

USC School of Dramatic Arts

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491: Theatre Organization & Management

Fall 2022—Monday, 1PM – 3:50PM

Location: MCC108

Updated: Aug 2022

Instructor: Mireya (“Murry”) Hepner

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: hepner@usc.edu

Course Description and Overview

An examination of the principal components of theatrical management with an emphasis on not-for-profit institutional theatre practice. Business and production management, unions, marketing and sales, fundraising, budgeting, board of trustees and artistic staff roles will be addressed, as well as how they relate to the field of stage management. This class will meet on ground and online.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to compare non-profit and commercial theatre models and organizational structures, and will learn to identify and discuss the various management job functions in the professional theatre.

Class projects center around putting students in the shoes of people who perform various functions within an organization. The goal is to develop an appreciation of the creativity and collaboration involved in the smooth running of a non-profit company.

Required Text and Readings

There is no Required Text for this class, but various reading materials, articles, videos, and case studies will be shared with students as part of each week’s course work. They will all be found in that week’s “Module” in Blackboard.

Grading Breakdown and Criteria

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|---|-----------|
| Written Assignments and presentations | 20 points |
| In-Class Work (quizzes, etc.) | 20 points |
| Midterm Group Presentation & Materials | 40 points |
| Final Report and Presentation | 20 points |

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| Grading | 95-100 points = A; 90-94 points = A- |
| | 80-84 points = B; 85-89 points = B+ |
| | 70-74 points = C; 75-79 points = C+ |
| | 60-64 points = D; 65-79 points = D+ |

Assignment Submission Policy

As a general rule, written Assignments that are meant to be completed outside of our class time should be submitted by Monday at 9am, to give me time to read and comment on them before Monday’s 1pm class. If they’re emailed and not submitted through the Blackboard platform,

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please make sure you include your name and the date. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling count! If there isn't a written assignment due, there may be reading or a video to watch. Each module will come with instructions, but as a general rule, you should be prepared to discuss any of that material or content during class. Class begins promptly at 1 PM. The Module for the following week's class will be posted on Mondays at the end of our class time.

Grading Timeline

- Quizzes will be graded immediately through Blackboard
- Other assignments will either have feedback in class or before the next class meeting date
- Feedback on Homework assignments and the Mid-Term Group Project will be given before the next class time, as long as assignments are turned in on time.
- Final assignment will be graded in the week following the final 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.

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.

Late work

All of the assignments and quizzes are to help you understand the information covered in class and in the short videos you will watch at home, so it's important to do them in the week they are assigned. 1 point will be deducted for every day a quiz is late, 2 points for other assignments, and 5 points will be deducted for late mid-term or final projects. Please talk to me if you're having trouble completing assignments on time.

Technology

- Students will need access to the internet to watch various You-Tube links, access assignments via Blackboard, etc.
- On-line classes will be held on Zoom. The expectation is for everyone to have their video camera on for our Zoom meetings. With the understanding that this might not always be possible, students can participate with audio only in certain

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circumstances. Please let me know ahead of time if you need special accommodations for those sessions.

Classroom norms/Setting the tone

- Civility and Respect should be a given
- Be present! Listen actively and attentively.
- Everyone should participate in the conversation. All voices are valuable.
- You can challenge one another In discussions but remember to do so respectfully.
- Make no assumptions about others
- Trust that people are always doing the best they can.
- Ask questions when you don't understand; don't assume you know what others are thinking, and your questions might help your classmates, too.
- Be mindful of taking up much more time than the others - and empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

Additional Policies

If you want feedback or have questions about the assignments or need extra help, I encourage you to make an appointment to meet with me privately so we can discuss. My goal is for you to understand the concepts that we're discussing, not just to get through the assignment as fast as possible.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

August 22 Introduction and Overview (in person)

In the first session, we'll discuss the overview of the class, goals, and expectations.

The organizational structures and "norms" we'll be discussing throughout the semester have been evolving since the start of the pandemic. Believing that we should know where we've been before we can change, I hope you come to this class ready to learn about what was, question the status quo, and dream together about what the new theatre structures can be.

August 29 Non-Profit vs. Commercial Producing models – plus Presenting (Online)

We'll discuss different models of organizational structure for producing theatre.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the difference between commercial and Non-Profit Theatre operating structures
 2. Recognize various titles given to Managers in both systems.
- We'll also be looking at alternative models and learning how to identify components of an Organizational chart

September 5 Labor Day. No class.

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September 12 The Board of Directors in Non-Profit Theatre (Online)

We'll do a deep dive into the role of the Board of Directors, the governance of a non-profit theatre, and the relationship between a board chair and staff leadership. We'll also discuss the relationship between Non-Profit and Commercial Theatre

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss & identify the role of the Board of Directors in a Non-Profit Theatre
2. Discuss the relationship between Commercial and Non-profit theatres

September 19 More on Non-Profit Structure, plus Mission and Season Planning (part 1) (in person)

In this session we'll continue our dive into how a Non-Profit functions, and then start to identify the elements of a successful mission statement. We'll also begin a discussion on how the theatre's mission is directly related not only to season planning for productions, but for every aspect of the theatre's activities and programs.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identifying elements of a Mission Statement
2. Identifying how Programming and Organizational Choices relate to the Mission

September 26 Mission plus Season Planning (part 2) (On-line) (Rosh Hashanah)

