



THTR 473 : Sketch Comedy in Performance  
2 Units  
Spring 2022  
Mondays 1-3:50pm / Lab Fridays 3-10pm  
Location: RZC Stage D

Instructor: Kirstin Eggers (she/her)  
Email: [kqeggers@usc.edu](mailto:kqeggers@usc.edu)  
Zoom Office: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/kirstin.sda>  
Office Hours: By appointment. Please schedule via email.

### **Course Description**

In this experiential workshop course, students will learn techniques of performing comedic sketches, specifically within the format of a multi-camera sketch comedy television program, as well as working in collaboration with writers, directors, producers, and technicians in the production of successful live filmed sketch comedy shows.

The shows will consist of material that is created and rehearsed over the course of the semester – primarily multi-camera filmed comedy sketches. Students will also be called upon to collaborate with writing and directing students in pre-taped comedic sketches ("interstitials").

All material will be developed, rehearsed, and produced in conjunction with School of Cinematic Arts courses CTWR 477 "Staff Writing the Sketch Comedy Show" (instructor: Jay Kogen), CTPR 464 "Directing the Television Sketch Comedy Show" (instructor: Rob Schiller), and CTPR 409b "Practicum in Television Production: Comedy Live" (instructor Harrison Merkt). Professor Jack Epps is our executive producer.

Welcome to *USC Comedy LIVE*!

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Apply sketch comedy acting techniques to both live studio audience multi-camera production and single-camera production;
2. Collaborate with writers, directors, producers and crew on comedic sketch and character creation;
3. Practice professional-level conduct and relationships on film and television sets;
4. Evaluate their own work as it relates to sketch comedy and multi-camera performance.

### **Course Notes**

Due to the collaborative, experiential, and performative nature of this class, you must attend class live and in-person (medical status withstanding).

You are also be expected to meet, rehearse, and film outside of class with fellow cast members, directors and writers as needed.

Because class periods are usually so full with rehearsal, instructors, TAs and/or producers may send instructional information via email, between classes. It is very important to read every email from *Comedy Live* instructors and staff carefully.

### **Communication**

Please email me at [kqeggers@usc.edu](mailto: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. You must be able to contact each member of your ensemble easily.

### **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](http://studentblackboardhelp.usc.edu).

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### **Required Reading**

You will receive handouts and/or weblinks you are expected to read and retain for discussion.

### **Recommended Reading**

- *Bossypants* by Tina Fey
- *Sick in the Head: Conversations About Life and Comedy* by Judd Apatow
- *Live From New York: An Uncensored History of SNL* by Tom Shales & James Andrew Miller

### **Required Viewing**

- *Saturday Night* – 2010 documentary
- Current *Saturday Night Live* episodes throughout the semester

### **Recommended Viewing**

- Attend a live television sitcom taping. Show schedule and reservations can be found on [tvtickets.com](http://tvtickets.com), among others.
- Attend a live sketch comedy show – suggested comedy theaters include Groundlings, UCB, Second City LA, among others.
- Current/recent television sketch shows including *Saturday Night Live*, *A Black Lady Sketch Show*, *I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson*, *Baroness Von Sketch Show*, *Alternatino*, *Goatface*, *Netflix Presents: The Characters*, *Key & Peele*, *Inside Amy Schumer*, *Portlandia*, *Kroll Show*, etc.
- Historical sketch shows include *The Carol Burnett Show*, *Chappelle's Show*, *The Kids In The Hall*, *Mr. Show*, *MADtv*, *In Living Color*, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, etc.

### **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.

Participation in Rehearsals, Interstitials, and Shows – Attendance, punctuality, and enthusiastic participation is critical, as a respectful member of an ensemble, and the weekly rehearsal process. Failure to attend or being late will be reflected in your grade, and will affect participation in the shows. However, should an emergency arise, you must contact your castmates and your instructor as soon as possible – if you find on the day (class or show) you will be late to any degree, please alert me via text so I can plan accordingly.

