

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## **THTR 397/497 Theatre Practicum**

Fall/Spring—MTWThF—6-10PM and other times as assigned, SA & SU 10AM-10PM (1 week)

Location: SDA Theatres & Labs

<http://dramaticarts.usc.edu/theatres-labs/overview.aspx>

**Section: 62999D**

**Instructor: Els Collins**

**Office Hours: by appointment**

**Contact Info: [ecollins@usc.edu](mailto:ecollins@usc.edu) (213)948-6782 Cell**

### **Course Description and Overview**

Substantive participation in the productions comprising the School of Dramatic Arts curated mainstage season of plays. Productions are anchored by SDA faculty who guide, mentor and collaborate with enrolled 397/497 students who will prepare a theatrical text to culminate in public performance housed in one of the school's performance venues. Design, technical direction, stage management assignments are made by the SDA Production faculty and acting assignments are by audition.

### **Learning Objectives**

Our undergraduate programs are anchored by principles aimed at developing artists who can exercise the interdependence of artistic practice and understand theatre as a collaborative art form. This course provides each population of artists the opportunity to develop their specific skillset within the context of a shared collaborative project. These are stated below:

All 397/497 participants/enrollees will:

- Cultivate collaborative and respectful interaction between themselves and all participants in the process, including actors, designers, technical directors and stage managers, as well as with their Practicum Leaders (Directors).
- Cultivate curiosity about diverse artistic regimens and expertise toward the common goal of the actualization of a theatrical production.

Actors are expected to:

- Obtain and hone a working knowledge of the interface between actor, text, theatrical event and audience across a range of social contexts, historical periods, performance styles and cultures.
- Acquire and hone a practical understanding of rehearsal processes and performance protocol in live theatre.
- Apply their developing physical, vocal and emotional skills to performances in productions that are mounted in the School's performing venues.

Designers are expected to:

- Utilize classroom skills learned in the current technology and understanding of the materials, methods and techniques utilized both in the shops and onstage.
- Hone the process of actualizing their designs from concept to realization, while exhibiting a working knowledge of the interface between actor, text, theatrical event and audience across a range of social contexts, historical periods, performance styles and cultures.
- Document work for inclusion in their professional design portfolio. The portfolio serves as the designers' calling card to obtain work in their selected field or to gain admittance to graduate school

Stage Managers are expected to:

- Acquire and hone the logistical and intuitive abilities to manage people, schedules, communication, and the organization of space, time and; materials necessary to realize a theatrical production.
- Gain a practical understanding of the relations between a stage manager, all artistic staff (designers and technicians) and actors.
- Facilitate communication.
- Collaborate with directors and actors throughout the rehearsal process, to support the creative life of rehearsals, and to maintain the production after the director's departure.
- Read and interpret production paperwork and drawings: schedules, scenic ground plans, sections, and elevations, light plots, and magic sheets; costume renderings and plots; and sound plots. Practical familiarity with computer programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel.
- Create a working production prompt book, which accurately records all production details from actor movement to tracking of props, scenery, costumes and placement of all ephemeral design cues.

Technical Directors are expected to:

- Improve and hone their skills in managerial functions required in the technical operations of a theatre, including supervision of personnel, scheduling of facilities and personnel, budget development, materials and equipment acquisition, record keeping, and maintenance of equipment and facilities.
- Improve their ability to translate designer plans, renderings, models, and/or sketches into realized production elements and to develop and communicate technological solutions via technical drafting sketching, and structural analysis, both by hand and with appropriate computer software.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

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

**Concurrent Enrollment:** None

**Recommended Preparation:** None

### **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

The play's script to be presented and such research materials as the director may deem necessary for a particular project. Students are informed which specific texts are to be used and are provided the publishing information to acquire these texts. Both actors and production designers and stage managers will be provided with a copy of the text prior to the start of rehearsals.

### **Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments**

THTR 397/497 projects are directed and graded by the SDA Faculty of record for each respective section. In addition to the section's faculty of record, all grades will also reflect the evaluations of the Practicum Leader (Director) and area SDA Technical Staff specifically in the areas of Professionalism and Rehearsal Process.

Grading will be determined by the following as defined below and according to the appropriate grading matrix and timeline for your discipline which is an addendum to this syllabus:

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1- Participation and preparation | 10% |
| 2- Professionalism               | 20% |
| 3- Rehearsal Process             | 30% |
| 4- Public performance            | 40% |

Separate Grading matrices are available for Design, Stage Management, Technical Direction, and Acting students.

