USCSchool of
Dramatic Arts

THTR 410 -THE DIGITAL ACTOR
Units: 2.0
Location: Shrine 105
TUESDAY; 12pm-1:50pm
Instructor: Julián Juaquín Conde
Contact: jconde@usc.edu
Spring 2023
Hours: Tuesday - 2pm-3pm By appointment

Course Description and Overview

This is a business and marketing class for actors specifically focused on the internet, social media, and new media as a vital resource in an actor's career. When graduation comes and the rubber meets the road, the wake up call that most theatre students experience is that they are suddenly the CEO, CFO, and Director of PR and Marketing for their own small business. The objective of this course is to prepare actors for this wake up call in advance and to provide the tools, resources, and mindset to effectively manage a business as a performer using all the assets and strategies that can be located in the digital realm.

Learning Objectives

To provide each actor-student with the ability to create a career foundation using the tools of the digital universe. The student will learn mastery of websites, webisodes, pitches, twitter and social media presence, online casting and submissions, apps, Facebook, followers and more, all as they relate to online opportunities and career development for actors.

Description of Grading Criteria for Course

A =   Student has fully demonstrated at a high level of competence all of the
         following:
  1. understanding of the practical requirements of pursuing a professional
      acting career
  2. ability to evaluate and make use of available resources

3. effective professional audition and interview skills
4. development of personal portfolio (headshot/resume)
5. development of personal and professional career plans
6. discipline and professionalism in all areas

     In addition to technical competence, a student receiving an "A" grade should also have demonstrated creativity, originality and imagination in his/her approach to the work.

B =   Student has achieved the goals stated for the course, certain skills being stronger than others, but without consistent application.

C =   Student comprehends the goals intellectually, but is not able to apply them on a consistent basis and does not use his/her creativity and imagination fully. Student may not fully demonstrate a professional and disciplined approach to the work.

D =   Student lacks comprehension of the goals and/or is inadequate in achieving them. Student has serious problems with professionalism and/or discipline.

F =   Student fails to comprehend the goals stated for the semester.

The instructor reserves the right to take into account studentship in determining the final grade.

+/- may be added to any grade

For Course Assignments:

All assignments must be typed and printed out and are due when requested. Late work will not be accepted. Please do not email assignments unless prior arrangements have been made.

Grading Criteria: **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of average quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

Grading Breakdown

Course shall contain at least three assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises which shall be evaluated during the semester and which shall provide an analytical record of each student's progress in the course.

- *Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*
- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*

- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*

Grading Breakdown

Course contains three assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises which shall be evaluated during the semester and which shall provide an analytical record of each student's progress in the course. Additionally, course includes mid-term assessment and final assessment.
- *Attendance shall be weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*
- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*
- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*

<u>**Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments**</u>
<u>Grades are dictated by</u>:
- Focus /concentration in class
- Performance of exercises
- Communication of selected skills
- Active in-class student analysis
- Constructive feedback of classmate's presentations
- Meeting all assignment deadlines: reading, writing, acting
- Memorization of lines
- Availability to fellow classmates for collaboration

<u>**Grade Categories**</u>   (100pts total)
1. In-Class Participation...10pts
2. Course assignments ………………………………………..30pts
3. In class exercises……………………………………...........20 pts
4. Mid term …………………………………………..............15pts
5. Final Exam………………………………………….............20pts
6. Growth And Effort.. 5pts

No late assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises will be accepted.

<u>**Grading Scale:**</u>
Excellent: A (4) = 100-96; **A**- (3.7) = 95-90 (clear understanding of class material coupled with original and creative insight)
Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; **B** (3) = 85-84; **B**- (2.7) = 83-80 (class material has been understood clearly)
Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; **C** (2) = 75-74; **C**- (1.7) = 73-70 (class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain)
Poor: D (.7-1.3) = 60's (there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material)

Fail: F (0) = 59 and below (gaps in completion of work and poor understanding of class material.)

