

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 305a-63022-Directing

Units: 4

Spring 2024 Tues/Thurs 2-3:50

PED 205

Instructor: Ken Sawyer

Office Hours: By Appointment

Contact Info: kdsawyer@usc.edu

818 903 6017 (text)

www.kensawyerdirector.com

Course Description

Examination of basic directorial principles. Pre-production analysis and rehearsal procedures; relationship of the director to the writer, the design team, the producing team, and the actor. This course will actively examine the fundamental principles of directing for the stage. Topics covered in this course will include script analysis, practical approaches to staging, directorial presentation skills, techniques for communicating with actors and designers, rehearsal techniques, and the creation of the director's prompt book.

Learning Objectives

- 1) Acquire a basic understanding of the skills and procedures required of a stage director to effectively prepare and rehearse for a theatrical production
- 2) Incorporate and apply detailed analysis and preparation into an effective rehearsal process, in support and guidance of the actors' work, and in conjunction with the overall vision of a scene from a play.
- 3) Cultivate the leadership skills necessary in leading a group of actors and design team through an effective rehearsal process.
- 4) Gain practical experience in the role of director through:
 - a. Classroom exercises
 - b. In- class rehearsals
 - c. Director prompt book preparation
 - d. Exploration, application and utilization of methods explored in class prompt book guidelines and reading assignments
 - e. Presentation of scene-work directed by the student

Course Notes

All students in this class are required to act in other student-director scenes. Time and availability outside of class for director preparation and rehearsals as both director and as actor for other scenes is extensive, expected and required in order to succeed in this course. There will be a considerable amount of time spent WATCHING others work and requires your feedback for participation points – this is where you can learn a LOT – but it requires self motivation and focus - you will not be on your feet working every class. Like in the professional world outside of school only you can manage your desire, interest and commitment.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

[Blackboard help for students](#)

IT Services 213 -740 – 5555 or email consult@usc.edu

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Weekly reading will be:

- Distributed to insert in your director's notebook
- Placed in blackboard to read

All reading must be completed before the corresponding class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

All of the following assignments below must be completed thoroughly and in a timely fashion per established schedule.

Assignments and in-class work and presentations will be assessed accordingly and in direct relation to the grading rubrics per project and the rules and expectations presented in the full body of this syllabus. Grading Rubrics are posted on Blackboard.

All reading assignments lead into class discussion on the reading – engaging in, contributing to, and participating in the discussion will be both an assessment of your reading comprehension (completion of the assigned reading) and an assessment of a portion of the gradable component of *participation*.

Another aspect of assessment will be based on the demonstration of the student in directly applying the concepts and practices of the reading and the prompt book in their in - class work, rehearsals and scene presentations. Incorporating / applying that which is taught to OTHERS while observing others work into your own in class scene rehearsals and presentations is also expected.

Assignments and work will include:

1. Participate in the “discovery project” to the fullest in the randomly assigned roles
2. Conceive and direct a 2-3 minute scene based on a visual image selected by the student.
3. Direct a 5-8 minute scene from one of the five plays provided by the instructor
4. Conduct an in-class rehearsal and do a final presentation for all scenes.
5. Conduct oral directorial pitch for the image scene.
6. Conduct a minimum of two rehearsals per week outside of class time for all scenes.
7. Submit the following written documentation for the scenes :
 - a. Director prompt book, with completed sections per PDF guidelines
 - b. Written director's assessment for scenes to be included in your Director's Notebook
8. Show readiness and fully engaged participation in all class discussions and text readings as well as complete all assigned readings.
9. Provide fully engaged participation for all exploratory and analytical work.
10. Act in fellow director's scenes – required.
11. NOTE: I suggest organizing a “trio” for cast/ director that rotates in one rehearsal session to cover all three director projects when possible. Equal time must be given to each director in a rehearsal group session in the outside rehearsals. Set a timer.
12. Props and Costumes must be provided by the actors and directors for in class rehearsals and scene presentations – no “miming” objects please.
13. A daily artistic question will be asked during roll call. You are required to be present and participate in answering and/or discussing the topic at hand. If you are not present when your name is called and the question is asked...points will be deducted from your overall grade per each absence/tardiness.