Continuing the discussion from the previous class about how Mission guides decision making in all aspects of the organization

Additional Learning Objectives:

3. Identifying other roles and responsibilities of the Artistic Staff of a non-profit theatre

October 3 The Budget (online)

The goal of this session is to understand the different types of budgets used by non-profit and commercial theatre productions, and to get a general understanding on what elements to think about when projecting expenses and revenue in a budget.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify and compare the different types of budgets used in Commercial and Non-Profit Theatres
2. Give Examples of items that are included in different types of theatre budgets
3. Complete a sample expense production budget template for a specific play

October 10 Fundraising (online)

In this class we'll be looking at "unearned" or "contributed" income as part of the revenue side of a non-profit company

Learning Objectives:

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1. Give Examples of different ways non-profits bring in gifts or "unearned income"
2. Demonstrate understanding of what's needed for a successful grant proposal

October 17 Marketing and Audience Development. (in person)

We'll take what we've learned about mission and fundraising as a basis for selling our show. What tools do we need to learn about who we want to come to see our production, and how we get them there? In this session we'll identify various Marketing tools but also the philosophy behind "selling" the show.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify differences between Marketing and Audience Engagement/Development
2. Identify different marketing tools
3. Identify audience engagement tools

October 24 Group project presentation: Your dream theatre company (in person)

The class will be broken into small groups to do this assignment, which is based on all of the classes up until now. In this session each group will present their project to the group. (Groups will be assigned during the class about Mission Statements, to allow for plenty of time to complete this project)

You're tasked with dreaming up a theatre company.

Each group will:

1. Write a clear mission statement that describes the essence of your new organization.
2. Give a brief description of what need your company is filling, or what makes it different from others.
3. Demonstrate what type of programming you'll choose based on your mission.
4. Describe the process of selecting your first season, with at least 2 examples of plays or programming under consideration.
5. Make a list of line items you might consider for one of the plays – you don't need to show numbers, but list a few considerations of what your budget might need.
6. Use your company's mission, and the description of why it is needed, to write a brief (one-page or less) fundraising appeal to a potential individual donor.
7. Pick a target audience and give a brief description on what messaging and method you'll use to reach them.

Be prepared to present your ideas in front of the class, and also to submit a written copy. The written documents should include a few paragraphs describing the process you went through to craft the final mission statement. Early draft ideas can absolutely be included.

Presentations will be graded on how well your budget items, play selections, and other documents match your mission statement, and how you present them to your classmates. Be prepared to answer questions from your classmates.

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- October 31 Halloween** **Box Office, FOH and Earned Income** (online)
We'll talk about various types of earned income for a theatre, and identify the roles and responsibilities of the House Manager and the Front of House Staff,
Learning Objectives:
1. Give Examples of different types of earned income for a theatre
2. Identify the role of the House Manager, FOH staff and others who deal with customers (Audience members)
3. Identify best practices for successful Customer Service
- November 7** **Theatre Unions & Associations** (online)
In this class we'll talk about the concept of collective bargaining, learn about various Theatrical Unions and who they serve, as well as some organizations who serve Theatre Organizations.
Learning Objectives:
1. Be able to identify various Theatre Unions and who they serve
2. Be able to identify some of the collective bargaining organizations that negotiate with the unions
3. Be able to identify some of the theatre field's service organizations
- November 14** One-on-One check-in sessions to discuss topics for final projects, and possible topics for the Management reflection sessions. These check-ins will be on Zoom.
- November 21** **Management Reflections, Part 1:** (in person)
We'll look at some of the issues that have come into focus as theatre companies grapple with the new reality of what it means to run a theatre company today. We'll read some articles and discuss issues such as scheduling, programming and staffing challenges. Come prepared for conversation.
- November 28** **Management Reflections, Part 2:** (TBD-online or in person)
We'll continue our discussions about challenges facing the field, concentrating on some specific examples of challenges faced by theatre leadership, plus topics of interest to the group.
- Dec 14** **Final presentation (NOTE this is a different day than our normal meeting day)**
(In person)
11am-1pm The final will be a thought/research piece about the future of theatre in our new world. Find a theatre company whose mission interests you, and interview a management or artistic leader, asking questions about challenges they've faced since the pandemic, some ways in which their theatre pivoted in terms of programming or staffing, and what they envision for their company in the future. We'll be coming up with sample questions as a group as part of the Management Reflections modules to help you get started.

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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.

Supplementary Materials

While not required reading, the following are interesting books to look at if you want additional information about topics we'll be discussing. You'll be reading some chapters from these books as part of your weekly assignments

The Art of Governance

Boards in the Performing Arts

By Nancy Roche and Jaan Whitehead; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

Invitation to the Party

Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community

By Donna Walker-Kuhne; Theatre Communications Group, 2005

Leading Roles

50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask

By Michael M Kaiser; Brandeis University Press, 2010

Successful Fundraising for Arts and Cultural Institutions

By Carolyn L. Stolper & Karen Brooks Hopkins

Oryx Press 1989

The American Theatre Reader

Essays and conversations from American Theatre Magazine

Edited by staff of American Theatre Magazine

TCG Books 2009

Joan Garry's Guide to Nonprofit Leadership

By Joan Garry

John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2nd edition, 2021

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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 (Video 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>

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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.symlicity.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

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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.