Course Description

“In the long history of humankind (and animal kind too), those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.” – Charles Darwin

In this experiential workshop course, students will learn and build upon the tenets and rules of theatrical improvisation, with ultimate emphasis on applying these to one's own life. Through theatre games, and improvised experiences and performance, students will work toward freeing themselves physically, vocally, emotionally, and mentally, to stimulate communication, creativity, imagination, self-expression, and the collaborative spirit.

This course may be taken for credit twice.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Apply the "rules of improv" as they relate to relationship, storytelling, and performance;
2. Practice being present in their mind, body and spirit;
3. Evaluate improv performances for content and quality;
4. Empathetically discover human nature through character exploration;
5. Perform confidently in unscripted material;
6. Evaluate their own performance and participation with the intent of self-growth;
7. and relate the improvisational theatre tenets to their own personal and professional lives.

"Improv is the only belief system I've ever experienced that directly works on how to be. Just how to be." – Ilana Glazer

Course Notes
Classes must be attended live and in-person (medical status withstanding), due to the collaborative, experiential, and performative nature of improv.

Communication
Please email me at kqeggers@usc.edu any time with questions or concerns. Emails will generally be returned within 48 hours on weekdays. I can also meet with you via my Zoom personal meeting room, or at an on-campus location as schedules allow.

I also ask that the class as a whole have a communication group, platform of your choice, so you can easily get in touch with each other.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
Blackboard will be updated regularly with announcements, readings, etc. Please check often. Blackboard help for students is at studentblackboardhelp.usc.edu.

*****
Required Readings
Students will be given pdfs and/or links throughout the semester which they are expected to read and retain for discussion. All readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Required Viewing
Students are required to attend at least one live (in-person or online) improv show of your choice, and turn in a written response to the show.

Supplemental Readings
- Letters to a Young Artist by Anna Deavere Smith
- Life Unscripted: Using Improv Principles to Get Unstuck, Boost Confidence, and Transform Your Life by Jeff Katzmann, MD and Dan O’Connor
- Bossypants by Tina Fey
- Improv Nation: How We Made A Great American Art by Sam Wasson
- Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin
- Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre by Keith Johnstone

Supplemental Viewing/Watching/Listening
- Live in-person or online improv shows — there are several on-campus groups, and off-campus theatres performing in various ways
- TV shows with stage improv such as Middleditch & Schwartz and Whose Line Is It Anyway
- Improvised narrative film and television, such as Christopher Guest mockumentaries, Curb Your Enthusiasm, Bajillion Dollar Properties, Reno 911, among others
- Improv-centered podcasts such as Comedy Bang Bang, The Hills of Baldwin, Spontaneanation, With Special Guest Lauren Lapkus, among others

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Below is a general overview of the assignments. A detailed assignment description will be posted on Blackboard with ample time for each assignment.

- In-class exercises with enthusiastic participation are the most important part of your success in this class. The bulk of the coursework takes place in class experientially, as is the nature of improv — you must learn by Being Here Now. Points are awarded for presence, focus, attitude, willingness.

- Family Member Monologue — You will write, rehearse, and perform a 45 second-1 minute monologue of a family member you know VERY WELL. Think of their catchphrases, physical and vocal qualities, how they carry themselves — how they walk, sit, stand, move. Your monologue should be very specific. Challenge yourself to be truthful.

- Stranger Monologue — You will observe a stranger for at least 10 minutes — observe their physicality, vocal qualities, attitude. Write, rehearse, and perform a 30 second monologue as that person. Be specific.

- Self-Reflections – You will write two self-reflections throughout the semester, one at the beginning of the semester, and one at the end. Detailed instructions and prompts will be posted on Blackboard.

- Extended Team Improv (Midterm) – You will perform with teammates in an extended improv. Extended focus will be needed. Exact format to be determined.

- Live Improv Show Response – You will write one response to a live improv show. The show you choose to attend must be over the course of the semester, not something you have seen previously in your life. Sharing of shows and group outings are encouraged!
• Final Jam – You will participate (choose format, announce, improvise) in a full "Improv Jam" performance. Final Jam may be recorded for you to view as part of our post-mortem, with the caveat that filmed improv is never as good as live improv.

### Grading Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class exercises — presence, focus, attitude, willingness (2/class)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Monologue (Family Member)— written and performed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Monologue (Stranger/Documentary)— written and performed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflections (6 points each)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Improv Show Response</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Team Extended Improv — comprehension, willingness, application of learned techniques</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Jam — Skill level, growth, commitment, application of learned techniques</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

- A = 95-100 pts
- B+ = 87-89 pts
- C+ = 77-79 pts
- D+ = 67-69 pts
- F = 59 or below
- A- = 90-94 pts
- B = 83-86 pts
- C = 73-76 pts
- D = 63-66 pts
- B- = 80-82 pts
- C- = 70-72 pts
- D- = 60-62 pts

### Assignment Submission Policy

Performance Assignments are presented in class, and copies of associated written work do not need to be submitted, although you must be prepared.

Written assignments should be posted on Blackboard as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time, and should be formatted for clarity and readability. Late assignments will not be awarded full points. Do not send links to Google Docs.

Grades will generally be posted to Blackboard within a week. If you fail to turn in an assignment, it will show on Blackboard Grade Center – I cannot follow up with you to ask about missing assignments.

### Sharing of Course Materials Outside of the Learning Environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B): Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

What happens in class, stays in class!

### Learning Experience Evaluation

Learning Experience Evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students’ experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.
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

SDA Productions, ISPs, and Extra-Curricular Commitments
SDA productions, ISPs and extracurricular activities* do 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 are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.)

Attendance
Being absent, late, or leaving early disturbs the important ensemble nature of this class, and in-class activity points will be deducted. You must be present and ready to work at the start of each class. Give yourself extra time to complete TrojanCheck to ensure an early arrival.

However, your health and the health of our community eclipses all! If your Covid-19 status precludes you from attending class in-person, I will attempt to conduct class as hybrid, and request you attend class LIVE (via Zoom). I will not open the Zoom classroom unless you notify me via email before class begins. Travel and other activities are not grounds for attending via Zoom.

Classroom Norms
Devices – Cell phones and other electronic devices should be left on silent in your backpack/bag, away from your work in class. This is to encourage your focus, mindfulness, and respect to your peers.

Attire – Improv is physical and can get sweaty – dress accordingly. Your clothing and shoes should allow you to move freely and comfortably. Shoes should be closed-toed and stay on your feet – no flip-flops. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged.

Masks – Medical-grade masks must be worn at all times while in class. Please procure a mask that stays over your nose and mouth without having to adjust while talking or during physical activity.

Break – We may take a “mask break” outside at the halfway point of class, depending on the day’s flow. Other than that, please be prepared to stay in the room and active as both a performer and audience member. In the event of an emergency for which you must leave the room, observe theatre rules of being discrete and respectful to your fellow actors.

Strike – You are expected to restore the classroom to neutral at the end of each class.

Health and Participation in Class
Students must complete the Trojan Check screening daily. The health and safety of everyone in class is the top priority. 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. If you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you must 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 medical-grade masks be worn indoors including in classrooms. Masks must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask. 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/).

"Improv is so freeing because there are no bounds; there's no safety net. You just say something and get an instant response." — Nicole Byer

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Please note: due to the fluid and creative nature of this course, weekly structure will change to accommodate the needs of individuals and the ensemble. You are asked to remain flexible, and you will be informed of any changes as much as possible.

Most classes will begin with group work and warm-ups, exploring foundations of presence, physicality, focus, relaxation, concentration, imagination, storytelling, playfulness, and ensemble-building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Due Today</th>
<th>Homework</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wed Jan 12</td>
<td>Welcome/Introductions&lt;br&gt;Introduction to warm-ups and theatre exercises. &lt;br&gt;Begin ensemble and presence work. Syllabus review.</td>
<td>Read selections from <em>Bossypants</em> and <em>Letters to a Young Artist.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wed Jan 19</td>
<td>Tenets/Basics of Improv&lt;br&gt;The Only Lecture — please take notes! &lt;br&gt;Class boundaries discussion. &lt;br&gt;&quot;YES, AND&quot; exploration.</td>
<td><em>Bossypants</em> and <em>Letters to a Young Artist</em> read for discussion.</td>
<td>Write Self-Reflection #1. &lt;br&gt;Prompts and detailed assignment description posted on Blackboard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wed Jan 26</td>
<td>Storytelling, Status, Space Work, Relationship &lt;br&gt;Exercises focused on space work (using the space/stage and &quot;pantomime&quot;), telling individual and group stories, beginning character work through Status, and establishing relationship.</td>
<td>Self-Reflection #1, posted on Blackboard before class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wed Feb 2</td>
<td>Physicality &amp; Voice Exploration &lt;br&gt;Beginning character work with voice and physicality, including gibberish and over-the-top work. &lt;br&gt;Tenets of improv, continued.</td>
<td>Write and rehearse a 45 second - 1 minute monologue of a family member you know VERY WELL. Think of their catchphrases, physical and vocal qualities, how they carry themselves — how they walk, sit, stand, move. Your monologue should be very specific. Challenge yourself to be truthful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wed Feb 9</td>
<td>Presentation of family member monologues. &lt;br&gt;Further character work, within scenes.</td>
<td>Perform a 45 second - 1 minute monologue you wrote, playing a family member you know very well.</td>
<td>Observe a stranger for at least 10 minutes (set your timer!). Observe their physicality, listen to their voice. Write a 30 second monologue playing that stranger — what is happening to them that day? Be specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topics/Daily Activities</td>
<td>Due Today</td>
<td>Homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wed Feb 16</td>
<td>Perform Stranger Monologues.</td>
<td>Present Stranger Monologues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practice open scenes, filling in the details of character, location, story, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Continuation of character work in scenes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wed Feb 23</td>
<td>Continue emotional and connection play. Continue improv basics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Wed Mar 2</td>
<td>Review and Practice Improv Basics</td>
<td>Prepare mentally for Midterm — review rules of improv.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wed Mar 9</td>
<td>Midterm Exam Performance <em>(Extended Team Improv)</em></td>
<td>Midterm (Extended Team Improv) Today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-class performance of to be-determined improv format, with ensemble as a whole.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPRING BREAK!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Wed Mar 23</td>
<td>Discuss Midterm.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Games: Character/Experts/Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn and rehearse more &quot;games&quot; for performance, with emphasis on character, expert, and style games.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wed Mar 30</td>
<td>Games: Guessing/Timed/Energy</td>
<td>Written Response of Live Improv Show, posted on Blackboard before class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn and rehearse more &quot;games&quot; for performance, with emphasis on guessing, timed and energy-driven games.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Wed Apr 6</td>
<td>Discuss Live Shows we saw.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn and rehearse more &quot;games&quot; for performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Wed Apr 13</td>
<td>Discuss format for Final Jam.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rehearse in small groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn more performance games as needed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Wed Apr 20</td>
<td>Final Rehearsal for Final Improv Jam</td>
<td>Prepare mentally for Jam — review calling assignments, formats, rules. Invite guests?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Together, determine final Improv Jam format. Final rehearsal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wed Apr 27</td>
<td>Final Improv Jam!</td>
<td>Final Jam Today</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Perform improv for each other, and possibly guests.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Learning Experience Evaluations must be completed before class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THTR 122 Syllabus, page 6 of 7
"Improvisors connect for the same basic reason you and your friends connect. Say you meet someone. You like something about them and they like something about you. Your mutual interest begets mutual play. Play begets cooperation and mutual understanding, which, trampoline by fun, becomes love. Love is the highest form of play." — Sam Wasson

****

Statement on 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 Needing Accessibility Services

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 your instructor 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), osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Statement on Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency or 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, emergency.usc.edu.

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 & 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 equity.usc.edu
Title IX – 213-821-8298 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.