

**491: Theatre Organization & Management**

Fall 2020—Monday, 1PM – 4:50PM

Location: Zoom land

Updated: August 7, 2020

**Instructor: Mireya (“Murry”) Hepner**

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Contact Info:** [hepner@usc.edu](mailto:hepner@usc.edu)

**Course Description and Overview**

An examination of the principal components of theatrical management with an emphasis on not-for-profit institutional theatre practice. Business and production management, unions, marketing and sales, fundraising, budgeting, board of trustees and artistic staff roles will be addressed, as well as how they relate to the field of stage management.

**Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to compare non-profit and commercial theatre models and organizational structures, and will learn to identify and discuss the various management job functions in the professional theatre.

Class projects center around putting students in the shoes of people who perform various functions within an organization. The goal is to develop an appreciation of the creativity and collaboration involved in the smooth running of a non-profit company.

**Required Text and Readings**

There is no Required Text for this class, but various reading materials, articles, videos, and case studies will be shared with students as part of each week’s course work. They will all be found in that week’s “Module” in Blackboard.

**Grading Breakdown and Criteria**

<b>Written Assignments and presentations</b>	20 points
<b>In-Class Work (quizzes, etc.)</b>	20 points
<b>Midterm Group Presentation &amp; Materials</b>	40 points
<b>Final Report and Presentation</b>	20 points

<b>Grading</b>	<b>90-100 points = A</b>
	<b>80-84 points = B; 85-89 points = B+</b>
	<b>70-74 points = C; 75-79 points = C+</b>
	<b>60-64 points = D; 65-79 points = D+</b>

**Assignment Submission Policy**

As a general rule, written Assignments that are meant to be completed outside of our class time should be submitted by Sunday at noon, to give me time to read and comment on them before Monday’s class. If they’re emailed and not submitted through the Blackboard platform, please make sure you include your name and the date. Grammar, punctuation and spelling count! If there isn’t a written assignment due, there may be reading or a video to watch. Each module will come with instructions, but as a general rule, you should be prepared to discuss any of that

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material or content during class. Class begins promptly at 1 PM through ZOOM. The Module for the following week's class will be posted on Mondays at the end of our class time.

## **Grading Timeline**

- In-class quizzes will be graded immediately through Blackboard
- Other in-class assignments will either have feedback in class or before the next class meeting date
- Feedback on Homework assignments and the Mid-Term Group Project will be given before the next class time, as long as assignments are turned in on time.
- Final assignment will be graded in the week following the final class.

## **Late work**

While I would normally not accept late work, these are not normal times. Please talk to me if you're having trouble completing assignments on time.

## **Technology in the classroom**

- The expectation is for everyone to have their video camera on for our Zoom meetings. With the understanding that this might not always be possible, students can participate with audio only in certain circumstances. Please let me know ahead of time if you need special accommodations.
- All Zoom sessions will be recorded per the University guidelines and the recordings will be accessible for students in the class only, until fall grades are submitted. You are reminded that you are NOT permitted to create your own recordings, which violates University Policy, or to share class materials outside of school.
- Students will need access to the internet in order to watch various You-Tube links and other video content.

## **Additional Zoom Etiquette**

- Please keep your microphone muted unless you're speaking, to cut out background noise.
- Since there are so few of us, I'd like to avoid using the "chat" function, so we can all be present together.
- To get the most out of Zoom, it's preferable to have everyone join on a computer, rather than a phone or tablet if possible.
- Please remember that this is still a classroom, so please dress appropriately
- Please make sure your name is showing in your zoom window so we can identify you
- Be patient with me and with each other as we navigate technology that might not always cooperate!

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## Classroom norms/Setting the tone

- Civility and Respect should be a given
- Be present! Listen actively and attentively.
- Everyone should participate in the conversation. All voices are valuable.
- You can challenge one another in discussions, but remember to do so respectfully.
- Make no assumptions about others
- Trust that people are always doing the best they can.
- Ask questions when you don't understand; don't assume you know what others are thinking, and your questions might help your classmates, too.
- Be mindful of taking up much more time than the others - and empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

## Additional Policies

If you want feedback or have questions about the assignments or need extra help, I encourage you to make an appointment to meet with me privately so we can discuss. My goal is for you to understand the concepts that we're discussing, not just to get through the assignment as fast as possible.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

### **August 17 Introduction and Overview**

In the first session, we'll discuss the overview of the class, goals, and expectations.

Understanding that we are in a new world, the organizational structures and "norms" we'll be discussing throughout the semester may look very different post-Covid. Believing that we should know where we've been before we can change, I hope you come to this class ready to learn about what was, question the status quo, and dream together about what the new theatre structures can be.

### **August 24 Non-Profit vs. Commercial Producing models – plus Presenting**

We'll discuss different models of organizational structure for producing theatre.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the difference between commercial and Non-Profit Theatre operating structures
2. Recognize various titles given to Managers in both systems.

We'll also be looking at alternative models and learning how to identify components of an Organizational chart

### **August 31 The Board of Directors in Non-Profit Theatre**

We'll do a deep dive into the role of the Board of Directors, the governance of a non-profit theatre, and the relationship between Non-Profit and Commercial Theatre

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## Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss & identify the role of the Board of Directors in a Non-Profit Theatre
2. Discuss the relationship between Commercial and Non-profit theatres

**September 7 Labor Day.** No class.

**September 14** Mission and Artistic Planning

In this session we'll identify the elements of a successful mission statement, and how the theatre's mission is directly related to season planning.

