

# SYLLABUS

## CTPR 476

### Section 18572D

## DIRECTING the COMEDIC SCENE

Units: 2

SPRING 2023

Wednesdays, 6 - 9:50PM,

RZC Stage D

Website: [barnetkellman.net](http://barnetkellman.net)  
password: classroom

Professor: BARNET KELLMAN

Office: SCA 407

Office Hours: Tuesday by appointment

Contact info: [bkellman@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:bkellman@cinema.usc.edu)  
(323) 819-3803

I will respond to emails within 48 hours

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### Course Description:

This is a course on the art of directorial interpretation. We focus on the dialogue scene, the director's work with actors, and the challenge of unlocking comedy from the text and in performance.

Students work with material not of their own creation, learning to shape a scene by breaking it down into component parts and uncovering its main event.

In addition, the course is designed to develop the director's ability to communicate effectively with actors in a way that brings forth their best work.

Finally, this workshop course will address the specific challenges of directing a comic narrative.

The scene is the basic unit of dramatic storytelling. The actor is the essential vehicle, carrying the narrative forward.

No matter how interesting the shots are or how sparkling the dialogue if the director does not identify, target and deliver the emotional payload of the scene - the “Event of the Scene” - the story will not move forward with emotional authority.

Likewise, no matter how good the other creative elements, unless the actors engage the audience as credible intriguing characters, the film will rarely succeed.

[In this class we explore the art of storytelling through the mounting and performance of the two-person scene.](#)

As students do assignments, exercises and rehearsals that lead to the filming of a two-person scene, issues of casting, directing actors, scene analysis, point of view, shooting styles, shooting methods, staging and editing will be considered from the comedic perspective.

### **The Comic Lens:**

Comedy is corrective. Comedy addresses “life out of balance.” Its goals are harmony and natural order. Comedy isn’t about nobility or aspiration; it’s about survival. A classical tragedy ends in a death; a classical comedy ends in a marriage. While tragedy rails against fate, destiny, injustice and death, comedy is a negotiation with life. A laugh is an involuntary recognition of life’s imperfection. It’s an involuntary, reflexive recognition of a truth or contradiction. The laugh signifies the acceptance of a compromise between what is, and what ought to be. Fostering comic performance is the act of conjuring that reflexive laugh. The ability to negotiate with, and make peace with existence through laughter is a uniquely human gift.

The role of the director of comedy is like that of a conjurer. It’s the director’s job to conjure the laugh. I believe that can be taught.

### **Learning Goals and Objectives:**

In this class you will learn that a good scene is far richer than you may have imagined. Even with two people sitting over a breakfast table - something must be *happening*, something important, something with emotional meaning. That “happening” is what we call the “emotional event” of the scene. Only scenes that have an emotional event are worth including in a dramatic narrative. Only such scenes are worth shooting.

In this class you will learn how to excavate a scene and uncover its emotional event. You will learn how to collaborate with actors, make them your partners in exploration, and enable them, through performance, to deliver the emotional event of the scene.

It is my hope that you will come to love working with actors and welcome them into your creative process.

Directors will complete a variety of assignments during the semester, designed to increase awareness, sharpen the senses of seeing and listening, clarify what the director wants from the actor, explore methods of getting it, and recognize whether it has truly been achieved. Emphasis will be on the communication between the director and performer, and the textual analysis of dramatic scene work. Through analytical preparation coupled with class exercises and rehearsal, the director should learn to collaborate with actors to realize the scene and capture the results on camera.

### **Class Philosophy:**

In this class, learning is a group endeavor.

I'm well aware that most students will be new to the concepts and practices we are considering.

I'm not so much looking for results, but rather for participation and engagement with a process.

I expect students to learn as much from each other's missteps as from the triumphs. Those missteps are very valuable.

I will appreciate your generosity in taking the risks to make mistakes, and your openness to sharing them with the class.

### **Course Elements:**

This class combines exercises, lectures, demonstrations, readings, discussions and written reflections as means to prepare for directing a comedic two-person dialogue scene.

Each student will be assigned two scenes from *50/50*, by Will Reiser to analyze, cast, explore through rehearsal and staging.

Scene One is designed to orient the student to the procedures of the class.

Scene Two will provide a greater opportunity for in-depth exploration and realization of the material.

**Scene One is a shortened version of a scene from the film.**

**Scene Two is the full scene.**

The texts provided for Scene One and Scene Two differ.

