



School of Dramatic Arts

Stand Up 2: Becoming A Pro
THTR 482

Spring 2021
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, Jacqueline Novak, Margaret Cho, Dinah Hashem, Sam Morril, Sarah Tiana, Brent Forrester, Brian Kiley, Kevin Pollak, Ron Funchess, Amy Silverberg, Judd Apatow, 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
• 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

Perform original stand-up show on Zoom.

15 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. 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

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: 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

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

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. 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

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