THTR 290 Section 63000
Introduction to Medical Clowning
Units: 2
Term: Spring 2024
Day, Time: Wednesdays, 5-6:50pm

Location: PED 206

Instructor: Zachary Steel
Office: JEF 208
Office Hours: available by appointment
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Cell: 347-546-0298

Course Description

Clowning in hospitals and other healthcare settings is becoming an internationally established practice with research proving its efficacy with a variety of diverse populations. It provides children and adults alike with a sense of authority and control in a hospital environment that, by its nature, disempowers the patient. Medical Clowns have been shown to increase communication between the medical staff, children, and their caregivers; and to decrease tension and anxiety often resulting from physically intrusive procedures. They empower the patient by giving them control of the creative interaction in an environment where they otherwise might feel powerless. Play and laughter improves our quality of life, and medical clowning seeks, through a unique application of the discipline of the clown, to impact the children and the facilities that need it the most.

This course explores the practice of bringing clowns into places of healing (hospitals, trauma sites, etc.) for the purpose of improving the physical and mental well-being of those in need, and expanding their capacity for hope. Through practical studio work, we will be able to distill what it means for clowns to connect to their audience through play. We will explore environmental sensitivity, improvisation, active listening, and game play, all principles of clowning and all effective when engaging with a patient in a hospital. This course would be appropriate for artists who seek to utilize their talents for social change, for those entering the world of healthcare who seek to enhance their ability to engage with patients, or for anyone interested in exploring the healing powers of play.

Learning Objectives
- To understand the role of the clown in the healing process
- To develop a unique and personalized approach to clown/audience interaction based on play and improvisation.
- To implement the principles and methods of clowning in practical clown exercises
- To examine the efficacy of medical clowns from various international organizations

Prerequisite(s): n/a

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
All reading will be available as PDFs on Blackboard:
The Life Threatened Child and the Life Enhancing Clown by Donna Koller and Camilla Gryski
Still the Best Medicine: Even in a War Zone by Amnon Raviv
Drama therapy role theory as a context for understanding medical clowning by Pendzik

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Reading Responses – 1-2 page reflection on the reading assignment consisting of discoveries, revelations and connections to the work we do in class.

Clown Organization Report – 1-2 page report on research done on a specific organization currently practicing medical clown work.

Final – Mock hospital visits will be done in class, an opportunity to apply all the learned medical clown techniques and approaches.

-Reading Responses and Clown Organization Report will be turned in through Turnitin on Blackboard.
-All other assessments will be based on in-class work.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Reading Response #1	100	10
Reading Response #2	100	10
Reading Response #3	100	10
Clown Org Report	100	10
Class Work (Performance)	100	20
Participation	100	15
Final	100	25
TOTAL	700	100

Grading Scale
Grading Scale for SDA:
Excellent: A (4) = 100-94 A- (3.7) = 93-90
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
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.
If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W. I will be happy to discuss your work at any time.

Assignment Submission Policy
All written assignments will be turned in on Blackboard via Turnitin.

Grading Timeline
Grades will be generally posted within a week of the assignment's due date.

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.

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.

Additional Policies
- Please arrive promptly for class. Late arrivals disturb the learning of the whole class.
- There will be no unexcused absences. If you are not feeling well and can't make it to class, please let me know in advance.
- If you are absent for an extended period of time due to covid quarantine or other serious illness, we will work together to ensure the continuation of your educational experience.
- *No late assignments, projects, exams, papers, or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the teacher or unless exceptional circumstances occur.*
- No social media posting about 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 meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. 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 what prompts you used to get 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

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
Week 1 **1/10**	Class Introduction Basic Clown Exercises		
Week 2 **1/17**	Basic Clown Exercises		
Week 3 **1/24**	Clown Games – Simple Clown		
Week 4 **1/31**	Clown Games – Simple Clown		
Week 5 **2/7**	Reading Discussion Birth of the Clown	*The Life Threatened Child and the Life Enhancing* Clown by Donna Koller and Camilla Gryski (on blackboard)	***Due 2/6 @ 5pm: Reading Response #1*** *The Life Threatened Child and the Life Enhancing* Clown by Donna Koller and Camilla Gryski
Week 6 **2/14**	Clown Fashion Show		Bring in clown clothes for costume.
Week 7 **2/21**	Medical Clown Video Response and Discussion Clown Games – Hospital Room Initiations	*Link Video Playlist on Blackboard*	
Week 8 **2/28**	International Clown Organizations Discussion Clown Games – Hospital Room Initiations		***Due 2/27 @ 5pm:*** *International Clown Organizations Report*
Week 9 **3/6**	Reading Discussion Clown Roles	*Drama therapy role theory as a context for understanding medical clowning* by Pendzik	***Due 3/5 @ 5pm: Reading Response #2*** *Drama therapy role theory as a context for understanding medical clowning* by Pendzik
SPRING BREAK 3/11-3/17			
Week 10 **3/20**	Clown Roles		
Week 11 **3/27**	Clown Roles		
Week 12 **4/3**	Clown Initiations		

Week 13 4/10	Reading Discussion Clown Initiations	*Still the Best Medicine: Even in a War Zone* by Amnon Raviv (on blackboard)	***Due 4/9 @ 5pm: Reading Response #3*** *Still the Best Medicine: Even in a War Zone* by Amnon Raviv
Week 14 4/17	**NO CLASS** - Thanksgiving		
Week 15 4/24	Mock Hospital Visits		
FINAL 5/1	Mock Hospital Visits		**Final Date: May 1, 430pm-630pm**

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

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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.

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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
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.