**YOU MUST USE THE TEXT APPROPRIATE TO THE ASSIGNMENT**

**Do not use Scene Two text for the Scene One Assignment.**

At the end of the semester students will have the opportunity to make a final presentation of their class work/experience by presenting shot and edited versions of their scene work in Class Fourteen and Fifteen.

Occasionally, for educational purposes, I may invite a student to present a Third Rehearsal, rather than shoot their scene. This is done solely at my discretion and is not offered as an option for scheduling convenience.

Scene One is a shortened version of a scene from the film.  
Scene Two is the full scene.

Scene One is designed to orient the student to the procedures of the class.  
Scene Two will provide a greater opportunity for in-depth exploration and realization of the material.

The texts provided for Scene One and Scene Two differ and must not be substituted.

At the end of the semester students will have the opportunity to make a final presentation of their class work/experience.

**Students from the Screenwriting Division and other non-Production Division students will present a Third In-Class Rehearsal in the Class Fourteen session.**

**Production Division students will present shot and edited versions of their scenes in Class Fourteen and Fifteen.**

Occasionally, for educational purposes, I may invite a Production student to present a Third Rehearsal, rather than shoot their scene. This is done solely at my discretion and is not offered as an option for scheduling convenience.

### **Workshop:**

This is a workshop course - its subject is the process of directing. The assigned scenes are tools for learning. They are never to be considered "product".

**In rehearsals and in the final presentation students may present the entire scene OR just a portion of the scene. That portion must include the beginning. It is our understanding that the work you present is "work in progress".**

During the first four weeks we will explore methods of auditioning, casting, scene analysis and breakdown, rehearsing, and staging. Also, during these weeks students will begin casting and rehearsing their scenes.

Each scene will be rehearsed outside of class and then brought into class for in-class rehearsals. The director will then have the opportunity to repeat the process several times, rehearsing both outside and again in class, before making a final presentation.

Through this process of exploration, and trial and error, it is expected that the student will learn practical principles and apply them to directing actors and comedy.

This class assumes that Production Division students have had other opportunities to produce and practice the more technical aspects of filmmaking. The opportunity provided here is to step back and work on the development of a scene, bring the performances to life and create something worth shooting. The filming we do at the end of the semester is intended to provide a bridge experience from preparation and rehearsal toward production. The workshop nature of the class does not support or encourage complex shooting or production requirements.

Please learn to understand, embrace and respect the workshop nature of this endeavor.

### **Casting:**

Casting is crucial. It's critical to a director's success. Take full advantage of the opportunity this class provides to become adept at assessing actor talent and appropriateness for the roles you need them to play.

You may cast someone you know -- you must, however, go through the audition process for the experience, and to see what alternatives are available.

**STUDENTS MUST HOLD AT LEAST TWO AUDITION SESSIONS** in preparation for choosing your cast.

You may not cast your relatives or lovers because you may be required to recast.

Actors often drop out of projects; it is strongly advised that you be prepared with backup casting options.

Any RECASTING must be done with the instructor's knowledge.

**IF YOU NEED TO RECAST YOU MUST NOTIFY THE INSTRUCTOR AND THE SA BEFORE BRINGING A NEW ACTOR TO CLASS - YOU MUST ALSO PROVIDE THE SA WITH THAT ACTOR'S PHOTO AND CONTACT INFORMATION.**

### **Casting the Two Scenes:**

The class assigns you two scenes to work on. You should plan to recast from the first scene to the second. If, as may happen, you find yourself in a particularly fruitful collaboration with an actor, you may request my permission to cast that actor twice.

**PERMISSION TO CAST AN ACTOR TWICE MUST BE REQUESTED, AND WILL BE GRANTED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.**

### **Gender and Casting:**

Each semester students ask if they can cast someone of a different gender than a role is written for. Here's the thing: the reason I give you a proven script, written by someone other than you, is to test your ability to REALIZE what someone else has designed. Not

to redesign it. Not to put a spin or “interpretation” on the material that you find interesting. In 50/50 I have chosen a script that I hope is race and ethnicity neutral. Although it was written by a Caucasian about his experience, and was originally cast accordingly, I don’t think the life experience represented is altered by casting actors of any ethnicity. Therefore, I encourage you to cast anyone you like in regard to race and ethnicity.

I cannot say the same about gender.

I think there are experiences portrayed in this story and its dialogue that are gender specific. The one exception I can make to this is Dr Ross. I see no reason why Dr Ross can’t be played by a woman. But, given the pedagogical goal of the assignment, that’s the only exception I feel it’s appropriate to make.

