

**THTR 427-AUDITION TECHNIQUE FOR FILM,
TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA
(2.0 Units)
Fall 2021-Friday-2:00-4:50 PM
MCC 108**

Instructor: DAN SHANER

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Office Hours: By appointment on Zoom

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Course Description and Overview

To provide each actor-student with practical as well as skills-based preparation for a professional career, to integrate instructors' direction, criticism and feedback in a positive and professional manner, and develop confidence, presence and professional decorum on-camera and in a collaborative environment.

Learning Objectives

This course develops and perfects auditioning skills needed to successfully build a career as an actor and compete at a professional level in a variety of film, television and new media venues. Focus includes:

- Identifying type, essence and age range as it applies to choosing roles and branding and marketing
- Breaking down and analyzing sides and scenes to discover emotional complexity and uniqueness of character to aid in making bold, unique choices
- Sharpening cold reading and on-camera skills, including practical technical aspects of filmed auditions
- Developing professional etiquette and decorum
- Learning the art of researching, self-taping and self-submitting on projects
- Demystifying pilot season casting
- Assessing personal habits and fears that might inhibit effective auditions
- Collecting and preparing appropriate audition materials
- Integrating acting skills into fully realized audition pieces

Prerequisite: THTR 101 and THTR 252B

Grading Scale and Criteria:

A indicates work of excellent quality (**100 to 90%**); **B** of good quality (**90 to 80%**); **C** of average quality (**80 to 70%**); **D** of below average quality (**70 to 60%**); and **F** indicates inadequate work (**50% and below**)

- A= In addition to technical competence, student has demonstrated creativity, originality and imagination in his/her approach to the work.
- B = Student has achieved the goals stated for the course, certain skills being stronger than others, but without consistent application.
- C = Student comprehends the goals intellectually, but is not able to apply them on a consistent basis and does not use his/her creativity and imagination fully. Student may not fully demonstrate a professional and disciplined approach to the work.
- D = Student lacks comprehension of the goals and/or is inadequate in achieving them. Student has serious problems with professionalism and/or discipline.
- F = Student fails to comprehend the goals stated for the semester.

The instructor reserves the right to consider studentship in determining the final grade.

+/- may be added to any grade

Grading Breakdown:

Course will contain **three written homework assignments:**

1. What's My Type? Exercise- **(5%)**-Due beginning of Week Two (9/3)
2. List of uploading video platforms- **(5%)**-Typed and turned in to Blackboard. Due beginning of Week Six. (10/1)
3. Deadline Hollywood Pilot Panic Research- **(5%)**-Typed and turned in to Blackboard. Due beginning of Week Ten. (10/29)

AND four practical application assignments: The analysis and breakdown of scenes given in class. Grades will be based on assessment of understanding the six basic principles of diagramming a scene illustrated in the syllabus: What, How, When, Where, Why and Who in:

4. Guest Star scenes **(17.5%)**
5. Co-Star scenes **(17.5%)**
6. Mock casting session scenes- **(17.5%)**

AND

7. Appropriateness of scenes chosen based on age range, character type and overall suitability- **(17.5%)**
8. Studentship (Attendance, Professionalism, Discipline, Responsibility and Participation)- **(15%)**

For Course Assignments:

All assignments must be typed and submitted through Blackboard and are due when requested. HAND WRITTEN WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Please do not email assignments unless prior arrangements have been made.

Required Textbook: "How To Audition on Camera: A Hollywood Insiders' Guide for Actors"-Second Edition By Sharon Bialy (2016) Available on Amazon and <https://www.bkstr.com/usctextstore>

Suggested Additional Textbook: "Working Actor" by David Dean Bottrell (2019) Available on Amazon.

Sides/Scenes: Will be distributed ahead of time, via Blackboard or email, unless otherwise specified.

Additional Policies:

- All students will be expected to bring and keep a separate notebook or tablet for lecture notes. Please keep all assignments and homework returned to you.
- **CELL PHONES ARE NOT ALLOWED IN CLASS** except for students with emergency situations discussed privately and approved by instructor, or when being used for a specific exercise.
- Students are requested to arrive on time (which means early) to class.
- **ATTENDANCE IN CLASS IS MANDATORY.** If you must miss class, please notify me AHEAD OF TIME, preferably in writing.
- Professionalism in class is paramount. This includes talking or leaving the room while others are speaking or performing scenes and treating others with courtesy and respect.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

(NOTE: Dates and discussions subject to change, especially regarding availability of Guest Stars. Assignment due dates will not change without advanced notice.)

WEEK ONE

8/27

TELLING YOUR STORY, DISCOVERING YOUR ESSENCE, AND TYPECASTING IN FILM AND TV

- Teacher introduction. Review of syllabus and materials.
- **HANDOUT:** “What Is Your Type?” on Blackboard
- **HANDOUT:** Resources for Actors on Blackboard
- **EXERCISE:** Introducing yourself, being comfortable in the room, telling “your” story. Standing out in the crowd, presenting yourself “dynamically.”
- **DISCUSSION:** “The Business” and what it takes to succeed as an actor.
- Review types of Auditions and Casting Situations.
- Discovering your type, age range, and essence. Self-perception vs. how others perceive you.
- Choosing roles that are “right” for you.
- The differences between “miscast” and “typecast.”
- **HANDOUT:** Watchlist on Blackboard
- **HOMEWORK:** Bring blank copies of your adjective list and go to the Village or other public place and ask strangers THEIR PERCEPTION OF YOU. (Due Week two)
- **TEXTBOOK:** Forward, Authors Note, Introduction.

WEEK TWO

9/3

DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION OF HOMEWORK FROM WEEK ONE

ANALYZING MATERIAL

DISCUSSION: Identifying style/tone/genre/pace of scenes and shows. Dissecting the six basic principles of analyzing and breaking down a scene:

1. **WHAT** does your character want?
2. **HOW** are they going to get it?
3. **WHEN** in the narrative does the scene take place?
4. **WHERE** does the scene take place, and what impact does environment have?
5. **WHY** is the scene in the script?

6. WHO is the character, based on their behavior/actions/dialogue?

- Making bold and surprising choices every time.
- Bringing your personality and inherent uniqueness into a character.
- Finding the transitions, subtext, and action words of the scene. What does punctuation mean?

RESEARCHING THE SHOW/SHOWRUNNERS/FILMMAKERS

- **DISCUSSION:** Who are the principals or “elements” in the project, how to find out more about them, and why it matters.
- **HOMEWORK:** Analyze and break down assigned scenes.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 1-4

WEEK THREE

9/10

PREPARING TO AUDITION-Starts the minute you enter the building

- **DISCUSSION:** Preparing material.
- **HANDOUT:** 21 Things That Make Casting Directors Happy.
- What to wear.
- Arrival and waiting room etiquette.
- Entering the room with purpose, confidence and calm.
- What to bring with you.
- Dos, don'ts and questions to ask.
- Appropriate use of props, costumes, furniture and pantomime.
- The three Ps: Professionalism, Punctuality, Preparation.
- The reader.
- The camera.
- Re-directs. What they mean, how to handle them, or the absence of them.
- Translating Casting Director and Director-speak.
- The Actors Survival Kit.

ON-CAMERA AUDITIONS

- **EXERCISE:** Begin auditioning homework scenes assigned in Week 2
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 5-12 (Chapters are short)

WEEK FOUR

9/17

ON-CAMERA AUDITIONS CONTINUED

- **EXERCISE:** Call-backs. What to do differently or the same. Wardrobe choices.
- The finer points of re-directs and adjustments.
- Each student will have the opportunity to perform scene twice with feedback.
- Playback of film and critique.
- **SPECIAL GUEST STAR: CASTING DIRECTOR TBA**
- Will assist in shaping auditions and call-backs.
- **HANDOUT:** Cold-reading tips.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 13-20

WEEK FIVE

9/24

COLD-READING TECHNIQUES FOR FILM, TV AND NEW MEDIA

- **DISCUSSION:** Analyzing material on a moment's notice.
- Shaping your auditions.
- Things to know fast and first.
- What to expect in a cold-read and why they happen.
- Re-directs and adjustments.
- **EXERCISE:** Each student will perform twice on-camera.
- Playback and critique.
- **HOMEWORK:** Research uploading video sites and platforms in preparation for Week Six. Typed and printed out.

WEEK SIX

10/1

SELF-SUBMITTING AND SELF-TAPING

- **DISCUSSION:** Finding auditions.
- Choosing worthwhile projects and ones to avoid.
- Dos and don'ts of self-submitting.