(Please see ATTENDANCE subtitle for Covid-19 protocol. If you cannot pass Trojan Check, do not come to class in person.)

Friday Lab attendance is on a contingent basis. The purpose of Friday Lab is to hold the cast's time for all three Friday shows from calltime through strike, and to be available for extra rehearsal, collaboration with writers and directors, and filming the required "Interstitials" on off weeks.

Weekly Assignments – Depending on the needs of the production, you will be required to be a prepared member of the cast, which may include memorization, character ideas, outside rehearsal, costume showcase, etc.

Written Self-evaluations/Goal-setting – Actors are asked to set goals at the beginning of the semester, and review each show as soon as tape becomes available, reflect on their work, and set goals for the next show. Prompts will be given on Blackboard, and should be posted to that assignment post.

Professional level engagement in shows – **The scheduled Friday shows are February 18, April 1, and April 22.** Actors must be present from calltime (specifics may vary) through dismissal after strike. Actors are required to fully participate in strike, as assigned by production staff.

Actors will also be responsible for collaborating on and providing appropriate costume/attire as needed.

This class is often, by its nature, very fluid and demanding, due to the combination of creativity and production (art and commerce, if you will). Cast members are asked to be extremely flexible, focused and good-natured about changes that may arise, as would be the case on any professional television set.

### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
In-class Activities — Presence, focus, attitude, willingness	12	12
Weekly Rehearsal Assignments — character creation, memorization, preparation (1 point each)	12	12
Interstitial acting work	10	10
Written Self-evaluations/Goal-setting (4 points each)	12	12
Professional level engagement in live filmed sketch show #1	18	18
Professional level engagement in live filmed sketch show #2	18	18
Professional level engagement in live filmed sketch show #3	18	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### 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 before the deadline date and time. Late submissions will have points taken off. PDFs preferred. Do not post link to a Google Doc. Formatting for clarity is expected.

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**

In-class exercises are essentially impossible to experience asynchronously, therefore missing more than two classes will lower your final grade. Being late or leaving early for more than three classes will also lower your final grade.

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), however Zoom accessibility for this program is unclear at this time. Travel and other activities are not grounds for attending via Zoom.

### **Classroom Norms**

- **Devices** – When in class, you must be focused and mentally, physically and emotionally present. Cell phones and other electronic devices often impede this. Devices should be put away completely unless you are called upon to use it (scripts, watching videos for reference, etc.) You should never have cell phones out during any lecture/lesson/active rehearsal, or when watching others perform in any way.
- **Attire** – Please wear appropriate rehearsal clothing and shoes to every class, in which you are not inhibited in any way. Shoes must be closed-toed – this is a strict SCA studio rule and you may be sent home to change shoes.
- **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.
- **Eating** – Food and drink is not permitted during any class. Absolutely no gum.
- **Presence/Breaks** – You must be present and easy to find throughout the entirety of our time together. There are many moving parts to production and if you are not where you are supposed to be, you slow down production and may be recast. Check in with instructor and producers often.
- **Strike** – You are expected to help restore the studios 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. Face coverings 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/>).

Safe performance protocol for all shows will be followed. This may include testing, making, distancing, etc. All cast members are responsible for their own compliance or risk the performance as a whole.

### 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 production. You are asked to remain flexible, and you will be informed of any changes as much as possible.*

Week	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
1	Mon Jan 10 (On ZOOM!)	Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review. Ensemble improvisation work, with focus on character. Improv/character workshop for all classes.		Self-reflection/goal-setting due Jan 24. Prompts posted on Blackboard.  Prepare two original characters and two impressions, for presentation.
	Fri Jan 14	Lab: HOLD.		
2	Mon Jan 17	NO CLASS — Martin Luther King Jr. Day		
	Fri Jan 21	Lab: HOLD.		
3	Mon Jan 24	Creating a comedic character with an original point of view. Possible table read. Possible collaboration with Directing students on rehearsal sketch material. Possible additional improv/character workshop for the Writing and Directing classes.	Self-reflection/goal setting #1 due before 1pm.  Two original character ideas and two impressions, for presentation.	Watch documentary <i>Saturday Night</i> for Jan 31.
	Fri Jan 28	Lab: HOLD.		
4	Mon Jan 31	Collaboration with Directing students on rehearsal sketch material. Possible table read, with instruction on how to execute a successful table read/cold read.	Watch <i>Saturday Night</i> for discussion.	
	Fri Feb 4	Lab: HOLD.		
5	Mon Feb 7	Entire first live show rehearsed on camera. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.	Actors off-book and rehearsed.	Prepare for show.