### **Rehearsal:**

Rehearsal is a critical tool in the making of comedy. This class will teach rehearsal technique and sharpen the students’ appreciation for the use of rehearsal in the finding and rendering of comedy.

Students are required to rehearse for NO LESS THAN FOUR HOURS TOTAL outside of class before bringing work into class. REHEARSALS MUST BE HELD IN PERSON. You may not bring an unrehearsed actor to class.

If an actor presents you with a sudden conflict that makes them unavailable to rehearse in class you must notify the instructor and your SA immediately. You may not bring a “surprise actor” to class.

### **Actor Database:**

An Actor Database posted on the class website and available on the class Google Drive is made up of actors who have worked successfully in class. I encourage you to take advantage of this resource.

### **School of Dramatic Arts Actors:**

You are strongly advised to cast students from USC School of Dramatic Arts when possible and appropriate. Directors who have done this have found them to be well-trained professionals and reliable collaborators.

*I recommend this every semester but this semester, with lingering concerns about COVID and access to campus, I strongly urge you to explore and take advantage of this valuable resource.*

A database of SDA Student Self-Tape Auditions is accessible on SCA Community.

### **Actor Contact information:**

Prior to your first in-class rehearsal you are required to provide your SA with your actors' NAMES/ Preferred Contact info (cell phone and email)/Digital Headshot Photo - If you recast you must update this information.

**THIS IS NOT AN OPTIONAL REQUEST:** Supplying these materials to your SA is required for credit toward completion of the course.

### **Critique - Giving and Taking:**

Each time a student presents work it will be subject to in-class discussion, "critique" and revision.

In this course we share "work in process". Artists "in process" feel vulnerable. One of the goals of this course is to help students learn to observe work in process, and share their observations in a way that is helpful to the director.

It is important that critique be received with a sense of openness.

Learning how to give and take useful criticism is by no means easy. It takes care, mindfulness and practice. I'm still learning how to do this myself! I encourage students to give me feedback on my performance in this regard even as you make efforts in this direction yourself. Together we will endeavor to create an atmosphere that is conducive to good process.

### **Inclusivity:**

Comedy like language both brings us together and sorts us apart. It has the capacity to either divide or include. Like language, inclusivity is the central goal of comedy. It reminds us of what we have in common - our humanity - and assures us that we are not alone.

[In this class you are encouraged to raise any concerns you may have, either publicly, or with me in private.](#)

### **Disclaimer and Fair Warning:**

The purpose of comedy is not to be hurtful, but to explore hurtful subjects in a safe way. Comedy is controversial by its nature. One of its functions is to test moral and social boundaries. Whatever the intention, it is possible that material shown and discussed in class may offend. Be aware of this possibility before deciding to take this class.

### **Screenplay and Scenes:**

We will be using the screenplay *50/50* by Will Reiser as our primary text. You will be provided with a PDF of the text and each of you will be randomly assigned two two-person scenes from this screenplay.

\*It's very important to recognize that the two-person scenes that you've been assigned have been ADAPTED, and differ in subtle ways, from the scenes as they appear in the original. You should use the full screenplay in your research, but you must adhere to the text of the adapted scenes.

YOU MUST READ THE FULL SCREENPLAY FROM WHICH YOUR SCENE ORIGINATES. IT'S ALL RIGHT IF YOU HAVE SEEN THE FILM IN THE PAST, BUT YOU MUST NOT REVISIT IT UNTIL AFTER YOUR FINAL PROJECT IS PRESENTED.

DIRECTORS MUST PRINT OUT COPIES OF THE COMPLETE SCREENPLAY FOR THEMSELVES FOR THE PURPOSE OF NOTE-TAKING.

DIRECTORS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A PDF OF THE ENTIRE SCREENPLAY FOR THEIR ACTORS AND URGE THEM TO READ IT.

\*I am aware that you cannot be certain that your actors have actually read the entire screenplay. You are, nonetheless, responsible for their knowing the circumstances of the screenplay that apply to their characters.

*It's on you to be proactive in bringing these circumstances to their attention.*

ACTORS MUST BE INSTRUCTED NOT TO RE-VIEW OR STUDY THE RELEASED FILM.

DIRECTORS ARE REQUIRED TO GIVE THEIR ACTORS THE EDITED AND ADAPTED VERSIONS OF THEIR SCENES.

YOU MUST REHEARSE ONLY USING THE EDITED AND ADAPTED VERSIONS OF YOUR SCENES.