### **Grading Breakdown**

**These expectations constitute the bulk of your graded experience. In addition to these may be other assignments that happen out of the specific rehearsal process.**

The final letter grade is awarded based on the following percentages

(A>94%>A->90%>B+>87%>B>84%>B->80%>C+>77%>C>74%>C->70%>D+>67%>D>64%>D->60%>F)

### **Participation and preparation 10%**

#### **Actors are expected:**

- To arrive at rehearsals on time, ready to work, focused on the work at hand.
- Unscheduled conflicts will be considered absences

#### **Sound Design, Scenic and Lighting Design Students are expected:**

- To read, understand and support the script prior to design meetings
- To be prepared at initial design meetings to discuss verbally or schematically the needs of the script and to discuss the scope of the production
- To be prepared with ideas for design and production meetings
- To visit the shop or load in often and as necessary in order to communicate with TD, ATD, Sound Supervisor, carpenters, painters, etc.
- To attend 2-3 hours of rehearsals in the first week of rehearsals.

- To attend 3-4 hours of Design Consults in the theatre space the weekend before tech rehearsals
- To attend meet and greet, tech and dress rehearsals

**Costume Design Students are expected:**

- To read, understand and support the script prior to design meetings
- To be present throughout the design and construction process.
- To attend 2-3 hours of rehearsals in the first week of rehearsals.
- To attend 3-4 hours of Design Consults in the Costume shop the weekend before dress rehearsals

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To read, understand and support the script prior to design meetings
- To be prepared with ideas for design and production meetings
- To visit the shop or load in often and as necessary in order to communicate with TD, ATD, Sound Supervisor, carpenters, painters, etc.
- To attend 2-3 hours of rehearsals in the first week of rehearsals.
- To attend 3-4 hours of Design Consults in the theatre space the weekend before tech rehearsals
- To facilitate technical elements at tech and dress rehearsals

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- Create an overall timeline noting all milestones for your production, including but not limited to; preliminary design meeting, auditions, first production meeting, first rehearsal, designer milestones, load-in, focus, meet & greet, tech schedule, program copy due date, dress rehearsal and performance dates.
- To attend and facilitate all rehearsals.
- To facilitate scheduling of initial design meetings
- To attend and facilitate production meetings
- To attend the THTR 130 class on the appropriate day for the Stage Manager meeting

**Professionalism 20%**

**Actors are expected:**

- To attend all costume measurement and fitting appointments as scheduled
- To learn lines by the deadlines required by the director
- To be quiet and respectful when their colleagues are rehearsing
- To be attentive to entrances and exits.
- To be responsible for all blocking and movement as presented by the director
- To acknowledge and incorporate director's notes
- To be in costume and make-up by the time the house opens
- To be quiet when not on stage
- To be responsible for their individual entrances and exits
- To be responsible for all personal props and wardrobe

**Sound Design, Scenic and Lighting Design Students are expected:**

- To collaborate with faculty, staff, peers and advisors
- To acknowledge and incorporate director's notes
- To meet all design deadlines as outlined by production faculty and staff
- To be interested and involved in design execution and the needs of the production

**Costume Designers are expected:**

- To acknowledge and act upon notes from the director in a timely manner
- To collaborate with faculty, staff, peers and advisors
- To attend all costume fittings

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To collaborate with faculty, staff, peers and advisors
- To acknowledge and act upon notes from the designer, stage manager, and director, referring design notes from other sources to the designer before acting on them
- To meet all deadlines for budgets, working drawings, layouts, scenery movement plots and special effects as outline by production faculty and staff
- To be available, on time, present and ready to work on the production at all times possible during the production period

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To set and maintain levels of courtesy and discipline
- To have an excellent working relationship with the shops

**Rehearsal Process 30%**

**Actors are expected:**

- To be flexible and open in the rehearsal process
- Rehearse in attire suitable to the ongoing physical/ psychological development of the role assigned at his/her casting (for ex: rehearsal skirts, proper footwear)
- To be willing to investigate alternative solutions and ready to offer their own ideas
- To work as needed with dialect and vocal coaches and fight choreographers
- To assist in the setting up and breaking down of rehearsal as needed for efficient use of time in rehearsals

**Sound Design, Scenic and Lighting Design Students are expected:**

- To attend selective rehearsals including the designer run-through and scheduled meetings with the director and design faculty
- To be actively involved in the technical execution of deliverables
- To understand and support the script and the director's vision

**Costume Design Students are expected:**

- To understand and support the director's approach
- To participate in and learn from fittings
- To communicate and interface well with the costume staff and other production members.

