

THTR 317 Section 63044R

Theatre Clown

Units: 2

Spring 2021

TTH, 11-12:50pm

Location: [Zoom Link](#)

Instructor: Zachary Steel

Office: email Zach for Zoom Link

Office Hours: available by appointment

Cell: 347-546-0298

Email: zsteel@usc.edu

Course Description

This class will challenge students to fully surrender to the immediate stakes of performance, to redirect their focus to the relationship between performer and audience, to examine the threshold of what can be done with our bodies and voices in performance, to confront preconceptions about one's own individual capabilities and discover what makes each individual funny, to celebrate one's greatest failures and experience the magnitude of true openness in front of an audience. And most of all, this class will guide you toward discovering a pre-socialized, chaotic, playful, maybe forgotten version of yourself: the clown.

Addendum for Remote Learning

The spirit of clown remains the same whether we are in person with each other or interacting online which makes this class well-suited for both. Physically, there are some differences as we are looking into a computer and responding not to each other but to a digital version of ourselves and we will make adjustments to accommodate for that. Some exercises will be done standing up and some will be done in the standard sitting-at-a-desk spatial relationship to the computer. The Zoom platform turns out to be a great tool for learning clown as it really forces one to explore simplicity, listening and responding, and staying in the moment. There is a more direct line to true vulnerability when we are in each other's physical presence – something occurs when one puts themselves in front of an audience – and it also can be achieved through zoom. It requires access to a more innocent and perceptive version of ourselves, and once we are allowed to be in the same room with each other, will make us more versatile, expressive, and impulsive performers.

Learning Objectives

- To define the principles of theatrical clowning
- To implement the principles of clowning through in-class improvisational exercises
- To apply the principles of theatrical clowning to on-camera performance
- To analyze various modes of contemporary performance that utilize clown technique

Prerequisite(s): THTR 101

Co-Requisite(s): N/A

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The required excerpts will be available on Blackboard as PDFs:

Why Is That So Funny? By John Wright

Folly of Racism: Enslaving Blackface and the "Natural" Fool Tradition by Robert Hornback

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Pathos Presentation – an introduction to clown work incorporating performer/audience connection, separations, bafflement, and pathos.

Video Project – application of clown principles to on-camera work.

Text Project – clown work integrated with partially scripted material

Reading Response – a 1-2 page reflection on the reading and how it applies to the work we do in class

Discussion Boards – two asynchronous class sessions, grades will be folded into participation grade

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	100	15
Class Work	100	15
Pathos Presentation	100	15
Video Project	100	15
Text Project	100	15
Reading Response	100	5
Final Project	100	20

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

Assignment Submission Policy

All written assignments will be submitted on Blackboard via Turnitin by the due date listed on the weekly breakdown.

Grading Timeline

Grades will be posted within a week of the due date.

Additional Policies

- Please arrive promptly for class. Late arrivals disturb the learning of the whole class.
- There will be no unexcused absences. You are required to be in attendance for each class period unless you are attending class from a time zone where the class falls outside of the hours 7am-10pm. If that is the case, it is required that you watch the recording of the class (available on Blackboard) and keep up with all assignments and course materials.

- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*
- Students are responsible for making themselves available for rehearsal outside of class.
- No social media posting about class.

Zoom etiquette:

- Please find as private and quiet a setting in your house as you possibly can. Keep in mind that as important as it is to not have any interruptions, it is also important to feel comfortable making sound and not be too concerned with disrupting others who are sharing a living/working space with you.
- Zoom camera should be on unless there is a specific reason for them to be turned off. Virtual backgrounds are ok.
- While we are in class, no applications should be in use on any device besides Zoom, unless otherwise instructed.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 1/19, 1/21	-Introduction to each other, how this class works... -Introduction to Clown		
Week 2 1/26, 1/28	Clown Exercises - Separations	<i>Why is That So Funny?</i> by John Wright (<i>The Simple Clown</i>)	
Week 3 2/2, 2/4	Clown Exercises – Bafflement	<i>Why is That So Funny?</i> by John Wright (<i>The Pathetic Clown</i>)	
Week 4 2/9, 2/11	Clown Pathos Presentations	<i>Why is That So Funny?</i> by John Wright (<i>The Tragic Clown</i>)	<i>InClass Presentation – Clown Pieces</i>
Week 5 2/16, 2/18	Clown Pathos Presentations		Clown Video Project Step 1
Week 6 2/23, 2/25	Clown Exercises – Free Play		Clown Video Project Step 2
Week 7 3/2, 3/4	Clown Exercises – Free Play		Clown Video Project Step 3
Week 8 3/9, 3/11	3/9 Asynchronous 3/11 Discussion on Clown Material	Viewing to be completed: “Clown Material” List available on Blackboard under Content	<i>Asynchronous Discussion Board Assignment</i>
Week 9 3/16, 3/18	Clown Text Reading and Discussion		Clown Video Project Step 4
Week 10 WD, 3/25	Clown Text Work Video Sharing		Clown Video Project Step 5
Week 11 3/30, 4/1	Clown Text Work Video Sharing		Clown Video Project Step 6
Week 12 4/6, 4/8	4/6 Asynchronous 4/8 Discussion on reading and viewing	Viewing to be completed: “Noses Off” Link available on Blackboard under Content	<i>Reading Response (The Folly of Racism) DUE 4/8</i>

Week 13 4/13, 4/15	Clown Text Work Clown Free Play		
Week 14 4/20, WD	Clown Text Work		
Week 15 4/27, 4/29	Clown Text Work Clown Free Play		
FINAL Tuesday, May 11th, 11-1pm	FINAL CULMINATION – See above for assignment description		FINAL Tuesday, May 11th, 11-1pm

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:

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://uscса.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

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: <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

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

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