### **Assignments:**

Assignments include exercises, rehearsals, recordings and reflections. A schedule of these assignments will be provided. Reading assignments will be announced on a weekly basis during the course of the semester.

Reading assignments are subject to change and may be updated on a weekly basis.

### **Written Reflections:**

Written Reflections enable me to get a better understanding of what you're learning, and they help me tailor my teaching to your individual needs. I consider them to be crucial communications and they count toward your grade.

Reflections need not be long - one page is sufficient - and they need not be written according to formal rules. Think of it as a personal communication from you to me. Your reflection may refer to any aspect of your process.

On the four occasions after you present work in class you will be required to write a "reflection" about it. The occasions are the "First In-Class Rehearsal", the "Second In-Class Rehearsal" the "Third In-Class Rehearsal", and after your Final Presentation

The reflection following your first rehearsal should include your reasons for casting each of your actors.

All Reflections must be emailed to me by 12pm on the Wednesday after each in-class exercise or rehearsal.

A reflection that misses this deadline will be marked LATE and be subject to a 50% reduction in grade value. The student will have until the following Wednesday at 12pm to turn in that reflection for half credit. Missing that second window will cause the student to forfeit the entire grade value of the assignment.

**The final reflection is due by 5pm on SUNDAY, May 7th.**

Reflections must be in WORD, TXT, Pages or another editable format. Please Note:

**NO WORK TURNED IN PDF FORM WILL BE ACCEPTED**

Students are required to submit a total of FOUR Reflections:

1. First In-Class Rehearsal
2. Second In-Class Rehearsal
3. Third In-Class Rehearsal
4. Final Presentation

**Missing Reflections:**

**Forgetting a Reflection is the most common cause of a lowered grade.**

**TAKE NOTE: Students often forget to do their Final Reflection which results in a lowered grade.**

**Google Drive:**

All assignments and class materials will be accessible on a 476 Class Shared Google Drive maintained by your SA. All recorded assignments must be posted on the Google Drive 36 hours prior to the class in which they are due.

**Assigned Readings:**

The weekly readings I assign are all written by me, and they of two different types:

1. Materials About the Class

These are designed to help explain class procedures and expectations. Their purpose is to help you navigate the course.

2. Materials About the Subjects of the Course

These are found in the COURSE READER and supplement and expand on the topics of the in-class presentations.

Readings will be assigned weekly. All reading materials will be available on the 476 Class Shared Google Drive.

### **Recommended Texts:**

There's not much literature on directing actors that meets my approval. Most books try to teach directors the terms of actor training, which, in my opinion, is a different thing. Judith Weston's book, *Directing Actors*, is widely assigned at SCA and it's good. It's worth your time, and so I recommend - but do not require - that you read it. If you do, you will find that she and I differ on many points, but on others we concur.

To my great frustration there isn't a text on Directing Comedy that I can assign. I default to recommending John Vorhaus' simple and clear book aimed at Writing Comedy. There are concepts in it that anyone interested in directing comedy should consider.

*Directing Actors* by Judith Weston <http://www.amazon.com/Directing-Actors-Memorable-Performances-Television/dp/0941188248>

*The Comic Toolbox* by John Vorhaus [http://www.amazon.com/Comic-Toolbox-Funny-Even-Youre/dp/1879505215/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1356230359&sr=1-1&keywords=the+comic+toolbox](http://www.amazon.com/Comic-Toolbox-Funny-Even-Youre/dp/1879505215/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1356230359&sr=1-1&keywords=the+comic+toolbox)

More suggestions are available to you on a sheet called Recommended Readings, which you can find in the Resources Folder on the class Google Drive.

### **Delivery Requirements:**

All Exercises should be delivered as .mp4 files and all Scenes Rehearsals should be delivered as .mp4 zoom files.

The recorded final version of your scene must not include any titles that mention the name of the screenplay from which the scenes are adapted.

### **Email:**

Email is a crucial means of communication in this class. I and your SA will reach out to you by email, and email is your most reliable and official way of communicating with us. Emails also create an important record of our correspondence.

[USC requires us all to use the usc.edu addresses provided to us all. You must use this address \(rather than personal email addresses\) and check your USC mailbox regularly.](#)

### **Labeling of Assignments:**

Improperly labeling leads to your work getting lost or misplaced. For this reason, I am very specific in my requirements for labeling. My system allows me to give you proper credit.