Week	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Fri Feb 11	Lab: HOLD.		
<b>6</b>	Mon Feb 14	NO CLASS — Presidents' Day		
	Fri Feb 18	<b>SHOW #1:</b> Tech and dress rehearsal, followed by filmed live performance of USC COMEDY LIVE.	Actors off-book and rehearsed. Wardrobe options. FULLY PREPARED FOR SHOW.	
<b>7</b>	Mon Feb 21	Rehash Show #1. Table read and rehearsal of original sketches for Shows #2 and #3. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.		View Show #1 when available. Self-reflection/goal-setting due Mar 7 before 1pm. Prompts on Blackboard.
	Fri Feb 25	Lab: HOLD.		
<b>8</b>	Mon Feb 28	Table read and rehearsal of original sketches for Shows #2 and #3. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.		
	Fri Mar 4	Lab: HOLD.		
<b>9</b>	Mon Mar 7	Table read and rehearsal of original sketches for Shows #2 and #3. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.	Self-reflection/goal-setting due before 1pm. Prompts on Blackboard.	
	Fri Mar 11	Lab: HOLD.		
SPRING BREAK!!				
<b>10</b>	Mon Mar 21	Table read and rehearsal of original sketches for Shows #2 and #3. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.		
	Fri Mar 25	Lab: HOLD.		
<b>11</b>	Mon Mar 28	Entire second live show rehearsed on camera. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.	Actors off-book and rehearsed.	Prepare for show.
	Fri Apr 1	<b>SHOW #2:</b> Tech and dress rehearsal, followed by filmed live performance of USC COMEDY LIVE.	Actors off-book and rehearsed. Wardrobe options. FULLY PREPARED FOR SHOW.	
<b>12</b>	Mon Apr 4	Rehash Show #2. Reading and rehearsing of original sketches for Show #3. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.		View Show #2 when available. Self-reflection/goal-setting due Apr 11 before 1pm. Prompts on Blackboard.
	Fri Apr 8	Lab: HOLD.		
<b>13</b>	Mon Apr 11	Reading and rehearsing of original sketches for Show #3. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.	Self-reflection/goal-setting due before 1pm. Prompts on Blackboard.	
	Fri Apr 15	Lab: HOLD.		
<b>14</b>	Mon Apr 18	Entire third live show rehearsed on camera. Writing notes, directing notes, acting notes.	Actors off-book and rehearsed.	Prepare for show.

Week	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Fri Apr 22	<b>SHOW #3:</b> Tech and dress rehearsal, followed by filmed live performance of USC COMEDY LIVE.	Actors off-book and rehearsed. Wardrobe options. FULLY PREPARED FOR SHOW.	
<b>15</b>	Mon Apr 25	Full production post-mortem. Learning Experience Evaluations.		
	Fri May 1	NO LAB		
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY MAY 4 — 2-4pm</b>	Cast post-mortem.  Location TBD.		Happy Summer!

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#### 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](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 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](mailto: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](http://emergency.usc.edu).

#### Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health

213-740-9355 – 24/7 on call [studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu)

Title IX – 213-821-8298 [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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.

USC Campus Support and Intervention

213-821-4710 [campussupport.usc.edu](http://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](http://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 / Dept. of Public Safety

Emergency: 213-740-4321 // Non-emergency: 213-740-6000

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime.