

**School of Cinematic Arts  
The John Wells Division of  
Writing for Screen and Television**

**CTWR 572 (19421) PRACTICUM FOR DIRECTING ACTORS FOR FILM  
2 UNITS  
FALL 2023**

Instructor: Wendy Phillips  
Class Schedule: Thursday 9am – 12:50pm  
Class Location: Zemekis Studio A  
Office Hours: TBD  
Contact Information: [wphillip@usc.edu](mailto:wphillip@usc.edu)

**Course Objective:**

To increase writer/director's comfort in communicating with actors.  
To be able to give clear, effective direction to one's actors.  
Hopefully, to deepen the writer/director's relationship with both the script and the actors.  
For all of us to have some fun!

**Course Description:**

3 sets of scene work:

In the first set students act in 1-2 page 2 person scenes from a produced film or TV episode and are directed by the instructor. In the second set students direct each other in 1-2 page 2 person scenes from a produced film or TV episode. In the final project students direct each other in 2-3 page scenes written by the students.

Explanation of well-known approaches to script analysis.

Basic physical acting exercises to free the imagination and give a sense of play.

The use of film clips to demonstrate acting techniques.

**Suggested Course Reading:**

Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television by Judith Weston.

**Grading Criteria:**

Written assignments can be emailed to Wendy Phillips at [wphillip@usc.edu](mailto:wphillip@usc.edu) on or before the due date. Students should also bring a hard copy of homework assignments to use in class.

5% Memorization

10% Scene One

20% Scene Two

15% Pop Up Scenes

15% Final Project Performance

25% Final Project Screenplay & Direction

10% Participation

As per Writing Division policy the following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

A	100% to 94%	C	76% to 73%
A-	93% to 90%	C-	72% to 70%
B+	89% to 87%	D+	69% to 67%
B	86% to 83%	D	66% to 63%
B-	82% to 80%	D-	62% to 60%
C+	79% to 77%	F	59% to 0%

### **Expectation of Professionalism:**

All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

### **Internet Policy:**

Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

### **Recording Devices:**

You may not record lectures or workshops without the consent of the instructor.

### **Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:**

Cell phone use will not be permitted during classroom hours. No texting. Laptop computers may be used for note taking during specified periods only.

### **Writing Division Attendance Policy:**

"This class is a workshop and your participation in the discussion is important. Participation includes full involvement in, and contribution to, class discussion, as well as reading (in advance at times; see schedule) the assignments of your colleagues and offering thoughtful, constructive comments.

Class attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Tardiness is unprofessional and disrespectful to the class. Two late arrivals equal one full absence. Two unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by a half grade point (Ex. A to A-) Any further unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered another two thirds of a point (ex: B to a C+) for each absence .

Excused absences can include, but are not limited to: illness, both physical and mental; death of a loved one; personal emergency; sporting events (for Student-Athletes) or other university-sponsored activities; religious holidays, and so on.

If you find you must miss class due to personal emergency or personal crisis, please contact your professor as soon as possible so they can assist you in finding the appropriate University care and guidance. Your health and well-being are of utmost importance to the Wells Writing Division and to your Faculty.

In addition, due to current Covid protocols, if you are feeling ill, without time to test before class, please notify your instructor, do not attend class and get a test. If you

test positive, inform your instructor and quarantine for the Health Department's designated period of time."

### **Class Schedule:**

Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

#### Week 1: August 24

Introduction to course, syllabus, myself.

Brief introduction of students.

Warm-up exercises

Cold reading: emphasis on "talking and listening".

Break (at the appropriate time).

Assignment: Scenes 1A and 1B

Various 1-2 page scenes from Film or TV for 2 students, workshopped by me.

"What are you really saying?"

"What are you really hearing?"

"What is really going on?"

#### Week 2: August 31

Discuss concept of "personalization" with it's different approaches and exercises.

Warm-up exercises.

Discuss Scenes 1A.

Break (at the appropriate time).

#### Week 3: September 7

Discuss "Scenic Structure & Script Analysis (objectives, beats, given circumstances, actions, personalization)".

Warm-up exercises.

Discuss Scenes 1B.

Break (at the appropriate time).

#### Week 4: September 15

Discuss "Final Project": 2-3 page 2 person scenes written and directed by students - acted by students. Emphasis on relationship.

Warm-up exercises.

Scenes 1A – "On Feet".

Discuss "Pop Up Scenes": Various 1-2 page scenes from Film or TV to be directed in future classes by assigned student/directors using students as actors. Emphasis on utilizing previously discussed acting techniques.

Break (at the appropriate time).

#### Week 5: September 21

Warm-up exercises.

Scenes 1B – "On Feet".

Discuss "Organic Approach to Blocking" using scenes 1A & 1B as examples.

Perform 2 Pop-ups

Break (at the appropriate time).

Assignment: Scenes 2A & 2B.

Various 2-3 page scenes from TV or film for 2 students workshopped by me.

Week 6: September 28  
Warm-up exercises  
Discuss Scenes 2A  
Perform 2 “Pop-Up” Scenes.  
Break (at the appropriate time).

Week 7: October 5  
Warm-up exercise.  
Discuss Scenes 2B  
Perform 2 “Pop-Up” Scenes.  
Break (at the appropriate time).

Week 8: October 12  
NO CLASS – Fall Recess

Week 9: October 19  
Warm-up exercise.  
Scenes 2A “On Feet”.  
Perform 3 “Pop-Up” Scenes.  
Assignment: Final Projects: Groups A, B & C.  
Break (at the appropriate time).

Week 10: October 26  
Warm-Up exercise.  
Scenes 2B “On Feet”.  
Perform 3 “Pop-Up” Scenes.  
Break (at the appropriate time).

Week 11: November 2  
Perform 4 “Pop-Up” Scenes.  
Rehearse Final Project: Group A.

Week 12: November 9  
Perform Final Project Group A.  
Rehearse Final Project Group B.

Week 13: November 16  
Perform Final Project Group B.  
Rehearse Final Project Group C.

Week 14: November 23  
NO CLASS – Thanksgiving.

Week 15: November 30  
Perform Final Project Group C

Finals Week

## **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).

### **A.I Policy**

The uses of generative Artificial Intelligence to create narrative continue to evolve throughout the media workplace. However, it is vital that before relying on AI to assist in aspects of storytelling that we learn to source and execute our work via our own unique imagination.

Creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course. All assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

## **Support Systems:**

*Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*  
[engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](https://engemannshc.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 Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

[engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) / Title IX - (213) 740-5086*

[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of 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.

*Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation 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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710*

[studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or violence against person or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail [diversity@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:diversity@cinema.usc.edu). You can also report discrimination based on a protected class here <https://equity.usc.edu/harassment-or-discrimination/>

### **Disruptive Student Behavior:**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

<p><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> <b>FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX</b></p>
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