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To faithfully execute the design as approved by the designer and the director
- To attend the designer run-through, all production meetings, and design meetings as invited or necessary
- To attend all technical rehearsals and dress rehearsals, or for productions with minimal tech and pending the agreement of the stage manager, to be on-call at a location no more than 3 minutes from the theatre after completing any notes.
- To train the stagehands in the safe and effective use of the set and any backstage systems or effects
- Create any needed scenery movement pots with the designer and stage manager

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To run all auditions and rehearsals including technical rehearsals
- To encourage actors to assist with the setting up and breaking down of rehearsals as needed for efficient use of time in the rehearsals
- Take roll
- To be effective in tone and information conveyed in rehearsal reports
- To provide accurate program copy to the Communications Office per the timeline established
- To provide breakdowns for Fight Choreography and any live flame to Head of Production
- To record all blocking, movement and potential cues
- To keep updated paperwork – contact sheets, calendars, props lists, etc.
- To serve as prompter as needed or to train another student to prompt
- To provide a final blocking/calling script to the Head of Stage Management for review and grading

**Public Performance/Quality of Design/Performance 40%**

**Actors are expected:**

- To integrate all of the rehearsal process to include physical, vocal and dialect work as appropriate to the production
- To execute the themes, tone and style of the play
- To perform as a member of the ensemble
- To attend and participate in the strike

**Sound Design, Scenic and Lighting Design Students are expected:**

- To attend the opening night performance and will hopefully enjoy seeing their work in front of an audience

- To have understood and fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of the design assignment to the best of their abilities
- To provide presentation/portfolio level documentation of designs
- To have demonstrated growth as an artist and storyteller
- To attend and participate in the strike

**Costume Design Students are expected:**

- To put information from a designer's show into the Costume bible - this includes pieces list (Costume item sheets), measurements (participation in the measurement process), drawings, etc. also, include costume staff in discussions and drawings from potential builds.

**Technical Directors are expected:**

- To have understood and fulfilled the duties and responsibilities of a technical director to the best of their abilities
- To run any particularly complicated or dangerous special effects during rehearsals and performances
- To be available from the Stage Manager's call time until "places" for last minute notes
- To provide portfolio quality documentation of the assignment
- To have demonstrated growth as a project manager, engineer, artist and craftsman
- To attend and participate in strike

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- To run all performances to include coordination with the house manager and actors
- To oversee the assignments of the crew to facilitate the smooth running of the performance
- To attend and participate in the strike

**All students participating in the production are required to attend and participate in the strike. Closed-toed shoes are required for all technical rehearsals and for strike.**

**Proposed Schedule:**

**Actors:**

- The normal rehearsal period for a THTR 397/497 is 6-8 weeks including the week of performance.
- Rehearsals take place 6:00pm-10:00pm Monday-Friday and 5 hours TBD on one weekend day
- Students in the THTR 397/497 project are "on call" for all scheduled rehearsals.

**Design Students:**

**Sound Design, Scenic and Lighting Design Students are expected:**

- Will be given due dates for drawings, renderings, lighting and speaker plots, etc. as appropriate by design faculty in consultation with SDA production staff.

- Designers are required to attend all tech rehearsals and dress rehearsals for their project.

**Costume Design Students are expected:**

- Being prepared with a complete ensemble ready to be fit (including shoes) for fittings. Developing skills at pulling from stock. Developing skills at shopping. Fitting notes are precise and understandable.
- Present research and/or drawings to Mentor, Director and Costume Staff in a timely manner. (Including the actors in this process as needed).

**Design Students:**

**Production Assistants in all areas of Design:**

- Production Assistants for Set, Costume, and Lighting Design are required to attend all tech rehearsals and dress rehearsals for their project.
- The normal rehearsal period for a THTR 397 is 6-8 weeks including the week of performances. During these weeks the Design Assistant will be asked to help the Designer in areas related to their assignment. Model building, purchasing supplies, checking in with shops or area heads, and keeping paperwork updated are all valid. Mostly though, it is intended for the Assistants to 'shadow' their designers in order to learn the process of designing and communicating during SDA productions.

**Stage Managers:**

**Stage Managers are expected:**

- The normal rehearsal period for a THTR 397/497 is 6-8 weeks including the week of performance.
- Stage Managers are called a half hour early for rehearsals which take place 6:00pm-10:00PM and 5 hours TBD on one weekend day. They may be called to stay a half hour later for each rehearsal to conclude paperwork.
- To attend all auditions and rehearsals
- To help facilitate all areas of the production

**Guidelines on Grading**

| Assignment                    | Points     | % of Grade |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Participation and Preparation | 10         | 10         |
| Professionalism               | 20         | 20         |
| Rehearsal Process             | 30         | 30         |
| Public Performance            | 40         | 40         |
|                               |            |            |
|                               |            |            |
|                               |            |            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Assignment Submission Policy**



Assignments will be submitted according to the guidelines provided by the design and stage management faculty mentors and practicum leaders (Directors).

### **Additional Policies**

Acting students will be penalized for missing rehearsals. Design and stage management students will be held accountable for their deadlines in submitting paperwork, drawings, plots, etc.

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

The weekly schedule varies according to the discipline of the student taking this class and to the section. Because of the variety of dates associated with each section and the range of activities of the students, the materials needed for each week necessarily varies in nature and timing. Assignments for designers and stage managers are spelled out in timeline documents which are provided to each student at the beginning of the class.

### **Final Examination Date:**

The final for this class is the final performance, or portfolio review in the case of designers and stage managers.

## **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.

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### **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](https://dps.usc.edu)