

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 464: An Actor's Reel (Section 001-63070R)

Units:2.0

Fall 2023/Fridays/3-4:50pm

Location: DRC -room 105

Instructor: Adam Chambers

Office Hours: Per request/Reach out and we'll discuss

Contact Info: adamcham@usc.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to develop an honest understanding of all fundamental creative and business elements which are essential to an actor's portfolio. By using the actor's demo reel as a preparatory baseline, we'll explore all areas of the "business" end of "show business" and uncover truths and myths about what is necessary to contend in today's artistic marketplace. The course intends to properly set a strong philosophical base and rigorously engage the actor so they feel confident in assembling their own personal, unique, specific and dynamic portfolio that will become the foundational marketing toolkit of their career.

Learning Objectives

- We will be creating our own original work and work for others through a deep dive into our brand and will really explore to find their through line and what they have to bring to each role they will play.
- Understand the various positions (agent, manager, casting director, etc.) involved in an actor's career, how they function, and how they use portfolio tools (headshot, reel, etc.) to aide in getting work or auditions for actors.
- We will watch and discuss a myriad of current demo reels and various other marketing materials and discuss their effectiveness.
- Explore on-camera acting techniques and what is the most effective in the form of creating a making a reel.
- We will work on various scenes and monologues to understand specifics that make each actor's work unique and how this information must translate in their marketing materials.
- Rehearse and tape monologues that may be used as the initial base of the actor's reel.
- Have complete knowledge of the day-to-day of working actors, covering auditioning, physical and mental health, financial responsibilities and supplemental work.
- Actors will learn more about the business side of the acting and what tools they need to help get auditions and what individual work they will need to do. (ex:Pictures, Resume, Reels, Websites)
- Actors will also be given the opportunity to ask questions to other people in the business as I will be bringing in guests to speak from time to time so they may get some other perspectives and some may get the chance to perform for some of them.
- Actors will be lead in emotional availability work to really explore the range they are capable of getting to.

- Actors will really explore their types and find their through line and what they have to bring to each role they will play.
- Actors will work on even creating some of their own work so they can see how that helps them get the auditions they want.

A Note From Adam: As a working actor and director I want to empower you to start seeing yourself as a business and how much power we actually have in that. Come ready to work and explore and let me help you find the best version of yourself so that we are leading with that in all of our work. Some schedules may need be adjusted to outside guess schedules but I will be giving you the perspective of real industry people. I don't believe we teach creative but we must allow for time to be creative. Consider this the time to really work on what you want.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Digital camera, mobile phones or tablets are desirable for easy mobility and access. Basic editing software(ie iMovie, Movie Maker, etc.), access to basic sound and lighting equipment may also be useful, but *not* required.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Participation is key. This is your career. If you treat it like a hobby then that is all it will ever be. So you must attend class and put in that effort. Because sweat equity is the back bone of what we have in this business. Who works hard and is willing to do it again and again.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Performnaces	40	40
Attendance	15	15
Participation	15	15
Professional Behavior	15	15
Final	15	15
TOTAL	100	100

Performances- How each performance is performed. Etc, memorization, choices, commitment. Is improvement happening.

Attendance- Tardy attendance if less than 15 minutes will result in half point deduction from the attendance grade for the day. A tardy arrival of more than 15 minutes will result in no points for attendance recorded for the day.

Participation- Engaged in class, asking questions, trying each an every activity fully.

Professional Behavior- How each student speaks with one another and the instructor, how they dress for the roles, how they take direction. Coomunication.

Final- The final performance.

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

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be discussed in detail at the end of each class period. Assignments will be either emailed, uploaded, or presented in class per Adam's instruction.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date & time. Grades on late assignments will be deducted. If an assignment is late it is deducted 15% for that assignment. Every week after that its late the assignment is deducted another 15% per week its late. Some classes will have particular workshops/activities that are done only in class. It is your responsibility to communicate with the instructor or other students to see what the missed assignments were or will be and to coordinate with the instructor how or when you plan to make up the missed work.

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](#).

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 with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course. I will often give you feedback after performances in the class directly but that is not a guaranteed direct reflection of your grade.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

A note from Adam: Questions are the best way to learn something. So please don't be afraid to ask anytime you have one. I will leave room in the course for this so please be aware that questions may move some things around and could extend classes into the following weeks. We also have to leave room for the possibility of not getting to everyone in one class and it extending into the beginning of another class.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 8/25/23	-Intro to class - What to expect -How to make acting long term -What has you stuck?	This is a lecture day with opportunity for questions.	

Weeks 2-4 9/1/23 9/8/23 9/15/23	-Questions from day 1 -Reels -Headshots -Type cast -Through Line -Who are you? -Financials -Sites	-Enneagram test -Take pictures -Thoughts of characters -Reel you like	-You will be given the link to the free test that week. You must bring in the given info you find the day of class for an in person discussion -Bring in pictures -Bring in ideas of roles -Bring in sample of reels you like.
Weeks 5-7 9/22/23 9/29/23 10/6/23	-Writing for ourselves -Writing for others -Focused on you	-Creating one original scene focused on you. -Creating one original scene focused on someone else.	-Shoot during or outside of class but by the 10/6 we will review all material. -Prep for the next class with already written work.
Week 8 10/20/23	-Already produced material	You will be presenting in person a scene from something already made and how you intend to shoot it.	Memorized pieces are due day of class and in person. Along with a plan on how to execute.
Week 9 10/27/23	-Mockumentary role	You will be presenting an original character in a mockumentary. Funny or dramatic and how to shoot it.	Memorized pieces are due day of class and in person. Along with a plan on how to execute.
Week 10 11/3/23	-Review in Viewpoints and an emotional exercise	Students will be given a lesson in choices and using the viewpoints method but also a lesson in how to tap into emotional availability.	
Week 11 11/17/23	-Guest Speaker	We will be having a guest come to class to speak with the class about audition and we will review some of the self tapes with them.	Nothing needed to prepare but thoughtful questions.
Week 12 12/1/23	-Final touches - New pictures	We will be giving a chance to make any adjustments we want to our finals and ask any last questions. -Taking pictures again	
Week 13 Final Monday 12/11/23 2pm-4pm	-Final presentaion	Presenting all 3 scenes and at least 1 headshot	All we be due by this day.

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.

Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.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

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.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 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.