

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Stand-Up 2: Becoming A Pro

2 Units

THTR 482 Fall 2022

Mondays 6pm - 7:50pm PST

Location: MCC 111

Prerequisite: THTR 474

Instructor: Professor Wayne Federman

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact: WayneFed@usc.edu

Course Description and Overview

Stand Up 2: Becoming A Pro is a performance class geared towards USC students who plan to pursue stand-up comedy professionally. The class primarily focuses on techniques for creating new comedy material as well as onstage performance strategies. All students are required to perform.

Learning Objectives

1. Acquire specific techniques for creating new material.
2. Identify stand-up comedic devices.
3. Acquire techniques to polish and streamline stand-up routines.
4. Understand the specific challenges and opportunities of professional stand-up.
5. Acquire techniques for material creation via pitch sessions and/or the "Writer's Room."
6. To learn to write for other comics.
7. Acquire the skills to create material for specific events and themes (aka Award Shows).

Other course-specific topics include road gigs, bar gigs, open mics, college tours, mainstream vs. alternative, creating a five-minute late-night TV set, writing for other comedians, how to be an "opening act," rejection, stage fright, becoming a headliner, Sound Exchange, roast jokes and strategies, podcasting, NACA, social media, late-night joke writing, award show writing, getting a manager/agent, and comedy festivals.

Guest Speakers

Stand Up 2 will bring in guest professionals working in comedy for lectures and Q/A. Past guest speakers have included: Beth Stelling, Jacqueline Novak, Margaret Cho, Dina Hashem, Sam Morril, Sarah Tiana, Jeffrey Ross, Gary Gulman, Mark Norman, Brent Forrester, Brian Kiley, Kevin Pollak, Ron Funches, Amy Silverberg, Judd Apatow, and Fahim Anwar.

Topics and Lectures

- * The importance of getting on stage
- * CBS - Clarity. Brevity. Specificity.
- * Point of view.
- * Curiosity
- * Microphone proximity.
- * Getting rid of “ahhs” and “umms”
- * The crucial first 30-seconds.
- * The physical basics: microphone, stand, “the light,” and the stool.
- * Recording your set/ Reviewing your set
- * Writing techniques
- * Your persona
- * Truthfulness
- * Exaggeration
- * Dealing with stage fright
- * Punching up?
- * Dealing with rejection
- * Promoting your show
- * Giving the audience too much power
- * Precise break-down of successful stand-up
- * Writing for other comics
- * How to build an act: from 3 minutes to an hour
- * Performing on television
- * The infinite possibilities of the internet
- * Various stand-up clips to be viewed and discussed in class

Recommended readings, viewings, and materials

The History of Stand-Up: From Mark Twain to Dave Chappelle - Wayne Federman
The Comedians: Drunks, Thieves, Scoundrels and the History of American Comedy - Kliph Nesteroff
Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s - Gerald Nachman
Sick in the Head: Conversations About Life and Comedy - Judd Apatow
The 100 Jokes That Shaped Modern Comedy - Vulture Magazine (free online article)

WTF – podcast w/ Marc Maron

Pryor: Live in Concert (1979) warning: explicit - film

I Am Comic (2009) Documentary about stand-up. dir. Jordan Brady

Dying Laughing (2016) Documentary about stand-up. dir. Lloyd Stanton.

Jerry Before Seinfeld (2017) Netflix documentary about starting as a stand-up.

Hysterical (2021) a close look at female comedians. dir. Andrea Nevins

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Exercises and Assignments

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Grades are *not* dictated by either the success of comedy presentations or Professor Federman's subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference.

Grades will be dictated by

Class participation.

Meeting all deadlines: reading, watching, writing, performing.

Feedback on classmate's comedy presentations.

Grading Points Breakdown:

Week 1 in-class exercise.....	5 points
Week 2 in-class exercise.....	5 points
Week 3 in-class exercise.....	5 points
Week 4 in-class exercise.....	5 points
Week 5 in-class exercise, 1st paper due	10 points
Week 6 in-class exercise.....	5 points
Week 7 in-class exercise	5 points
Week 8 MID-TERM: TEST and/or ESSAY	10 points
Week 9 in-class exercise.....	5
Week 10 in-class exercise.....	5
Week 11 in-class exercise, 2nd paper due	10 points
Week 12 in-class exercise.....	5
Week 13, in-class exercise.....	5
Week 14, in-class / Performance.....	5 points
FINAL TEST and/or ESSAY	15 points

TOTAL

100 points (plus extra credit assignments)

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.

Further Grading Notes:

If the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with excellent/good attendance & class participation and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average/ poor attendance & participation.

If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W. I will be happy to discuss your work at any time.

No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted**Assignment Submission Policy**

Written assignments will be collected at the beginning of each class. Assignments for presentation will be performed during class.

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.

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.

Course Schedule:**WEEKLY CLASS CONTENT**

(This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace, and unpredictability of the creative process of performance classes. Plus, guest lecturers may alter schedule.)

Week 1 GETTING TO KNOW YOU.

Class ground rules. Brief moment onstage to introduce yourself to each other. Breaking "ands" and "ums." What it means to be a professional. Microphone technique.

Assignment: for week 2: bring in short stand-up clip (audio or video) of comedian's routine you admire.

Week 2 YOUR ACT / BREAKDOWN

"Stand-up Breakdown" - examination of successful comedian's techniques. Student introduces the clip.

Week 3 YOUR ACT / BREAKDOWN

Conclusion of "Stand-up Breakdown part 2" - examination of successful comedian's techniques.

Week 4 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP HISTORY Part One

Perform up to 2-minute original stand-up. Assignment for 1st paper

Week 5 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP HISTORY Part two

Perform up to 2-minute original stand-up. Opening act. Selection of topic for Mid-term paper.

1st paper due.

Week 6 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE

Write original routine based on presented topics. In-depth examination of joke styles (one liner, deadpan, stories, act-outs, characters).

Week 7 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Writing monologue/topical jokes. The road vs. in-town.

Week 8 MID-TERM

Perform only topical jokes (monologue/weekend update) written over the last week. Creating a 5-minute Late Night Set. Mid-term assignment due.

Week 9 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Starting your own show vs open mics. *assignment: select paper #2 topic.*

Week 10 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE / WRITING EXERCISE

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Promoting yourself. Merchandise.

Week 11 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE / WRITING EXERCISE

In class “roast” of Professor Federman. How to go from 3 minutes to 1 hour. Building a set for the road.

Week 12 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE

Perform up to 3-minute original stand-up. Podcasting and Sound Exchange.

2nd paper due.

Week 13 YOUR ACT / STAND-UP LECTURE

Perform up to 4-minute original stand-up. Comedy festivals, working overseas, managers and agents.

Week 14 YOUR ACT

Perform original stand-up show on campus for invited audience.

15 FINAL EXAM (time and date TBD)**Additional Notes:**

Please ensure that you are prepared for the class and are in a fit state (mentally, emotionally, physically) to contribute.

Recording yourself is strongly encouraged.

Recording OTHER students is prohibitive.

No food is allowed during class.

There will be one (7-10 minute each) break per class.

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.

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

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.