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.*

Additional Policies

All students will be expected to bring and keep a separate notebook or tablet for lecture notes. Please keep all assignments and homework returned to you. Students are requested to arrive early (which means on time) to class.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Reading: *Crush It!* - Gary Vaynerchuck

Required Viewing: *Do what you love (no excuses!)* [15 min] - Gary Vaynerchuk TED Talk

Required classroom materials: Computer (preferred) or tablet, smartphone, chargers for each, and a good attitude

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

WEEK 1 - OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

Overview of current digital landscape for actors including tools, apps, online resources and media platforms for actors
Personal branding fundamentals and self-assessment
Handout list of course goals, grading and expectations for success

HOMEWORK: Personal Branding Lists and Distillation Research
Extraordinary Photography Examples
Actor/Artist Website Examples
Great Bios
Actor's Who Have The Career You Want
Fashion, Hair and Style That You Love

The ten things that are most important to you.
The ten things that are least important to you
Your 5 worst flaws
The one good thing about you that everyone knows
Survey to colleagues, family and friends for key descriptive words

. ***Do what you love (no excuses!)*** Discussion. The "Why" of Acting

WEEK 2   PERSONAL BRAND & PROFESSIONAL PERSONA
What is your story?
Who are you in the professional market now?
Where do you see yourself?
Choosing your priority social media platform for career
Your Marketing Toolkit: Headshot, Reel, Resume, Content, News

WEEK 3   WEBSITES
2023 Trends
Bios and curated content
Site map strategy for actors
Why you must buy your name
Why high quality photography is imperative
More video and images, less words.

ASSIGNMENT #1: Launch or revamp your personal website based on best practices
discussed in class.

_____

WEEK 4   DIGITAL MARKETING
Photography
Video
Resumes
Content
Reels
Online Presence
Print vs. Digital

WEEK 5   DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR ACTORS
Actors Access
LA Casting
Facebook Groups
IMDB Pro
Agency/Management Considerations

CastingAbout.com
SAG/AFTRA
AEA
backstage.com
Playbill

ASSIGNMENT #2: Create a 30-Day Action Plan to launch accounts for online actor presence targeted specifically towards casting in film, television and theatre using Los Angeles specific resources.

WEEK 6   **ACTOR REELS & ONLINE CONTENT**
Waiting For Work vs. Creating Your Brand
Los Angeles vs. New York
Commercial Reel, Voiceover and More

WEEK 7   **THE PITCH**
Supporting passion with research
Knowing the target audience
Research, research, research
Enrollment game
Raising money
Being good in a room

WEEK 8   **SOCIAL MEDIA & NETWORKING**
Foundations, Par
Consistency and repetition across all platforms
Must be sustainable
Content
Create Your Personal "Social Media Rules"
Aesthetics, Taste and Professionalism

MIDTERM DIGITAL ENTREPRENUERSHIP
Create a digital pitch deck (10-15 slides) using PowerPoint or Keynote for a new project with a targeted social media strategy.

WEEK 9   **FACEBOOK**
Friends, Groups, Events
Communities & Professional Targets
How NOT to promote yourself
Digital Tools, Resources & Tips

WEEK 10   **TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, LINKEDIN & SNAPCHAT**

Which is best for your career
1000 fans vs. 10,000 followers
Strategies for engaging directors, casting directors and more
Digital Tools, Resources & Tips

WEEK 11   **YOUTUBE & VIMEO**
YouTube is 2nd Largest Search Engine
Copyright Infringement
Clearances
Vimeo vs. YouTube (Optimization)
Digital Tools, Resources & Tips

ASSIGNMENT #3: Realize a self-created digital project completely based on your research and project pitch.

WEEK 12   **BUSINESS COMMUNICATION & PRODUCTIVITY**
Crafting Your Powerful Introduction

WEEK 13   **DIGITAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION & PRODUCTIVITY**
Email tools & signatures
Productivity Apps & Tools
Project Management
Database/Contact Management

WEEK 14   **BUILDING YOUR PROFESSIONAL NETWORK**
Professional Networking for Actors
Target List (Los Angeles)
Creating your own internship/observer-ship

WEEK 15   **SUMMARY & REVIEW**

FINAL   **DIGITAL PORTFOLIO EVALUATION**
Create 6-month action plan with identifiable acting career goals & deliverables including a realized marketing portfolio: CV/resume, headshots, stills, video, all your online platforms, strategies for growth, contacts, and business plan.

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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standardshttps://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. 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/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the *Department of Public Safety* http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* *http://emergency.usc.edu/*will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.