

USC School of Dramatic Arts

SDA #305A Directing

Fall 2021 – Tuesdays and Thursdays – 8 until 9:50 a.m.

Location: PED 202

Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer

Office: MCC 204

Office Hours: Mon. 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in PED (meet outside room 208) 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

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): Admittance to the BFA in Acting for Stage, Screen and New Media

Co-Requisite (s): THTR 120A, THTR 140A and THTR 125

Concurrent Enrollment: THTR 120A, THTR 140A and THTR 125

Recommended Preparation: N/A

Course Notes, Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

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

- *A Sense of Direction*, by William Ball (req.)
- *Win Lose or Draw*, by Mary Gallagher and Ara Watson (req.)
- *Cages: Snowangel and Epiphany*, by Lewis John Carlino (req.)
- *Steal Like An Artist* by Austin Kleon (req.)
- *A text of your choice* for your vision play. (req.)
- *Notes on Directing: 130 Lessons in Leadership from the Director's Chair* by Frank Hauser (rec.)

Materials:

- A notebook (to serve as your Directors Book) is required. It needs to have the ability to hold inserts and handouts that will be accumulated across the semester. This will 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 (And Due Dates)

In Class Observed Rehearsals of First Scene. Due: Sept. 30th, Oct. 5th, 7th, 12th

Assessment: Formative only. Observed rehearsals average 20-25 min. where the student director and their actors are 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 as described in the text.

Midterm. Presentation of First Scene. Due: Oct. 19th & 21st

Assessment: Summative (20pts) based on attention to formative feedback from the observed rehearsal.

Director's Book #1 Due: Oct. 19th & 21st

Assessment: Summative (10pts) In addition to all class notes, observation responses to class exercises, your Directors Book includes (for both midterm and final projects) include the following components:

- Class Notes
- 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.

- 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. 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 Due: Nov. 2nd, 4th

Assessment: Formative only. Following the Cornerstones of Success from William Ball’s *A Sense of Direction*, research, 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 5 min. in length. Five-minute feedback/discussion session follows.
- Peer Observation Notes begin and carry on for the remainder of the semester’s work. (These are turned in at the Final, Dec. 14th)

Environment Set-up Lab for vision play Due: Nov. 9th

Assessment: Formative Only. Group work, peer feedback and instructor interaction/feedback modalities.

Observed Rehearsals of Second Scene Due: Nov. 11th, 16th, 18th, 23rd.

Assessment: Formative only. Observed rehearsals average 20-25 min. where the student director and their actors are working in class so that the encounter can be viewed by instructor and peers.

- Emphasize usage of space and vision elements.
- Short feedback/question session follows.
- All costumes, props, set pieces are required.

Semester Wrap-up. Nov.30th.

Presentations of Second Scenes/Director’s Book #2 Due: Dec. 2nd, 14th.

Assessment: Summative (25 and 15 pts respectively)

Peer Observation Notes Due: Dec. 14th.

Assessment: Summative (5 of the 15pts allotted for the Director’s Book #2)

Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

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 (all props, costumes, set evidenced) and fulfillment of your directors' vision, as articulated in your Director's Book journal.
I look to see that what is on the page has found it's way onto the stage!

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Classwork	30	30%
First Scene	20	20%
Directors Book #1	10	10%
Second Scene	25	25%
Directors Book #2	10	10%
Peer Notes	5	5%
TOTAL	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. Note that I will have "spot observed" your Director's Book during class time throughout the semester.
- 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 class sessions.
- Students can receive written feedback for all performance assignments immediately if the student wishes to capture electronically my handwritten notes.
- Formalized grading of performance and written work can be expected within 3 class sessions from the due date.

Additional Policies

Attendance:

- 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 that are missed will not be rescheduled.
- There are no excused absences. Three tardy episodes constitute one absence.

Time Requirements:

- Rehearsals outside of scheduled class time are required for a successful outcome in 305a. Note...Scenes need often be cast with students outside of this section's enrollment. You may not act in your own directing scene.
- Logistical prowess in terms of time management for self and others is required.
- 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.

