

THTR 482 Standup 2: Becoming a Pro
Spring 2023—Wednesdays (63199)—6:00pm to 7:50pm
Location: MCC 112
Units: 2

Instructor: Judith Shelton (Jude)

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

Office Hours: By appointment, Wednesdays – Fridays only

Contact Info: You may contact me Tues. – Fri., 9am-5pm

Email preferred – judiths@usc.edu

I return emails, Tuesday – Friday, only

On class days, in an emergency only, text 626.390.3678

Course Description

This course continues where THTR 474 left off, using additional writing tools and techniques, while performing in class over and over to create longer more effective sets. You will also engage in the non-performing, but just as important, work of the comic by actively pitching, producing, and promoting your own standup show. By the end of the course, you will leave with a greater understanding of what other work is available to comics, where to head next in your comedy career, and an additional 5-7 minutes of material.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

- Revisit and refine the skills learned in Intro to Standup
- Develop additional material via the “Writer’s Room” and your “Head Writer”
- Write for other comics and perform material written by other comics
- Execute script “punch up” in collaboration with a USC SCA screenwriter or similar
- Participate in constant, constructive evaluation of one’s comedic material and style
- “Try on” other points of view and styles
- Flesh out the characters in your act and bring them to life
- Practice hosting and headlining
- Explore other career opportunities for comics
- Identify a personal care plan, focusing on mental health and longevity in the business
- Self-produce a standup show in which to showcase your work

Readings

***Comedy Writing for Late-Night TV* by Joe Toplyn – REQUIRED – we will use this book in class**

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Crying by Carol Leifer (Audiobook recommended)

The History of Stand-Up by Wayne Federman (recommended)

Auditing Student Policy

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

Recommended Preparation

STAY HEALTHY, wear your mask in high-risk situations and wash your hands.

I am not offering Zoom participation this semester. You must perform live, in class.

Come to each class, on time, prepared to perform.

Come willing to put in the time and focus needed to evolve as a comic

We do not officially take a break during class, but you may use the restroom when you need to.

Course Notes on Attendance

Succeeding as a comic requires self-motivation. I expect Standup 2 comics to be even more committed to their craft and progress. Like Intro to Standup, 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. You may make up 15 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. If you are not in class to perform, you will need to make up those points.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment:

Grades are not dictated by the success of comedy presentations 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 and assignments, Midterm, Show, and Final. I provide options to make up 15 points total per semester. More details listed under “Make-Up Options”.

Be advised: auditing students observe but do not participate.

Participation (15% of total grade):

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

Exercises and Assignments (32% of total grade):

- Due to the live performance aspect of standup comedy, exercises and homework assignments will be presented in class, no video submissions accepted
- If you cannot commit to being in this class, on time, please wait for another semester
- Student invests fully, striving to make a connection with the crowd and improve over time
- If a student misses an exercise or assignment, student accepts that they have missed their opportunity to perform (stage time) and will lose points which will impact their grade

Midterm (15% of total grade):

- The Midterm presentation is worth 15 points
- No video submission of presentation accepted, except example video requirement
- If you miss the Midterm, you lose 15 points, which will greatly impact your grade
- The policy for tardiness/leaving early (pg. 4) applies to the Midterm, as well

Shows (30% of total grade):

- You must perform in the Show, it is worth 15 points
- You must contribute to the producing of the show, it is worth 5 points
- You may choose to do less time, but let’s talk about it before you decide

Final (8% of total grade):

- The Final is a paper worth 10 points, due at the beginning of the 2-hour Final period and must be at least 500 words.
- The Final will be submitted electronically, via Blackboard discussion board.
- Tech problems happen during Finals week, please plan ahead. No late papers accepted.
- Not handing in a paper will result in a loss of 10 points, which will impact your grade.

Make-up options:

- If you miss an exercise, assignment, or presentation, you may make up 15 points.
- You must post your make-up work via the specific discussion board on Blackboard by Thursday, April 28th at 11:59pm. Board closes at Midnight, no late posts accepted.
- You may make up 8 points by doing a NON-USC booked standup show.
- You may make up 6 points by doing a USC booked standup show.
- You may make up 4 points by doing an open mic anywhere.
- You must record your set and photograph the space; video will count as both.
- You must post both items AND a hearty paragraph (5 sentences) to the specific discussion board on Blackboard.
- Technical/posting issues will result in a loss of points, leave time to figure it out.
- You may make up 4 points by *observing the speakers* in Wayne's class, Mondays, 6-7:50pm and posting a screenshot and two full paragraphs (10 sentences) to the specific discussion board on Blackboard. Date and times of speakers, TBD.
- You may make up 2 points by *observing* Wayne's class and posting a picture and full paragraph (5 sentences) to the entire class, via the discussion board on Blackboard.
- You must email Wayne before you drop into his class. Waynefed@usc.edu
- You may make up 2 points by watching a standup show and posting a picture and full paragraph (5 sentences) to the discussion board on Blackboard.
- Make-up points cannot take you over 100 points, 100 points is the maximum.

