

**THTR 122 Improvisation and Theatre Games**

Fall 2022—Tuesdays—4pm-5:50pm

Units: 2 Section: 62633

Location: MCC 111

Instructor: Judith Shelton (Jude)

Office: TBD or Virtual: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/judes.office>

Office Hours: By appointment, Tuesdays and Fridays only

Contact Info: You may contact me Tuesday – Friday, 9am-5pm

Email preferred [judiths@usc.edu](mailto:judiths@usc.edu)

I return emails, Tuesday – Friday, only

On class days, in an emergency only, text 626.390.3678

**Course Description**

Individual and group exercises to free the actor physically and emotionally and stimulate creativity, imagination, and self-expression. Each class will be a series of playful and thoughtful exercises to help the student discover more about themselves, their unique impulses, and humanity in general. Students will feel comfortable with spontaneity, flexible, and stable in unknown situations. Show up each week, ready to play. Leap, and the net will appear!

**Learning Objectives**

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

- Execute the concept of “Yes, and...”
- List the guidelines for successful improv
- Describe the elements of an improv scene
- Demonstrate various theatre games and improv exercises
- Create unscripted relationships and scenes in the moment, with only a 1-word suggestion

**Readings and Supplementary Materials**

*Truth in Comedy: The Manual of Improvisation* by Charna Halpern, Del Close and Kim “Howard” Johnson (**required**)

*Improvisation and the Theatre* by Viola Spolin (recommended)

*Daily Rituals: How Artists Work* by Mason Currey (recommended)

*Art and Fear: Observations on The Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking* by David Bayles and Ted Orlando (recommended)

**Recommended Preparation** Read the suggested chapters or watch the suggested videos for discussion. Be on time. Wear clothing you can move in. Come willing to be silly, inquisitive, and supportive. Wash your hands and stay healthy.

**Course Notes on Attendance**

This is a performance class, all “the good stuff” happens in class. Missing class means missing points for the in-class exercises and discussions, which will impact your grade. Also, being late or leaving early will cost you a participation point. I offer the option to make up 10 points if the need to miss class completely/arrive late/leave early arises. Use those missed classes wisely. We are still in a pandemic and things might come up. Fifteen points is all I offer, so make the effort to stay healthy and be present in class.

Please inform me immediately if you have **any injuries or conditions** that prevent you from participating fully in class. Come to class, we can IMPROVISE a solution.

## **Description and Assessment of Assignments and Exercises**

**Grades are not dictated by** the success of scenes and exercises or the instructor's subjective opinion of talent, intellect or sense of humor.

### **Grades are dictated by:**

Points. Each aspect of class has a point value: participation, in-class exercises, Midterm and Final. I provide options to make up 10 points max per semester. Details listed under "Make-Up Options".

### **Participation (15 points, total):**

- In-class active student analysis of presented materials such as text and video clips
- Constructive feedback on classmates' work
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and the other students to one's own work
- Total focus on the moment and the work at hand
- If a student is late or leaves early, they will lose their participation point for that day

### **Classwork (52 points, total):**

- Due to the performance aspect of improv and theater games, exercises and homework assignments will be presented "live" during class time
- If a student misses an exercise/assignment, student accepts that they have missed their opportunity to play and will lose points which will impact their grade
- Student invests fully, striving to be open and honest and improve over time
- Student regularly "steps out" to join scenes and support their classmates

### **Midterm (15 points):**

- The Midterm is worth 15 points, and will be performed in class
- The Midterm is a character study/exercise, I will explain more as we get closer
- Missing the Midterm will result in a loss of 15 points, which will impact your grade

### **Final (18 points):**

- The Final paper is worth 18 points, due at the beginning of the Final period.
- The Final will be submitted electronically, via Blackboard.
- Tech problems happen. Please plan ahead and give yourself time to handle any surprise situations. No late papers or electronic submissions accepted.
- Not posting a paper on time will result in a loss of 18 points, which will impact your grade.

### **Make-up options:**

- If you must miss an in-class exercise or assignment, you may make up 10 points, total, by Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> (last day of classes) at 11:59pm. Blackboard closes at Midnight.
- You may make up **8 points** by performing in an improv show. You must submit a clip or photographic evidence and two hearty paragraphs (at least 10 sentences) on the experience via the specific discussion board on Blackboard to receive credit.
- You may make up **6 points** by attending a live improv show. You must post a photo of the ticket or show AND two hearty paragraphs (at least 10 sentences) on the experience via the specific discussion board on Blackboard
- You may make up **2 points** by interviewing someone and posting the clip to the specific discussion board on Blackboard
- Technical or link issues will result in a loss of points, double check your submission
- Make-up points cannot take you over 100 points, or replace the Midterm or Final

## **Grading Breakdown**

### **Grading Scale**

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

**Excellent: A** (4) = 100-96; **A-** (3.7) = 95-90

**Good: B+** (3.3) = 89-86; **B** (3) = 85-84; **B-** (2.7) = 83-80

**Average: C+** (2.3) = 79-76; **C** (2) = 75-74; **C-** (1.7) = 73-70

**Poor: D** (.7-1.3) = 60's

**Fail: F** (0) = 59 and below

### **Auditing Student Policy**

Auditing students attend class strictly as an observer and will not participate.

