

CTWR 407 Course Syllabus

Course Title: Creating the Comedic Character
Instructor: Jennifer Glickman
Course Number: CTWR 407
Credit Hours: 2.0 (max 4.0)
Term: Fall 2021
Meeting Location: RZC 114
Meeting Day & Time: Mondays, 10:00 am-12:50 pm
Instructor Contact: jg24644@usc.edu
(text for time-sensitive matters)
Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interactive and immersive course teaches the basics of improv comedy through games and written exercises. Students will learn the improv “rules” and participate in interactive games and exercises — in groups and individually, performing and writing. While the emphasis will be on creating characters, improv is a fantastic way to gain confidence, practice collaboration and increase creative flexibility.

GOALS OF THE COURSE:

- Acquire knowledge of the history of improv and those that invented games and formats (i.e., Viola Spolin, Del Close)
- Learn the basic rules of improv and common improv games.
- Gain confidence working under a time limit or thinking on the fly.
- Create a tool-kit to utilize when writing, directing, acting or living.
- Strengthen the habits of listening to others and working in collaboration.
- Learn how to develop characters with distinctive voices and attitudes.
- Develop a good attitude toward “failure” and go outside a comfort zone.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS:

- Be ready and willing to try something new. Be willing to push yourself out of your comfort zone.
- Bring energy to class: show up physically and mentally.
- Come on time and stay for the entire class.
- Participate in all the performing and writing exercises.
- Be supportive of your fellow improvisors and yourself.
- Get out of your head.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

- Cell phones and computers should not be used during class, except for assigned writing purposes. A warning for the first offense will be followed by a lowering of a grade for the second offense.
- Using or imbibing mind-altering substances prior to class is not appropriate.
- Participation is mandatory. Fun is optional but recommended.

Internet Policy: Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be posted anywhere on the internet or shared on social media.

Recording Devices: You may not record without the consent of the instructor.

Writing Division Attendance Policy: Students are allowed two absences throughout the semester. On the third absence, students will have their final grade lowered by 10% and an additional 10% for each absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence. NOTE: Exceptions will be made in the case of religious holidays and DSP accommodations.

In the case of medical emergencies, family emergencies, or allowances needed for personal well-being, all concerns must be communicated and approved by the Instructor. If there is a difference of opinion, the student can contact the Writing Division at (213) 740-3303 or writing@cinema.usc.edu

If a student has an emergency and additional accommodations are needed, those accommodations will need to come through the USC Campus Support and Intervention (CSI) office. The Writing Division recommends the student and/or advocate contact CSI at 213-821-4710 and their home department adviser for additional support.

Please be aware that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major/minor you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit, please check with your home department.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Students will be evaluated as follows:

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| 20% | Participation and doing your personal best. |
| 20% | Collaboration and listening to your scene partners. |
| 20% | Commitment to the scene and your scene partners. |
| 20% | Banishing self-judgement. |
| 20% | Taking risks and pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. |

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to be on time for each class, and stay for the duration. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by one full point (ex: A to A-). A third unexcused absence will result in your grade being lowered another full point. Your grade will be lowered by one point for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

In order for an absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

Please note that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major/minor you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit please check with your home department.

If you have an emergency and must miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

COURSE CALENDAR:

CLASS 1 – Mon, Aug 23

CLASS: Personal introductions. Syllabus review and overview of course. What and why is improv? Setting personal intentions/goals for the course.

FOCUS: Easing into improvising with life story warm up, “Yes, And” storytelling circle, Who/Where line, and Ad Agency.

HOMEWORK: Lists of names, relationships, locations and jobs.

Mon, Aug 30 - NO CLASS!! RESCHEDULED to 12/6!!!

LABOR DAY — NO CLASS — Mon, Sept 6

CLASS 2 – Mon, Sept 13

CLASS: Who/Where line, physical agreement, Dumb and Dumber, Anaconda

FOCUS: Agreement and building on the premise. Creating a character with a specific attitude and vocal style. Being able to mimic a voice someone else creates.

CLASS 3 – Mon, Sept 20

CLASS: Who/Where/Why Is Today So Important line, Two-Headed Expert, Emotional Orchestra, New Choice

FOCUS: Confident presentation. Avoiding self-judgement. Creating distinctive characters and voices.

HOMEWORK: Write down interesting snippets of dialogue you overhear: arguments, vocal tics, accents, attitudes

CLASS 4 – Mon, Sept 27

CLASS: Who/Where/Why Is Today So Important line, Very Big Store, Poet's Corner writing & performing exercise

FOCUS: Writing in a particular voice, listening to others, using "spacework" and physicality to improvise without words.

CLASS 5 – Mon, Oct 4

CLASS: Who/Where/Why Is Today So Important line, Blind Date, Catch-Phrase Character, Podcast

FOCUS: Subtext in dialogue. Listening. Finding character specifics.

CLASS 6 – Mon, Oct 11

CLASS: Who/Where/Why Is Today So Important line, One-Sided Playwright, Theater/Movie Styles

FOCUS: Listening. Mimicking tone and dialogue.

CLASS 7 – Mon, Oct 18

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, writing prompt coming from conflict point in an existing scene, Everyday Olympics

FOCUS: Creating a specific environment, and using the environment to further character.

HOMEWORK: Bring a common (not valuable) object or two from home to use and share at next week's class (for example: spatula, trombone, plunger, Rolodex, yarmulke, cat toy). Items will be returned, undamaged.

CLASS 8 – Mon, Oct 25

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, This Is A... (using the objects people found in their homes), New Choice, Emotional Scene

FOCUS: Thinking creatively/breaking the box. Getting in touch with your infinite creativity.

CLASS 9 – Mon, Nov 1

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, five-minute scene planning exercise, Oscar Moment scene

FOCUS: Working with a clock ticking. Thinking about scenes in the bullet-points/overall arc.

CLASS 10 – Mon, Nov 8

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, Daytime TV Talk Show, Anaconda

FOCUS: Mimicking a character someone else created and building on that. Serving the needs to the scene as a whole.

CLASS 11 – Mon, Nov 15

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, Emotional Orchestra, Let's Make A Date, Gibberish

FOCUS: Collaboration, creating characters with physicality

CLASS 12 – Mon, Nov 22

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, 10-5-1 scenes, Scenes from a Hat

FOCUS: Working with limitations, dialogue style as a means of building character

CLASS 13 – Mon, Nov 29

NOTE: THIS IS NOT THE FINAL CLASS!

CLASS: Who/Where/What I Need line, I Want To See That scene, Tindr profile character (writing exercise) —> Dating Game

FOCUS: Building bigger stories from scenes, bringing characters from the page to the stage

CLASS 14 – Mon, Dec 6

CLASS: Potpourri (favorite games revisited)

FOCUS: Doing the thing you felt least comfortable doing in class 1. Setting new goals and intentions.

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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (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

Student Health Leave Coordinator – 213-821-4710

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed. <https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

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.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/sssa

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

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, 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

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail diversity@cinema.usc.edu. You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here: <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

Disruptive Student Behavior:

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.