

**SOT #305A Directing**

Spring 2021 – Mondays and Wednesdays– 8 until 9:50a.m.

Location: Online

**Instructor:** Stephanie Shroyer

**Office Hours:** Tues and Thurs. 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. or 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; cell phone supplied first day of class

**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):** THTR 101

**Co-Requisite (s):** none

**Concurrent Enrollment:** none

**Recommended Preparation:** N/A

## Course Notes, Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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

Required Text:

- *A Sense of Direction*, by William Ball (req.)
- *The Person I Once Was*, by Cindy Lou Johnson (req.)
- *Win/Lose/Draw* by Ara Watson and Mary Gallagher (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 (req.)

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 (Due Dates)

**In Class Observed Rehearsals of First Scene.** Scheduled for: March 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>

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.
- Assessment: formative only

**Midterm. Presentation of First Scene.** Due: March 15<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>

- As the director...having researched and established cornerstones, cast, rehearsed outside of class time and one observed rehearsal during class time; present a 5-minute scene from either *The Person I Once Was* or *Final Placement*. (Actors, Set, Props and Costumes required.)
- Vision Play choice greenlighted by instructor (a full-length, published, theatrical piece of your choice)
- Assessment: Summative (10pts) based on attention to formative feedback from the observed rehearsal.

**Director's Book #1** Due: March. 15<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>

Assessment: Summative (10pts) Director's Book assessment is based on completeness, organization and presentation of the following criteria:

- all synchronous session class notes
- asynchronous exercise preparation
- observations and responses to in-class exercises to date that are disseminated during

- our synchronous class sessions (self and peer notes)
- Includes the following components specific to your play of choice (*Person I Once Was or Final Placement*):
    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. Remember that looking back is a viable way to see forward! 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** Scheduled for: March 29<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>. Assessment: Formative only. Peer discussion, peer and instructor feedback given.

- Following the Cornerstones of Success from William Ball's *A Sense of Direction*, research, devise and 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 10-minutes. 10-minute question/feedback/discussion session follows. Total presentation: 20- 25 minutes.
- Peer Observation Vision Project Notes begin and carry on for the remainder of the semester's work. (These are a component of your Final Written work submitted at semester end.)

**Environment Set-up Lab for vision play** Scheduled for: April 5<sup>th</sup>. Assessment: Formative Only. Group work, peer feedback and instructor interaction/feedback modalities.

**Observed Rehearsals of Vision Project** Scheduled for: April 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>

Observed Rehearsals for your Vision Project will include a "deep dive" into the playwright and their body of work. This 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, parameters of genre and societal relevance, we will use this opportunity to know more of the playwrights' whose stories are being envisioned by you, the students, in 305a.

Assessment: Formative only. Peer/Instructor discussion and queries regarding application to your vision project will inform your trajectory for your final project.

Talk to us about:

- The playwrights' 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?
- Use of visuals, video clips of interviews, power points are welcome.
- Cast actors (for this table read they may be your class-mates doing a cold read) and prepare for a five-minute reading of your text exemplifying the playwright's use of language (this may or may not be the portion of the text or the cast you ultimately bring forward/emphasize in your final project).

**Final Project for your Vision Play- 4 Options-** Scheduled for April 28<sup>th</sup> or May 10<sup>th</sup> (Date TBD according to the needs and progress of the class). Assessment: Summative, based on completeness, organization and presentation of project materials as described below...

Deliverable of Choice-*Option One, Two, Three or Four* (25pts)

Summary Paper "Why This Play Now?" (10 pts)

Peer notes (5pts)

Option One-

The same as your Midterm Project but with your vision play as the source material (a scene presentation accompanied by a Director's Book. Reminder of components listed below)

- Vision Cornerstones
- Director's journaling of your rehearsals and process.
- Reference and research pertinent to the play.
- Ground plan/environment sketches.
- Your character descriptions and prop lists.
- Director's rehearsal script with margin notes and beat breakdown.
- 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.
- Summary Paper (2 pages) "Why This Play Now?"

Option Two-

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
- Prop lists
- Character Descriptions
- Virtual Casting
- Universal and Super Objectives for major characters

- Summary paper (2 pages) “Why this Play Now?”

Option Three-

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 Four

Dramaturgical Portfolio in support of your Vision Play.

Include:

- Continue to 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?
- Relativity to other pieces of the playwrights work?
- Social/historical significance?
- 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.** April 26<sup>th</sup>  
**Vision Projects Share.** Due: TBD April 28<sup>th</sup> or May 10<sup>th</sup>  
**Peer Observation Notes** Due: May 10<sup>th</sup>

**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)
100	Total points possible*

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.