### **Assignment Submission Policy**

All exercises are presented in class, no electronic submissions of in-class exercises accepted.

Only the make-up work and Final papers will be submitted via Blackboard.

### **Grading Timeline**

I will review your make up work within 48 hours of submission, between T-Th. I am happy to discuss your grade with you at any time, please make an appointment.

### **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. (SeeSection 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 with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

### **Additional Policies**

Absolutely no distractions while in class. No eating, drinking (except for water), social media, computers, or phones, while in class. Total focus should always be on your teammates. I do not officially take a break during a class, but you may use the restroom as needed.

### **A note on the in-class exercises:**

The following breakdown of in-class work may appear vague. Each group of improvisers is different. I am preserving some flexibility so that, as I get to know the ensemble, I can make changes as needed.

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Text in **bold** indicates assignment requiring preparation.

*(This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace, and unpredictability of the creative process of any given class. Being in class ensures you are aware of any changes.)*

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Readings and Homework</b>	<b>Deliverable/ Due Dates</b>
<b>Week 1</b> 8/23/22	Warm-up, introductions and discussion of syllabus (our contract)	Ch. 1 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> What is Improv, Anyway?	To discuss in week 2
<b>Week 2</b> 8/30/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 2 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> But, Seriously Folks...	To discuss in week 3
<b>Week 3</b> 9/6/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 3 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Support and Trust	To discuss in week 4
<b>Week 4</b> 9/13/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 4 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Agreement	To discuss in week 5
<b>Week 5</b> 9/20/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 5 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Initiations and Game Moves	To discuss in week 6
<b>Week 6</b> 9/27/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises Review what is needed for the Midterm	<b>Create-a-Character!</b> Each of you will bring in a character with specific physical and emotional traits. We will talk more about this as we get closer.	<b>Due week 7</b>
<b>Week 7</b> 10/4/22	<b>MIDTERM</b> In-class exercises featuring your characters!	<b>No homework</b>	<b>Relax and enjoy!</b>
<b>Week 8</b> 10/11/22	<b>Online Improv via Zoom</b> Games to develop interview skills and a deeper connection	Watch Episode 1 Middleditch & Schwartz	To discuss in week 9
<b>Week 9</b> 10/18/22	Discussion of Episode 1 In-class exercises	Ch. 6 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Moment to Moment to Moment	To discuss in week 10
<b>Week 10</b> 10/25/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 7 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Building a Scene	To discuss in week 11
<b>Week 11</b> 11/1/22	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 8 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> One Mind, Many Bodies	To discuss in week 12
<b>Week 12</b> 11/8/21	Discussion of reading In-class exercises	Ch. 9 <i>Truth in Comedy</i> Environmentally Aware	To discuss in week 13
<b>Week 13</b> 11/15/21	Discussion of reading In-class exercises Decide which games and scenes we'd like to play for	Watch Episode 3 Middleditch & Schwartz	To discuss in week 14
<b>Week 14</b> 11/22/21	Discussion of Episode 3 <b>First Improv Jam-</b> Games and scenes <b>Audience Welcome</b>	Be sure to post all make-up work via Blackboard Discussion Board	<b>Make-up work due by 11:59 pm on 12/2/22, board will close at Midnight</b>

<b>Week 15</b> 11/29/21	<b>Final Improv Jam-</b> Games and scenes Finalize which games and scenes we'd like to play <b>Audience Welcome</b>	<b>Write Final Paper:</b> What are your new skills? How do you plan on using these skills going forward? How could they be helpful in school, work, relationships, and creativity?	<b>Due by the beginning of your Final:</b> <b>Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm</b> <b>**Make-up work due by 11:59 pm on 12/2/22, board will close at Midnight**</b>
<b>FINAL</b> 12/13/21	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b>		<b>Thank you for working with me! Enjoy your Winter break.</b>

### **KEY DATES**

Sept. 9: Last day to add or drop this class without a "W", or to select "P/NP"

Sept. 9: Last day to change "P/NP" to letter grade

Oct 13-14: Fall Recess

Nov. 11: Last day to drop this class with a mark of "W"

Nov. 23-27: Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 2: Fall semester classes end

Dec. 3-6: Study Days

Dec. 7-14: Final Examinations

Dec. 15-Jan. 8, 2023: Winter Recess

### **Additional Notes**

- ***No food or drinks, except water, are allowed during class at any time.***

**Welcome to Improv and Theatre Games, dear students! It is a joy and privilege to get to know each of you through our collaborative and creative exploration of what happens at the intersection of humanity and circumstance. Do good work, endeavor to know yourself better, risk a little, support each other, make lasting friendships, and reveal your true self in your work and play. We are going to have a blast together!**

**Judith Shelton (Jude)**

### **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](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 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](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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### Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture Statement:

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

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### 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>

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### 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 and 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 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [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.

*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](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 - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

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

Non-emergency assistance or information.