I will not take on the clerical duties of relabeling your assignments.

All assignments must be labeled using the following format:

**Course #- Your Last Name-Assignment-Date.**

For Example: **476 -Smith- First Rehearsal Reflection -10\_15\_18**

The document itself must be labeled this way. It is the document containing your work that I intend to save and file. Proper labeling allows me to file your work properly and give you proper credit.

Sometimes students make the mistake of labeling the subject line of the email in the prescribed format and then attach a document named something generic like "Reflection #1". That is unacceptable and exactly what I am trying to avoid. If I save that document, I am forced to rename it so as to know to whom it belongs.

**I will not accept any assignment wherein the document is not named in the proper format.**

**I will not accept any Reflections documents sent in PDF form.**

#### **Due Dates:**

Missing deadlines is generally regarded as unacceptable in our industry, and so it will be in this class. If you know ahead of time that unavoidable circumstances will prevent the timely delivery of your work you must notify me immediately.

Unexcused missed due dates will result in reduction of 1/2 of the point value for each full class period past the original due date.

#### **Unforeseen Circumstances:**

If you have circumstances or life issues that might affect your work, please let me know in advance. I want to be understanding and helpful if I can. I can only do that if I'm informed.

#### **Extensions:**

Please contact me in advance to make arrangements for deadline extensions if you find you need them.

**Grading:**

I appreciate your talent but I do not grade you on it. You are graded on your fulfillment of the assignments of the course, your engagement with the subjects and challenges we take up, your active participation and the growth evidenced by your work during the semester.

**Grading Breakdown:**

First Scene - First Rehearsal	5 points
First Scene - First Rehearsal Reflection	10 points
Second Scene - First Rehearsal	10 points
Second Scene - First Rehearsal Reflection	10 points
Second Scene - Second Rehearsal	15 points
Second Scene -Second Rehearsal Reflection	10 points
Final Presentation	15 points
Final Presentation Reflection	10 points
**Participation	15 points
TOTAL	100 points

\*\*PARTICIPATION is the engine of Group Learning. It is a crucial element in your grade. It includes commitment to the class, involvement with other students' work, helping them in its realization, engagement with the material and contribution to class discussion.

**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

### **Production Division Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two absences will result in a student's grade being lowered by one full letter (IE: A becomes B). A third absence will result in a student's grade being lowered by one, additional full letter (IE: B becomes C). A student's grade will be lowered by one full letter for each additional absence. Two late class arrivals equate to one full absence. There is a maximum of four absences allowed per semester. Any subsequent absences will result in a failing grade.

If a student misses class due to an emergency, the student must contact the professor and the SA prior to class.

Such advance notice is helpful, respectful and appreciated, and will be noted. It does not however guarantee that the absence will be "excused."

### **Late Arrival:**

15 minutes late constitutes an official late arrival. In cases where petty tardiness - i.e. of less than 15 minutes becomes chronic, I will give one "warning", and then I will assign penalties. Your SA will keep track of late arrivals.

### **476 is a Workshop:**

CTPR 476 is a Workshop Course, not a Production Course. As such we are more concerned with the impact of performance, storytelling, and the rendering of comedy than with the technical quality of the final product. It is more important to optimize the quality of the sound than it is to demonstrate artistry in lighting, costuming, location or other production values. Directors are strongly encouraged to keep their shooting and editing styles simple and unobtrusive.

**NO SCENES MAY BE SHOT AS EXTERIORS WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL**

### **Camera Operation:**

Your attention must be firmly placed upon your actors. You cannot do this if you are responsible for camera operation. Students must not operate camera on their own scenes.

## **STUDENTS MUST NOT OPERATE CAMERA ON THEIR OWN SCENES.**

[I urge you to partner with a fellow student from the class and serve as each other's operators.](#)

### **Use of Laptops in Class:**

Web surfing, texting and emailing are not permitted in class. You may not be on a screen for any purpose other than note taking.

[If you use a laptop to take notes in class you may do so, but you must notify me and your SA of that intention, and sit in either of the first two rows.](#)

If you need to make or take an emergency communication, please step off the stage.

### **Production Numbers - Use of School Equipment:**

Your SA will work to obtain production numbers for class members. Delaying the SA's efforts will earn a student a grading penalty equivalent to a late assignment.

Students will be responsible for payment of insurance for usage of school equipment. You may request permission to use additional equipment. If permission is granted you will be required to obtain insurance for that equipment through Joe Wallenstein's office.

