

THTR 423: Magic
Units: 2
Fridays
Time: 10:00am - 12:50pm

Location: KDC 241

Instructor: Matt Felten
Office Hours: By Appointment
Contact Info: felten@usc.edu
Cell: 336.671.2478
(will reply within 48hrs)
Teaching Assistant: none

Course Description

Magic is an art that is universal in that we all experience it the same way. Astonishment is the same in any language. In this class you'll not only be learning skills and techniques but also the theories and histories of magic to help teach you how and most importantly why magic works. We'll be learning the history of magic from its earliest historical representations to present day.

Magic is a performance art and this is a performance class. Whether you are a performance major or not, you will be expected to perform magic in front of people. The course will focus on the practice and performance of Close-up Magic and Stand-up/Parlor Magic. Your performance is expected to be theatrical as you will perform it from the point of view of either yourself, a character, or as part of a duo or trio ensemble.

Learning Objectives

1. To learn the Skill of Magic! - Students will gain familiarity and ability with a variety of magic tricks including cards, coins, rubber bands, ropes, and other objects.
2. To present the Skill of Magic in the context of a character, presentation, and/or scenario. These scenarios will be solo, duo, or trios of performers and could be in a dramatic or comedic structure.
3. To learn about the History of Magic. We will be reading the book, *The Illustrated History of Magic* (hardcover Edition) by Milbourne and Maurine Christopher. You will be creating group or solo presentations of certain chapters in front of the group about the different forms of magic, performers, and the historical and societal impacts of the craft of magic.
4. To be able to risk failure in front of others and learn from it. Learning the Skill of Magic is hard. Learning to present magic in an authentic way is even harder. We will fail in front of each other a lot this semester. Students will leave the class with new tools and approaches

to presentation and public speaking. "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." - Samuel Beckett

Prerequisite(s): none

Co-Requisite(s): none

Concurrent Enrollment: none

Recommended Preparation: What was the first time you were exposed to magic? What was your reaction?

Course Notes: I will use Blackboard to distribute supplemental reading material as well as recordings of demonstrations from class. These will be posted in the content section and I will notify you when new additions are made.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

n/a

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required: *The Illustrated History of Magic (hardcopy Edition)* by Milbourne and Maurine Christopher (a pdf version will be made available on the first day of class)

Supplementary materials include:

1. Two decks of standard poker size playing cards. One red, one blue (or contrasting back designs/colors).
2. Magicians' close-up pad (11" x 16"). (optional)
3. Four half dollar size (1.2" diameter) or dollar size metal washers (1.5" diameter). These can be purchased at any Home Depot or hardware store. You can also bring four half dollar coins if you own or can find them though they are rather hard to come by.
4. 4- size 19 rubber bands
6. 6' cotton rope (Uday makes some great rope for magicians)

I will tell you the week before, which materials to bring for the following class though it's a good idea to bring all materials to every class as you may want to work on something not being covered that day.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

1. Each class will be split into three sections: Performance/Show and Tell, Magic History discussions, and Learning Magic Tricks/Techniques. Engaging in discussions and demonstrating during Show and Tell (showing what you've been practicing in front of class) will count toward your participation score.
2. Most weeks (with some exceptions), one to three magic tricks or techniques will be taught in class. They will then be rehearsed over the following week and performed as a "show and tell" in the next class.
3. Practice: You will be expected to practice the techniques taught in class 4 times a week for at least 20 mins each session. You will keep a log of your practice sessions that will include video.
4. Each week you will be expected to read 1-2 chapters of the book: *The Illustrated History of Magic* which we will discuss in class the following week. I will assign other reading throughout the semester as well, which will be made available through PDFs in the content section of Blackboard.
5. Performance Assignments: There will be four performance assignments/presentations: Solo, Duo/Trio, Group/Solo History Presentation, and The Final (which will be a performance).

Grading Breakdown

Including the above assignments, students will be graded overall as follows

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Participation	15	15
Practice Log	15	15
Assignment 1	20	20
Assignment 2	20	20
Historical Magic Presentation	10	10
Final Performance	20	20
Total	100	100

Grading Scale (Example)

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

Performance Assignment Rubrics

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Point of view/Character	20	20
Scripting	20	20
Audience Engagement	20	20
Was it Magical?	20	20
Technique	20	20
TOTAL	100	100

Assignment Submission Policy

You must be in class during the scheduled performances and presentations in order to receive credit.

Grading Timeline

Grades will be posted after the subsequent performance/presentation and before the following class. You can always ask me about your grade before or after class.

Additional Policies

Attire: Dress with the thought in mind that you will be getting up in front of the class to perform on a regular basis. Don't wear anything that would limit your movement physically or due to modesty. There may be times where I will ask you to bring a specific article of clothing to class (if you own it) such as a jacket or pants with multiple pockets. I will tell you the week before what to bring for the following class.

Attendance

You are required to attend every class unless you have been granted an approved excused absence. Unexcused absences will result in receiving a 0 in participation for class that day and will affect your final grade.

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Use of AI Generators

Since 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.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. 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 relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

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.

Course Schedule: Breakdown

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Discuss Syllabus Course Overview Demonstration Learn Technique	Practice the techniques taught in class	
Week 2	Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 1 - 2 Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 3	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 3 - 4 Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 4	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 5 - 6 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log First Performance - Solo Cards Deadline to Submit partner requests for Second Performance
Week 5	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 7 - 8 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 6	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 9 - 10 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log

Week 7	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 11 - 12 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 8	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 13 - 14 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 9	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 15 - 16 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log Second Performance (mid terms) - Duo/Trio Deadline to Submit Partner and Topic Requests for Magic History Presentation and Final Performance
Week 10	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 17 - 18 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 11	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapter 19 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 12	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Read Chapters 21 + 23 to be discussed next week Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 13	Book Discussion Show and Tell Learn Technique/Effect Workshop	Begin/Continue to work on Magic History Presentation Practice the techniques taught in class	Practice Log
Week 14	THANKSGIVING BREAK	THANKSGIVING BREAK	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 15	History Presentations Workshop	Prep for final show	Magic History Presentations - Solo or group
Week 16	Workshop	Final Show Dress Rehearsal	Practice Log LAST DAY OF CLASS
FINAL			Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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 Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

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

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7

days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086
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
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101
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
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
Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.