Exercises and Assignments	Points	% Of Grade
Week 1, in-class improvised exercise	1	1
Week 2, 1 st assignment: First Set	2	2
Week 3, in-class exercise: Characters	3	3
Week 4, 2 nd assignment: Late Night Monologue	4	4
Week 5, in-class exercise: Writer's Room-Pitching	3	3
Week 6, 3 rd assignment: Second Set	4	4
MIDTERM Presentation: Comedy in The Style Of	15	15
Week 8, in-class exercise: Writer's Room-Punch Up	4	4
Week 9, One-On-One Via Zoom	1	1
Week 10, 4 th assignment: Joke Dump and Improvised Sets	5	5
Week 11, 5 th assignment: Writer's Room-Head Writer	7	7
Week 12, 6 th assignment: Third Set	6	6
Week 13, 7 th assignment: Rehearsal for Off-Campus Show	7	7
Week 14, 8 th assignment: SELF-PRODUCED OFF-CAMPUS SHOW	20	20
Week 15 (4/26), 9 th assignment: Rehearsal for On-Campus Show	10	10
Week 15 (4/27), 10 th assignment: USC ON-CAMPUS SHOW	10	10
FINAL: Paper Due: Critical Analysis, Self	8	8
TOTAL:	100	100

Grading 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

Further Grading Notes:

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a “W”, April 7th. I will discuss your work at any time.
- Auditing students attend class strictly as an observer and do not participate.
- Students joining the class weeks 2 or 3 must still make up the earlier week’s points.

Assignment Submission Policy

This is a live performance class, no video submissions of presentations or exercises.

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.

ATTENDANCE

Absences:

Developing standup material and style depends on consistent writing (usually as homework) and “getting up” (performing in class). Each class helps you build and refine material over time. **Be advised: if you miss a class, points awarded that day for performing your stand up material in class and being an active, supportive audience member will be lost.** I provide make-up options should you need to miss a class, or two. But things happen, save missing class for emergencies.

Tardiness/leaving early:

Everyone gets up each class. Names are picked “lottery” style. When you are late or leave early it is unprofessional, disruptive, and unsupportive. Committing to this class means being here from 6pm to 7:50pm. **If you arrive after 6:05pm you will lose your participation point for the day.** Comics arriving late are put at the end of the lottery and might not get up, depending on time. I take the late people last, in the order they arrived. Comics choosing to leave early lose their participation point and risk not getting picked before they wish to leave, losing all the points for the day. I do, however, try my best to get you all up. I realize things happen and will try to make time for you, but this class is full, only 2 hours now, and we have a lot to cover. Be mindful of days that have more points, like the Midterm. I end class at 7:40pm to give homework. Everyone who comes to class on time and stays the duration will get up. Anyone who is late/leaving early may or may not get up, depending on time and running order. If you are not in class for the homework, please refer to this syllabus or contact another comic. Please do not email me asking what the homework is. It is all here in this syllabus. Make the choice to be in class on time, to stay the whole class, and remain aware of what is required of you.

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.)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 Jan. 11	Warm-up, introductions, discussion of syllabus (our contract) In-class improvised exercise and stage time	Begin reading Toplyn book Homework: 3- minute set, max.	Due week 2
Week 2 Jan. 18	First assignment* - First Set Students perform first 3-minute set Plus, brainstorming show and creating tasks	<i>Homework:</i> <i>Study character comics for discussion</i> Read ch. 5 Toplyn	Discussion and exercise week 3
Week 3 Jan. 25	Characters in Comedy Fleshing out the people in your act In-class discussion, exercise, and stage time Discussion of monologue joke writing	Homework: Bring in 3- minute topical monologue	Due week 4
Week 4 Feb. 1	Second assignment* - Late Night Monologue Please bring in a 3-minute monologue inspired by news headlines, cultural events, and pop culture within the last 7 days.	Homework: Bring in 3-5 ideas that could use some help or need fleshing out	Due week 5
Week 5 Feb. 8	Writer's Room: Pitching Students break into smaller groups and pitch on each other's jokes Writing session followed by stage time	Homework: Work on second set 4 minutes, max.	Due week 6
Week 6 Feb. 15	Third assignment* - Second Set Students bring in 4 minutes of best "bits" from weeks 1-5, creating a "set" Midterm discussion and assignments	Homework: Receive comic and prepare Midterm presentation	MIDTERM week 7
Week 7 MIDTERM Feb. 22	Midterm* - Comedy in the Style of In class 6, you isolated an area in your own work that needs improvement. In class 7, students present a 4-minute comedy set inspired by the point of view and persona of a comic that embodies that strength. You are not writing for them but using their style to lead you into new territory, previously uncharted as an artist, creating new and fearless, deeper material. Use of wardrobe, props, anything that helps you embody the style of this comic is mandatory. This is a fun one!	Homework: Bring in material of any kind that needs better jokes Read ch. 6 Toplyn	Discussion/ex. Week 8