## Learning Objectives:

1. Identifying elements of a Mission Statement
2. Identifying how Programming Choices relate to the Mission
3. Identifying other roles and responsibilities of the Artistic Staff of a non-profit theatre

**September 21 The Budget**

The goal of this session is to understand the different types of budgets used by non-profit and commercial theatre productions, and to get a general understanding on what elements to think about when projecting expenses and revenue in a budget.

## Learning Objectives:

1. Identify and compare the different types of budgets used in Commercial and Non-Profit Theatres
2. Give Examples of items that are included in different types of theatre budgets
3. Complete a sample expense production budget template for a specific play

**September 28 Fundraising**

In this class we'll be looking at "unearned" or "contributed" income as part of the revenue side of a non-profit company

## Learning Objectives:

1. Give Examples of different ways non-profits bring in gifts or "unearned income"
2. Demonstrate understanding of what's needed for a successful grant proposal

**October 5 Marketing and Audience Development.**

We'll take what we've learned about mission and fundraising as a basis for selling our show. What tools do we need to learn about who we want to come to see our production, and how we get them there? In this session we'll identify various Marketing tools but also the philosophy behind "selling" the show.

## Learning Objectives:

1. Identify differences between Marketing and Audience Engagement/Development
2. Identify different marketing tools
3. Identify audience engagement tools

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**October 12**

## **Group project presentation: Your dream theatre company**

The class will be broken into small groups to do this assignment, which is based on all of the classes up until now. In this session each group will present their project to the group. (Groups will be assigned during the class about Mission Statements, to allow for plenty of time to complete this project)

You're tasked with dreaming up a theatre company.

Each group will:

1. Write a clear mission statement that describes the essence of your new organization.
2. Give a brief description of what need your company is filling, or what makes it different from others.
3. Demonstrate what type of programming you'll choose based on your mission.
4. Describe the process of selecting your first season, with at least 2 examples of plays under consideration.
5. Make a list of line items you might consider for one of the plays – you don't need to show numbers, but list a few considerations of what your budget might need.
6. Write a one-page fundraising appeal describing why your company should be supported.
7. Pick a target audience and give a brief description on what messaging and method you'll use to reach them.

Be prepared to present your ideas in front of the class, and also to submit a written copy. The written documents should include a few paragraphs describing the process you went through to craft the final mission statement. Early draft ideas can absolutely be included.

Presentations will be graded on how well your budget items, play selections, and other documents match your mission statement, and how you present them to your classmates. Be prepared to answer questions from your classmates.

**October 19**

## **Box Office, FOH and Earned Income**

We'll talk about various types of earned income for a theatre, and identify the roles and responsibilities of the House Manager and the Front of House Staff.

Learning Objectives:

1. Give Examples of different types of earned income for a theatre
2. Identify the role of the House Manager, FOH staff and others who deal with customers (Audience members)
3. Identify best practices for successful Customer Service

**October 26**

## **Theatre Unions & Associations**

In this class we'll talk about the concept of collective bargaining, learn about various Theatrical Unions and who they serve, as well as the organizations who serve Theatre Organizations.

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## Learning Objectives:

1. Be able to identify various Theatre Unions and who they serve
2. Be able to identify some of the collective bargaining organizations that negotiate with the unions
3. Be able to identify some of the theatre field's service organizations

- November 2**    **Management Reflections, Part 1: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Anti-Racism**  
We'll look at what some theatres have done to become more inclusive, and what steps theatres can take to truly become anti-racist. We'll be reading some case studies, watching some panel discussions, and discussing in class.
- November 9**    **Management Reflections, Part 2: Leadership during crisis**  
The Covid Pandemic has turned the theatre world upside-down. What does leadership mean when your company is in crisis? We'll be looking at a case study of a crisis before the pandemic, learning how some theatres are coping now, and talking about what this new reality might mean for the field going forward.
- November 18**    **Final presentation (NOTE this is a different day than our normal meeting day)**  
4:30 – 6:30    The final will be a thought/research piece about the future of theatre in our new world. Find a theatre company whose mission interests you, and interview a management or artistic leader, asking questions about their experience during the stay at home order and what they envision for their company in the coming year. We'll be coming up with sample questions as a group as part of the Management Reflections modules to help you get started.

## **Supplementary Materials**

While not required reading, the following are interesting books to look at if you want additional information about topics we'll be discussing. You'll be reading some chapters from these books as part of your weekly assignments

*The Art of Governance*

*Boards in the Performing Arts*

By Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

*Invitation to the Party*

*Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community*

By Donna Walker-Kuhne; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

*Leading Roles*

*50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask*

By Michael M Kaiser; Brandeis University Press, 2010

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*Successful Fundraising for Arts and Cultural Institutions*

By Carolyn L. Stolper & Karen Brooks Hopkins

Oryx Press 1989

*The American Theatre Reader*

*Essays and conversations from American Theatre Magazine*

Edited by staff of American Theatre Magazine

TCG Books 2009

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## 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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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.

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

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.