All necessary forms and online request forms are available on SCA Community under the "Student Productions" heading. Contact your SA with any questions that you may have.

### **Hazardous Shooting Conditions**

In terms of shooting plans, students are required to vet their plans with their faculty including discussing any Hazardous Shooting Conditions as defined by the SCA's Safety Book as posted on SCA Community.

[THE MATERIAL WE ARE WORKING WITH IN THIS WORKSHOP DOES NOT WARRANT ANY HAZARDOUS SHOOTING. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTION AS TO WHETHER WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING CONSTITUTES A HAZARD, YOU MUST DISCUSS THE PLAN WITH ME BEFORE UNDERTAKING YOUR SHOOT.](#)

### **Covid Safety Compliance Understanding and Agreement**

Due to concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19 in California and around the world, USC and the School of Cinematic Arts (SCA) have taken a strong stance regarding the need for safe and mindful behaviors among all members of the SCA community.

Medical authorities agree that even the young and healthy are capable, if infected, of becoming ill, or of being non-symptomatic, unconscious vectors of the disease's spread.

The health and wellbeing of all community members has to be our paramount concern as we return to learning and collaborating together. We understand that attentiveness to the concerns of all SCA community members - students, staff and faculty, including those with underlying health conditions -- is simply an extension of the key principle of creative collaboration that has guided our school for decades. We're all in this pandemic together and need to behave accordingly.

All protocols are posted on the class Google Drive in a folder labeled COVID PROTOCOLS. These are binding on all students and faculty. They should be read and considered to be part of this course syllabus.

Sadly, we must recognize that we are in ever-changing territory with the emergence of new variants and subvariants. Protocols may change during the semester as the situation demands.

**Safety:**

All students are expected to abide by USC School of Cinematic Arts Safety Guidelines. Violations of any of the safety guidelines may result in disciplinary action ranging from confiscation of footage to expulsion from the University.

**Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the Instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. The office is in Student Union 301, and their phone number is (213)740-0776.

**Stressful Times:**

These are stressful times in our country, and Graduate School, in and of itself, is stressful. I encourage you to take care of yourself and your fellow students. USC provides opportunities for Mindful Meditation <http://mindful.usc.edu> and Mental health counseling is available at the Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, 213-740-9355.

**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](https://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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

**Students indicate their agreement to abide by these terms and regulations by enrolling in the production program Fall semester 2022.**

## Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 - 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*Student Health Leave Coordinator - 213-821-4710*

Located in the USC Support and Advocacy office, the Health Leave Coordinator processes requests for health leaves of absence and advocates for students taking such leaves when needed.

<https://policy.usc.edu/student-health-leave-absence/>

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 - 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours - 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://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. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

*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 Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.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 & 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](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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) 442-1200 - 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

[ombuds.usc.edu](https://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

### **Covid Protocols Spring 2023:**

As you know, variants of the Coronavirus continue to present us with an ongoing challenge as we return in-person in the new year.

All protocols are posted on the class Google Drive in a folder labeled COVID PROTOCOLS. These are binding on all students and faculty. They should be read and considered to be part of this course syllabus.

These protocols may be revised during the course of the semester.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT COMEDY

This class represents something of an experiment. Although classes exist and many books have been written on writing comedy, few (if any) take up the challenges of directing comedy. There are those who do not believe that such a thing can be taught. Carmen Ghia, an outrageous character in Mel Brooks' "The Producers," says about comic aptitude: "Or you got it - or you ain't". It would seem that the majority of comedy practitioners are satisfied to leave the matter at that.

Aptitude is an asset in the study of any subject and this one is certainly no exception. The ability to "get" a joke, a sense of humor and of timing will be needed to fully benefit from our work together. Still, I believe that there are underlying principles that pertain to comedy that can be studied and applied by all directors. This course will attempt to identify those principles and demonstrate their application.

I subscribe to, what for some might be, a broad definition of the comedy genre. Anton Chekhov described his great plays as Comedies. There are those who find that claim to be puzzling. I have always found it to be apt. The contemporary trend is toward such an encompassing definition. Television series such as "Weeds" and "Orange is the New Black" compete for Emmy Awards with the more obviously comedic "The Big Bang Theory" and "Modern Family". In my estimation "Some Like It Hot" is a supremely great comedy, and "Sunset Boulevard" is as well. I have no problem placing "Austin Powers" and "American Beauty" and "The Death of Stalin" together on a comedy continuum, and will endeavor, in the teaching of this course, to demonstrate why.