- Each student will maintain a **Director's Book** containing; classroom notes, observations, comments upon viewing other students in class rehearsals and scene presentations and documentation of your directing process as described above in "Assignments". This may be checked and referenced during observed rehearsals and is turned in to me in two increments: Directors Book for first play at midterm and for second/vision play at final periods. *See "Hint" below*
- Peer Observation Notes from in class exercises, observed rehearsals and presentations.

Classroom Rules:

- Class exercises and discussions are experiential in nature and "make-up" work is not possible. Scheduled observed rehearsals that are missed will not be rescheduled.
- 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.
- 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*.
- 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 is possible per semester.
- Scheduling rehearsal space should be done according to the SDA scheduling protocol.
- Check your USC email regularly. Scheduling changes and other timely information will be sent via email.
- Cell phones are to be turned off for the duration of class.
- Electronic Capture of any portion of class is strictly prohibited without prior approval of the instructor.

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...yikes!) 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/Out of Class Rehearsals

- 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 occurring while we must still be “COVID Conscious” please take all COVID precautions listed in the Trojan Health App when you gather to rehearse. We all want you to be safe and healthy so we can remain in person!

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week 1	8/24	Introduction. Course outline.
	8/26	Discussion: the role of the director. Assignment: Read <i>Final Placement (from Win/Lose/Draw) and Snow Angel (from Cages)</i> by Thurs. Sept. 2 nd .
Week 2	8/31	Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. Read: <i>A Sense of Direction</i> pages 3 through 44.
	9/2	Text work on <i>Final Placement and Snow Angel</i> .
Week 3	9/7	Auditioning. Casting. Read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> , pages 44 through 69.
	9/9	Auditioning/Casting continued...The Director’s responsibility.
Week 4	9/14 & 16	Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage them to talk to each other? Read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> , pages 70 through 92.
Week 5	9/21 & 23	Rehearsal. The journey of story telling begins. Sense of place and time. Your rehearsal environment. Objectives. Read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> , pages 93 through 124.
Week 6	9/28	Shaping the scene or stages in rehearsal progression. “Is this blocking?”. Begin search for second scene.
	9/30	Observed rehearsals. Continued search for second scene.
Week 7	10/5 & 10/7	Observed rehearsals. Continued search for second scene.
Week 8	10/12	Observed rehearsals. Text for second scene green-lighted by instructor.
	10/14	Fall Break
Week 9	10/19 & 21	Presentation of first scenes.
		Director’s Paper Packet #1 Due. Midterm Evaluation.
Week 10	10/26 & 10/28	The World of the Play. Technical elements. Director’s vision. Read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> pages 125 to end of text.
Week 11	11/2 & 11/4	Vision Presentations
Week 12	11/9	Environment Set-up Lab (for vision play).
	11/11	Observed Rehearsals Vision Scene. Prioritize environment/rehearsal space.
Week 13	11/16	Observed Rehearsals continued.

	11/18	Observed Rehearsals continued.
Week 14	11/23	Observed Rehearsals continued.
	11/25	Thanksgiving. University Holiday
Week 15	11/30	Semester Wrap-up. Questions/Observations/Trouble shooting.
	12/2	Begin final presentation of second scenes, Thurs. Dec. 2 nd and cont. Tues., Dec 14 th 4:30- 6:30 p.m. (Director's Book #2 due on the date of the scene presentation).

Process and Progression is subject to change based on the needs and requirements of the group

Final Exam Period: Tues., Dec 14th 4:30- 6:30 p.m. Peer Observation Notes for Vision Projects due.

**EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training
Wednesday, September 15, 2021**

As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

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 Accessibility Requirements

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with *The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)*. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.– 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS 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.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
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

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

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, 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

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.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 Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

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

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.

This syllabus serves as your contract for course #305A, Fall Semester 2021