

**THTR 515c: Advanced Movement  
Clown**  
Units: 2  
Fall 2023, Monday/Wednesday, 10am – 11:50pm

**Location:** PED 202

**Instructor:** Zachary Steel  
**Office:** JEF 208  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 9am-10am, by appointment  
**Contact Info:** [zsteel@usc.edu](mailto:zsteel@usc.edu)

### Course Description

This class will explore the art of theatrical clowning and how it supports all live performance. We will investigate what it means to be on stage in performance and give the student a solid understanding of what it takes to make people laugh. We will discover what makes each individual student funny in their own singular, inimitable way, and come away celebrating our greatest failures with the same enthusiasm as we do our most triumphant triumphs. Underneath all of it is the truth. Comedy isn't comedy unless it is rooted in a deep understanding and experience of the human condition. Through this exploration, we begin to see the similarities between comedy and tragedy, the pathetic and the sublime, the sacred and the profane.

This class will challenge students to fully give in to the present moment, to redirect their focus to the relationship between performer and audience, to examine the threshold of what can be done with our bodies and voices in performance, to confront preconceptions about one's own individual capabilities and discover what makes each individual funny, to celebrate one's greatest failures and experience the magnitude of true openness in front of an audience.

### Learning Objectives

- To create original comedic material based on our in-class clown work
- To constructively critique the work of other classmates as well as professional work
- To apply the criticism from the class and from myself to the student's classwork
- To develop one's own sense of what makes them funny.

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

For required reading and viewing please see breakdown of class schedule. All viewing and reading should be carried out **PRIOR** to the class for which is it indicated.

### Description and Assessment of Assignments

**Clown Piece** – an original piece of material, with or without text, generated from the class work around clown technique and pathos. We will utilize the concepts of “separations” and “bafflement.” The piece will be presented in at least two rounds, the second round having been adjusted, augmented based on the feedback from the class.

**Final Culmination** – a remounting of work done throughout the semester...

Each assignment will receive a grade out of 100.

*Grading Scale for SDA:*

Excellent: A (4) = 100-95 A- (3.7) = 94-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-87 B (3) = 86-83 B- (2.7) = 82-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-77 C (2) = 76-73 C- (1.7) = 72-70

Poor: D (.7-1.3) = 60's

Failing: F (0) = 59 and below

A = work of excellent quality; clear understanding of class material coupled with original and creative insight

B = good quality; class material has been understood clearly

C = average quality; class material generally understood, gaps in understanding remain

D = below average quality; identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material

F = inadequate work; gaps in completion of work, poor understanding of class material

Further Grading Notes:

*When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been excellent or good and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average or poor attendance and participation.*

### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Clown Piece	100	30
Culmination	100	40
Participation	100	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
TOTAL		

### 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

### Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments are performance based and will be presented in class.

### AI Policy

I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to utilize it in your class work in a way that supports your growth and education. Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.]
- For more information on how to cite or credit AI, visit <https://libguides.usc.edu/generative-AI>

### Additional Policies

- 4 excused absences and/or lateness for the semester. Late=absence. You are kept out of class if you are late. Grace period=5minutes. You have 5 minutes where the class will hold and wait for you.
- If you are out with COVID you must have tested positive. At home Rapid tests are now the University standard. You do not need to wait for PCR.
- Half a point marked down once a student reaches their limit per absence/late day per semester. For example: Absence/lateness #5 you have an A- at best. #6 B+ etc.
- The minimum passing grades for graduate credit is a "C". Students who receive a B- in any course will be placed on probation for the following term.
- Students are responsible for making themselves available for rehearsal outside of class.
- No social media posting about class.

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

This is subject to change based on the specific pace and needs of the class.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction to the class, how this class works... -Introduction to Clown		
<b>Week 2</b>	Simple Clown Exercises		
<b>Week 3</b>	Simple Clown Exercises <b>MONDAY – NO CLASS:</b> Labor Day		
<b>Week 4</b>	Discussion on Clown Source Material Pathetic Clown Exercises	<i>Viewing of Clown Material, Youtube Playlist</i>	
<b>Week 5</b>	The Clown Show		
<b>Week 6</b>	The Clown Show		
<b>Week 7</b>	Clown Dynamics		
<b>Week 8</b>	Clown Dynamics		

<b>Week 9</b>	Clown Dynamics		
<b>Week 10</b>	Clown Exploration		
<b>Week 11</b>	Clown Exploration		
<b>Week 12</b>	Clown Material		
<b>Week 13</b>	Clown Material		
<b>Week 14</b>	Culmination Run <b>WEDNESDAY – NO CLASS:</b> Thanksgiving		
<b>Week 15</b>	Culmination Run		
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>FINAL CULMINATION –</b> See above for assignment description		Date to be determined by MFA Culmination schedule.

### **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 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](#).

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](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

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### **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.

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### **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>

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### **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](mailto: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.