?
- Dealing with rejection
- Giving the audience too much power
- Precise break-down of successful stand-up
- How to build an act: from 3 minutes to an hour
- Performing on television
- Stand Up on Zoom.
- The infinite possibilities of the internet
- Various stand-up clips to be viewed and discussed in class
- Plus guest artist lectures with Q&A

### **Required Readings**

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

*Sick in the Head: Conversations About Life and Comedy* by Judd Apatow

*The 100 Jokes That Shaped Modern Comedy* - Vulture Magazine (free online article)

### **Recommended readings, viewings, and materials**

*The History of Standup Podcast* - w/ Wayne Federman and Andrew Stevens

Marc Maron’s WTF - podcast

Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s - Gerald Nachman

Richard Pryor: Live in Concert (1979) warning: explicit - film  
 I Am Comic (2009) Documentary about stand-up. dir. Jordan Brady  
 Dying Laughing (2016) Documentary about stand-up. dir. Lloyd Stanton.  
 Jerry Before Seinfeld (2017) Netflix documentary about starting as a stand-up.

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

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Grades are *not* dictated by either the success of comedy presentations or Professor Federman's subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference.

#### **Grades are dictated by**

- Class participation
- Meeting all deadlines: reading, watching, writing, performing.
- Feedback on classmates comedy presentations.

#### **Grading Points Breakdown:**

• Week 1 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 2 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 3 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 4 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 5 in-class exercise, 1st paper due	10 points
• Week 6 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 7 in-class exercise .....	5 points
• MID-TERM: TEST and/or ESSAY	10 points
• Week 9 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 10 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 11 in-class exercise, 2nd paper due	10 points
• Week 12 in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 13, in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 14, in-class exercise.....	5 points
• Week 15, in-class exercise.....	5 points
• FINAL: TEST and/or ESSAY	15 points

**TOTAL**

**100 points (plus extra credit assignments)**

#### **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:**

- If the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with excellent/good attendance & class participation and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average/poor attendance & participation.

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W. I will be happy to discuss your work at any time.
- **No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted**

### **Assignment Submission Policy**

Written assignments will be collected at the beginning of each class.

Assignments for presentation will be performed during class.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **WEEKLY CLASS CONTENT**

*(This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace, and unpredictability of the creative process of performance classes. Plus guest lecturers may alter schedule.)*

#### **1 GETTING TO KNOW YOU.**

Class ground rules. Brief moment onstage to introduce yourself to each other. Breaking “ands” and “ums.” What it means to be a professional. Microphone technique. *Assignment: for week 2: bring in short stand-up clip (audio or video) of comedian’s routine you admire.*

#### **2 YOUR ACT / BREAKDOWN**

“Stand-up Breakdown” - examination of successful comedians techniques.

#### **3 YOUR ACT / BREAKDOWN**

Conclusion of “Stand-up Breakdown part 2” - examination of successful comedians techniques. Perform up to 2-minute original stand-up.

#### **4 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP HISTORY Part One**

Perform up to 2 minute original stand-up. HISTORY OF STAND-UP LECTURE. Assignment for 1st paper

#### **5 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP HISTORY Part two**

Perform up to 2-minute original stand-up. Opening act. HISTORY OF STAND-UP LECTURE. Selection of topic for Mid-term paper. 1st paper due.

#### **6 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Write original routine based on presented topics. In-depth examination of joke styles (one liner, deadpan, stories, act-outs, characters).

#### **7 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Writing monologue/topical jokes. The road vs. in-town.

**8 MID-TERM**

Perform only topical jokes (monologue/weekend update) written over the last week. Creating a 5-minute Late Night Set. Mid-term assignment due.

**9 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Starting your own show vs open mics.  
*assignment: select paper #2 topic.*

**10 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Promoting yourself. Merchandise.

**11 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. How to go from 3 minutes to 1 hour. Building a set for the road. **2nd paper due.**

**12 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. HISTORY OF STAND-UP. Podcasting and Sound Exchange.

**13 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 4-minute original stand-up. Comedy festivals, working overseas, managers and agents.

**14 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE**

Perform up to 4-minute original stand-up. Transitioning to professional comedian.

**15 YOUR ACT**

Perform original stand-up show on Zoom.

**16 FINAL EXAM (time and date TBD)**

**Additional Notes:**

- *Recording of yourself is encouraged.*
- *Please ensure that you are prepared for the class and are in a fit state (mentally, emotionally, physically) to contribute.*
- *Recording of ANY OTHER student is prohibitive.*
- *No drinks or food are allowed during class.*
- *There will be two restroom breaks per class.*

**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>.

**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 micro-aggressions 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](https://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](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu)