

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 464: An Actor's Reel, Section #63166

Units: 2

Spring 2022

Tuesdays, 9am-11:50am

Location: MCC 111

Instructor: RODNEY TO

Office Location: DRC 111c

Office Hours: Hours available upon request

Contact Info: rodneyto@usc.edu / (917) 445-1040 m.

Course Description

This course is designed to develop an intricate, yet holistic understanding of all fundamental creative and business elements which are essential to an actor's portfolio. By using the actor's demo reel as a preparatory baseline, we'll explore all areas of the "business" end of "show business" and uncover truths and myths about what is necessary to contend in today's artistic marketplace. The course intends to properly set a strong philosophical base and rigorously engage the actor so they feel confident in assembling their own personal, unique, specific and dynamic portfolio that will become the foundational marketing toolkit of their career.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss and understand the overall business trajectory of show business as it has evolved over the past several decades and how current personal marketing has become an essential tool to compete in Entertainment.
- Understand the various positions (agent, manager, casting director, etc.) involved in an actor's career, how they function, and how they use portfolio tools (headshot, reel, etc.) to aide in (hopefully) procuring work for actors.
- We will watch and discuss current demo reels and various other marketing materials and discuss their effectiveness.
- Explore on-camera acting technique and understand commonalities and differences from other theatrical forms.
- We will work on various scenes and monologues and, through constructive discourse, understand specifics that make each actor's work unique and how this information must translate in their marketing materials. "You can't judge your acting work if you don't know what you're looking for." - Rodney
- Rehearse and tape monologues that may (potentially) be used as the initial base of the actor's reel.
- Have complete knowledge of the day-to-day of working actors, covering auditioning, physical and mental health, financial responsibilities and supplemental work.
- We will finish the course with an *entry-level* acting clips that meet basic industry standards and expectations, but is also specific, unique, creative and personal so as to "stand out" and remain competitive.

Note from Rodney:

Actors, this class is your opportunity to gain a true understanding of the Entertainment Industry from a 'business perspective'. After all, in the eyes of the law, as a professional actor, you officially own your own business. Oftentimes, in business preparation courses, I find that acting students mire themselves in many costly details that detract from what is actually necessary for them to thrive. We'll use the virtual nature of this class to explore & vet from various professional perspectives (i.e. casting director, agent, director, producer, etc.) giving you a deeper, practical understanding of how your materials are used to represent, pitch and hire you as a professional artist. As a working actor and industry professional myself, it is my mission to provide clarity to any unanswered questions you may have about the industry, so you leave our time together well-informed, confident and fully prepared to do your best work.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will need internet access as well as access to a working digital camera. Mobile phones or tablets are desirable for easy mobility and access (*see MOBILE PHONE & TABLET POLICY below*). Basic editing software (ie iMovie, Movie Maker, etc.), access to basic sound and lighting equipment may also be useful, but *not* required.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

No textbook required. Coursework and assigned reading will be conferred throughout the semester.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

Grading Breakdown

- Weekly assignments: 5pts x 15 weeks = **75pts*****
- Final Reel Clip: **20pts**
- Class participation: **5pts †** (*see Participation breakdown below*)

Total: 100 points

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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

† **Participation Breakdown:**

† **5pts EXCELLENT participation.** Demonstrates active, everyday engagement. Shows willingness & enthusiasm in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **4pts GOOD participation.** Frequent active participation. Engaged, willing semi-regular participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **3pts AVERAGE participation.** Semi-regular, but active participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

Further Participation Notes:

All aspects of a life in the Entertainment Industry is nothing short of a fully collaborative, immersive process. I cannot emphasize enough how much (more) you will learn by listening to, working with, and supporting your fellow classmates. Therefore daily participation and active engagement in class (discussions, classwork, etc.) is essential and *will* factor into your final grade.

Therefore no absences or late arrivals will be allowed. *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be discussed in detail at the end of each class period. Assignments will be either emailed, uploaded, or presented in class per Rodney's instruction.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date & time. Grades on late assignments will be deducted appropriately. I reserve the right to not accept late assignments at my discretion.

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).

Course evaluation

Course 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.

RODNEY'S IN-CLASS POLICY REGARDING COVID AND SAFETY

- ALL STUDENTS WILL WEAR A MASK (PREFERABLY K95) AT ALL TIMES FROM THE MOMENT YOU WALK INTO MY CLASS, TO THE MOMENT YOU LEAVE IT. I (RODNEY) WILL WEAR ONE AS WELL.
- I reserve the right to enforce this policy and either not allow you in class or dismiss you during class. Such dismissals will count as absences.
- We must NOT take wearing a mask lightly. It must be fitted over your nose and mouth. This is non-negotiable. If for any reason you do not agree or feel indifferent or anticipate not wanting to wear a mask at some point or feel like you 'won't be able to act' with a mask on your face, MY CLASS SECTION IS NOT THE CLASS FOR YOU.
- Students and faculty (including myself) have household members who are immunocompromised and it's imperative that we not put them at any more risk than necessary.
- NO EATING OR DRINKING IN CLASS because in order to do so, you would have to remove your mask. So if you even want to sip water, step outside of the building. Again, no excuses.
- Once again, if you feel like you will not be ok with my policies, that is your right, however, my class section is not for you.

NETIQUETTE (for online):

The online learning modality for the Arts & Entertainment Industry is a new frontier for everyone. We are discovering how to best navigate these newer practices together. While certainly not ideal, let's embrace this as an opportunity.

- I will be expecting that you do your best to treat this as a traditional classroom. Do your best to find a quiet space in your home where you can sit up comfortably and focus with little-to-no distractions or disturbances. No outdoor spots unless you discuss it with me first. I am acutely aware (and sensitive to the fact) that everyone's circumstances vary, so if you're unable to find a reasonable working spot for class, please contact me privately to discuss.
- Even though we will be online and in your homes this semester, students must wear appropriate, casual, classroom clothes - no pajamas. Be professional, mature, and respectful; wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Please log-on from a desktop (or laptop) if possible. Oftentimes, I find when students log-on from their phone or tablet, the smaller nature of these devices lends itself to the student being too casual, less alert and easily distracted.
- Remember safety at all times. Do NOT drive while in class. You will be logged-off and marked with an unexcused absence if you attempt to take class while driving or exercising or shopping or cleaning or babysitting - Yes, I've seen it all.
- No 'other' technology during class. Phones must be on silent and put away. Unless I invite you to do so, phones may only be taken out during breaks. I am keenly aware when you are reading your phones unnecessarily - trust me, I'm not *that* old. Any intentional use of your devices for non-class purposes (texting, emailing, viewing of non-class related materials, playing video games, etc.) will negatively reflect your participation grade.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- No pets or any other distractions such as toys, video games, etc.
- Do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class. We will be working hard to establish trust with each other. Respect is paramount. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently, but always be respectful, mindful, mature.

I pride myself in treating all students like professionals-in-training. It's important that you begin your journey to becoming professionals by behaving as such throughout this course which, at the very least, begins with proper, respectful usage of your devices. No one in the history of the world has died or will die because of you paying attention in class.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverables/Due Dates
WEEK 1 1/11 ON ZOOM <i>*Log in by clicking on the link in Blackboard</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intro to course/Begin discussion: Professional life of an working actor and necessary toolkit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and bring in marketing materials that you have thus far. Be prepared to discuss materials in class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations will be made in-class on Tuesday, 1/18.
WEEK 2 1/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUSINESS A(cont'd): In-class presentations/ discuss individual marketing materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick 2 actors of note whose work you feel is reflective of your own. Bring in one short clip of each to screen and be prepared to discuss their work and what contributes to their appeal and their relevance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations will be made in-class on Tuesday, 1/25.
WEEK 3 1/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business A(cont'd): Screen clips/open forum comparing and contrasting choices w/ presenting actor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read in-class handout regarding on-camera technique and be prepared to discuss. Also, read <i>assigned play (TBA)</i>. 	
WEEK 4 2/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin On-camera technique: Introduce basic on-camera skillset, concepts, commonalities & differences to other theatrical platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse assigned scenes from play with scene partners outside of class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearsed scenes will be presented in-class on Tuesday, 2/8.
WEEK 5 2/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-cam Technique (cont'd): Present scenes w/ notes and discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-tape assigned monologues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-taped monologues are due NO LATER THAN SUNDAY, 2/13 at 12noon! Tapes will be presented on 2/15.

WEEK 6 2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-cam Technique (cont'd): Screen self-tapes w/ acting notes/ Discuss framing (single/multi) and understand what is necessary when self-taping for professional projects (quality of sound, picture, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin research for final monologues. <i>Yes, we are starting way early so there is no excuse for turning them in late.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse a monologue and prepared to discuss monologue(s) choices in-class on Tuesday, 2/22.
WEEK 7 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GUEST SPEAKER #1 / Industry guest. I will randomly pick actors to perform in front of industry professional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick one monologue from previous choices and rehearse to perform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse monologue of choice to perform in-class on Tuesday, 3/1.
WEEK 8 3/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-cam Audition technique and self-taping: Begin preparing audition. Story, beat shifts, blocking, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive assigned material and rehearse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse mock audition to be taped in-class on Tuesday, 3/8
Week 9 3/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GUEST SPEAKER #2 / Casting director. Actors will perform mock audition with notes and adjustments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CONTINUE LOOKING FOR MONOLOGUES! READ PLAYS! 	
WEEK of 3/15	SPRING	BREAK	NO CLASSES!
WEEK 10 3/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUSINESS / PITCHING: discuss type, patterns, etc. as it pertains to representation and casting. Understanding rosters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CONTINUE LOOKING FOR MONOLOGUES! READ PLAYS! 	
WEEK 11 3/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business (cont'd): discuss REPRESENTATION (agent vs. manager, lawyers and various members of an actor's team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CONTINUE LOOKING FOR MONOLOGUES! READ PLAYS! 	

WEEK 12 4/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business (cont'd): discuss CONTRACTS and DAY on SET for the employed actor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize monologues for taping. 	
WEEK 13 4/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business: FINAL FULL CLASS DAY. "So you're finally an actor...now what?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearse final clip material. 	
WEEK 14 4/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAPING DAY (assigned times) 		
Week 15 4/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAPING DAY (assigned times) 		
5/4 - 5/11	FINALS	FINALS	FINALS

******YOUR FINAL TAPES WILL BE SCREENED ON TUESDAY, MAY 10 from 8am-10am******

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 (Vidoe 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.