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

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%
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	100%

### Assignment Submission Policy and Grading Timeline

- Assignments due as described above.
- All paper-work submissions must be compiled into portfolio form and turned in to me electronically through Blackboard, your Google Folder set up for Spring '21 or USC email.
- Once submitted, please look for email confirmation from me that I can access your submissions. If there is a problem with the digital submission I will contact you and we will trouble-shoot to complete successful transfer of your materials.
- 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:

- 1) 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, presentations that are missed will not be rescheduled. If your schedule changes, you are responsible for the logistics of switching times with a classmate.
- 2) There are no excused absences. Three tardy episodes constitute one absence.

#### Time Requirements:

- 3) 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.
- 4) Logistical prowess in terms of time management for self and others is required.
- 5) Attention to essential props, costumes, and set pieces for scene work is encouraged. Lack of attention in this area will affect your grade.

#### Classroom Rules:

- 6) Class exercises and discussions are experiential in nature and “make-up” work is not possible. Do your best to be with us each class meeting.
- 7) As for “netiquette”, if possible, please keep your camera on and refrain from eating during class. Find a place to participate where you are comfortable but also, encourages you to be alert mentally and physically.
- 8) We will take a “brain/body” break halfway through class.

- 9) 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.
- 10) Written work is submitted electronically thru USC email, Blackboard and or Google Document Folder.
- 11) 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*.
- 12) 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.
- 13) Check your USC email regularly. Scheduling changes and other timely information will be sent via email.
- 14) 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.

### **Note on Staging**

No actual weapons can be used in scenes, and if you intend to use a prop weapon, please discuss this with me. Since our directing class is online it is less likely that your actors will share a physical space with each other or with you. If there is to be shared physical space please take all COVID precautions listed in the Trojan Health App.

We all want you to be safe and healthy so we can all be back together soon!

### **Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

#### **Process and Progression**

Week 1	1/18 1/20	Martin Luther King Day. University holiday. Introduction. Course Outline. Discussion: the role of the director. Assignment: Read <i>The Person I Once Was</i> and <i>Final Placement</i> from <i>Win/Lose/Draw</i> by Wed., Jan. 27 <sup>th</sup> .
Week 2	1/25	Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. The Cornerstones for Success. Have read; <i>A Sense of Direction</i> pages 3 through 44.

	1/27	Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. The Cornerstones for Success. Have read; <i>A Sense of Direction</i> pages 3 through 44. Assignment: Answer questions for Directors Play analysis for <i>Snow Angel and Final Placement</i> .
Week 3	2/1	Auditioning. Casting. Have read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> , pages 44 through 69.
	2/3	Casting cont.
Week 4	2/8	Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage them to talk to each other? Have read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> , pages 70 through 92.
	2/10	Rehearsal. The journey of storytelling begins. Sense of place and time. Your rehearsal environment. Introduce beats/objectives. Have read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> , pages 93-124.
Week 5	2/15	Presidents Day
	2/17	Continue work on objectives. Composition and Picturization. Directorial shaping of the scene. Stages in rehearsal progression. <b>** Note: Begin search for second (vision play) project. **</b>
Week 6	2/22	Presidents Day. University Holiday.
	2/24	Physicalizing of Action in “Blocking”. Secondary activity and physical action that supports story and character objectives.
Week 7	3/1	Observed Rehearsals. Search for second project (Vision play).
	3/3	Observed Rehearsals ( <i>Snow Angel &amp; Final Placement</i> ). Vision play chosen.
Week 8	3/8 & 3/10	Observed rehearsals. Script for Vision play green-lighted by instructor.
Week 9	3/15 & 3/17	<b>Midterm share. Presentation of <i>Snow Angel and Final Placement</i> scenes. Director’s Book #1 Due.</b>
Week 10	3/23 & 3/25	Director’s Vision. World of the Play. Technical elements. Have read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> pages 125 to end of text.
Week 11	3/29 & 3/31	Vision Presentations
Week 12	4/5 & 4/7	Presentation of Vision play environment set-up and use of playing areas. Group feedback/discussion.
Week 13	4/13 & 15	Observed Rehearsals. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
Week 14	4/20 & 22	Observed Rehearsals continued. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
Week 15	4/27	Semester Wrap-up. Class discussion of notes from first presentation of second scenes. Troubleshooting session for rehearsal questions.
	4/29	Begin final presentation of second scenes, Wed. April 24 <sup>th</sup> and cont. Mon., May 6 <sup>th</sup> 11:00a.m.- 1:00 p.m. (Director’s Paper Packet #2 due at time of students’ scene presentation).

**Final Exam: Mon., May 10<sup>th</sup> 11:00 until 1:00p.m. Director’s Book #2 due at final presentation of vision scene.**

\*\*\* Reading assignments should be completed by the day listed. \*\*\*

\*\*\* Process and progression subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group \*\*\*



## 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](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 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](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.

### 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 microaggressions 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](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)

*\*\*\*This syllabus serves as your contract for course 305A, Spring Semester 2021\*\*\**