Week 8 March 1	Writer's Room: Punch Up In-class exercise, break into smaller groups Writing session followed by stage time	<i>Homework: Compile list of questions, concerns Make appt. to meet with me one-on-one RSVP via Google Sheets</i>	One-on-one Zoom meetings week 9
Week 9 March 8	One-on-One meetings with me via Zoom Please come at your assigned time	Homework: Read Toplyn Ch. 7, 8	Due week 10
Week 10 March 22	Forth assignment* - "Joke Dump" and Improvised Sets	Homework: Receive your comic and get them 3-minutes of new material, by Sunday, 12pm	Due week 11
Week 11 March 29	Fifth assignment* - Writer's Room: Head Writer Students "tailor" and perform the material written for them, 5 minutes max.	Homework: Work on third set, 5 minutes max.	Due week 12
Week 12 April 5	Sixth assignment* - Third Set Students present third set, 5 minutes of best jokes from weeks 1-9.	Homework: Bring in 1st show set for rehearsal	Due week 13
Week 13 April 12	Seventh assignment* - Rehearsal w/hosts For Off-Campus Show The act returns in an advanced, playful form, receiving feedback and notes Emphasis on beginning and ending, handling "mistakes", nerves, boredom, etc. Finish last-minute production tasks and tidbits	Homework: Continue adjusting and improving set for 1st show off-campus Complete all tasks and Promote show	Due week 14
Week 14 April 19	Eighth assignment* Off-Campus Show!	Homework: Assess and make final adjustments for 2nd show on-campus Complete all tasks and Promote show	Due week 15 (Makeup work is due April 28, by 11:59 pm)

Week 15 April 26 April 27	Ninth assignment* Discussion after off-campus show Finalize act Rehearsal for On-Campus Show with Hosts Finish last-minute show tasks and tidbits Tenth assignment* On-Campus Show!	Homework: Prep for show on 4/27/23 Write self- assessment Final paper	Due by the beginning of your Final Period----- Wednesday May 3, 2023 7-9pm
FINAL May 3 7-9pm	Final* Critical Analysis, Self – Paper Due Written paper due, self-assessing the student’s overall progress through the class; including personal challenges, strengths, weaknesses, victories, and future plans 500 words minimum Submitted via Blackboard		Hooray, you did it! Thank you for giving your all to this process!!

Off-Campus Class Show on April 19th:

Together, you will secure the location, produce, promote, and perform a class show during your regular class period. Where? How? Comics devote a good portion of their time finding ways to perform. Being a good “hustler” will get you far in comedy, get creative!

On-Campus Class Show on April 27th:

USC Standup Comedy Showcase is on campus, the final week of classes
 Location decided by SDA

KEY DATES <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20231/calendar/>

- Jan. 27: Last day to add or drop this class without a “W”, or to select “P/NP”
- Jan. 27: Last day to choose “P/NP”
- Feb. 24: Last day to drop without a mark of “W” on official transcript only
- Feb. 24: Last day to change P/NP to a letter grade
- March 12-19: Spring recess
- April 7: Last day to drop this class with a mark of “W”
- April 28: Spring semester classes end
- April 29-May 2: Study days
- May 3-10: Final examinations
- May 11: Spring semester ends
- May 12: Commencement

Additional Notes

- **No eating or drinking is allowed during class at any time, per USC SDA guidelines.**
- **You may drink water when you need to.**
- **No social media, texting, computer work.** Phones are for sets and recording only.
- **We do not take a break, but you may use the restroom as needed.**

Welcome back, dear students, and thank you for working with me once again!
Together you’ll take the next step in your journey, get better as comics, try new things,
and feel more confident about your career and where to go next.

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. 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.symplcity.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.