- **EXERCISE:** Shooting, editing and uploading of self-tapes, including lighting, framing, clothing, coloring, readers, sound and slates.
- Each student will shoot a self-tape audition with material they have chosen.
- **REVIEW:** Research homework from Week Five.
- **HOMEWORK:** Submit to me via email, Dropbox, Hightail, We Transfer, Google Drive, etc.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 20-25

WEEK SEVEN

10/8

REVIEW OF SELF-TAPES (This assignment will serve as a mid-term assessment to gauge understanding and application of skills learned thus far)

- **EXERCISE:** Feedback, critique and re-directs. Re-shoots as necessary.
- **HOMEWORK:** Prepare co-star and featured “one-liner” roles.

WEEK EIGHT

10/15

HOW TO AUDITION FOR CO-STAR AND FEATURED ROLES ON CAMERA

- **DISCUSSION:** How not to stand out.
- Tricks and techniques including S.L.A.P. (Say it like a person).
- Miscasting and typecasting, and the differences between them.
- **EXERCISE:** Auditioning scenes on camera.
- Feedback and re-directs.
- Second round of auditions will feature several actors reading the same role.
- **HOMEWORK:** Prepare scenes for mock casting session.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 26-Conclusion

WEEK NINE

10/22

MOCK CASTING SESSION AUDITIONS ON-CAMERA

- **EXERCISE:** Two or more actors will receive the same material. The rest of the class will be the Casting Directors.
- Re-directs and discussion of actors.
- Call-backs. At least one actor from each group will be eliminated. The rest of the class and eliminated actors will be Producers.
- **DISCUSSION:** How is a cast assembled? How does type, look, essence, personality, physicality and talent come into play when choosing a cast? What happens when no one is chosen?
- **HOMEWORK:** Prepare scenes for pilot season auditions. Deadline Hollywood Pilot Panic. (Type Primetime Pilot Panic 2020 into search bar). Pick three pilots that interest you. Include all elements, storyline, and reason you chose it. Typed and turned in through Blackboard.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Glossary and Audition checklist.

WEEK TEN

10/29

PILOT SEASON -- PILOT PRE-READS AND CALL-BACKS ON CAMERA

- **EXERCISE:** Two or more actors will receive the same material, (Distributed as Week Nine Homework). The rest of the class will rotate as Casting Directors.
- Re-directs and call-backs. Two or more actors will move to Studio Testing phase.
- **DISCUSSION:** Quotes, holds, contracts, and testing preparation.
- **REVIEW:** Pilot Panic homework assignment from Week Nine.
- **HOMEWORK:** Choose your own material for Film auditions in Week 13.

WEEK ELEVEN

11/5

STUDIO TESTS-AUDITION AT STUDIO OR PRODUCTION COMPANY LEVEL ON-CAMERA

- **EXERCISE:** Director work session.
- Studio Executive casting session. We will attempt to re-create Studio Environment as much as possible. At least one actor per role will be eliminated and join Executive/Producer panel.
- **DISCUSSION:** What works, what doesn't. Creating a cast. Dealing with stress, anxiety, nerves and rejection.

WEEK TWELVE

11/12

NETWORK TESTS-AUDITION AT NETWORK LEVEL ON-CAMERA

- **EXERCISE:** Network casting session. We will attempt to re-create actual Network environment as much as possible.
- One actor for each role will be chosen. Or not. As actors are eliminated, they will join the Executive/Producer Panel.
- **DISCUSSION:** What happens now? The ins and outs of Network casting, screen tests, self-tapes. Competing in the global marketplace.
- **HANDOUT:** The Big 10: Questions To Ask Your Head Shot Photographer

WEEK THIRTEEN

11/19

FEATURE FILM AUDITIONS ON CAMERA (This assignment will serve as a final exam assessment to gauge understanding and application of skills learned throughout the semester)

- **DISCUSSION:** Similarities and differences to TV.
- Directors' medium vs. writers' medium.
- Tricks to use and traps to avoid.
- Processing feedback and demonstrating flexibility.
- **EXERCISE:** Each actor will audition with material they have chosen. (Week 10 homework)

WEEK FOURTEEN

11/26 THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)

WEEK FIFTEEN

12/3

TBD

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 Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 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) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (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.

SDA PRODUCTIONS

SDA productions are courses and therefore do not supersede any other courses in which you are enrolled. When in an SDA production, students must not register for evening classes that conflict with regularly scheduled rehearsals. In short, being involved in an SDA production is a curricular assignment and must be treated as any other curricular assignment.

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.

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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 GFS 120 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) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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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