Assessment of “Participation”

1. *Students are required to be present and be on time for all classes and scheduled sessions unless they are genuinely too ill to attend or affected by unavoidable personal or external circumstances. If the student has more than 2 absences during the course they will not be able to fulfill their ability to fully participate in class. Additionally, students must keep the teacher informed of any absence or late arrival IN ADVANCE. Failure to do so also constitutes a lack of participation and points will be deducted.*
2. *Appropriate rehearsal clothing and props for ALL EXERCISES AND IN CLASS REHEARSALS.*
3. Openness to new methods of working and eagerness to attempt them.
4. Constructive feedback on classmates’ presentations.
5. Energized support of all classmates’ work.
6. *Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of professor and fellow students on one’s own work.*
7. Meeting all assignment deadlines.
8. Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse outside class.

Grading Breakdown

1. **SCENE WORK** For each directed scene assignment, the student is expected to perform well in each of four categories:

- A. Follow directions of the assignment.
 - B. Lead a rehearsal that demonstrates skills being taught in class
 - C. Demonstrate that the scene is well prepared, and exciting to watch, and in service of a clear and vivid story
 - D. Display a creative physical use of the space and the actors through staging and ground plan choices, guiding of performances, and creative and economical design choices
- A Grading rubric for both in-class rehearsals and final presentations, director presentation and prompt book will be made available to review.

2. **DIRECTOR PITCH** Each directorial presentation must be no longer than 5 minutes and incorporate visual aids. Details will be discussed in class.

3. **WRITTEN WORK THAT ACCOMPANIES SCENE WORK** The student is expected to perform well in each of the following categories:

- A. Your prompt book must be neat, following the directions that are given, thoroughly documented, and show creative insights into text analysis and realization of directorial ideas on paper.
- B. A written self-assessment must include detailed working objectives and a clear description of the extent to which you achieved them.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Director Pitch- Image Scene	5	5
Scene work in- class rehearsal (2 @ 10 pts each)	20	20
Scene Presentation "Image Scene" (Mid Term)	20	20
Scene Presentation Scripted Scene (Final)	20	20
Prompt Book/Self Assessment (2 @ 10 pts each)	20	20
Daily artistic question	.5	15
TOTAL	100	100

****A complete and detailed director’s notebook with Daily Artistic Questions, notes on fellow classmates scenes, and reading projects CAN act as 15 points of extra credit when turned in at the end of the semester.****

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 Rubrics

All assignment rubrics will be available on Blackboard and when possible emailed to entire class.

Assignment Submission Policy

All written work turned in will contain the following or will not be accepted:

1. Your name
2. Course name, number, and section
3. Assignment label
4. Date
5. Must be stapled or in binder in orderly fashion

Due Dates

Reflected in schedule on following pages. All assigned due dates must be met on time with proper preparation. No late assignments will be accepted. Students absent from the presentation date without an official excused absence will receive a 0 for that portion of the assignment. All directors are required to have a back-up exercise or rehearsal plan to work on with the actor (s) if an actor is missing from in-class rehearsal portion of the project.

Absences/Tardiness

No absences or tardies are allowed, however I will allow each student two “mental health” days. These days may be scheduled in advance or may be taken with 24 hour notice. However due to the nature of the class you must make sure that any colleagues impacted by your absence are notified and that alternate arrangements are made so that the available partners can continue their assignments in your absence.

Note: If a deadline is missed because of a classmate/ project partner's unavailability, the available partner/s will not be penalized. If problems arise, a discussion with the professor with all involved must be arranged BEFORE the day of the scheduled scene or everyone will be held equally accountable.

Participation and Collaboration

I expect students who want to be in the classroom want to perform well. “Performing well” means focused participation in the classroom even as a “spectator”. The methods being explored in the reading, prompt book and in-class rehearsals are expected to be applied. I also expect students to communicate if they have questions about instructions or vocabulary. As the course moves quickly, you may have to attend an office hour in order to get your questions answered. But ask them.

Per schedule and rules previously stated. Per class schedule / at the time of presentation of various graded assignments. If a student is concerned about their grade or progress in class, they should make an appointment to discuss this with the professor. Midterm grades will reflect only a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" score.

MISSED WORK DUE TO EXCUSED ABSENCE

Because of the compacted schedule, ***you cannot make up a presentation, in-class rehearsal, or final scene rehearsal or scene presentation.*** Exceptions will not be made to this policy. Check your calendars to ensure that important dates in this class do not fall on important dates for you during the semester. Due to the nature of this workshop class; in-class participation (and any collaborative exercises done in class) cannot be made up. Homework assigned on the day of your absence can be obtained from one of your colleagues. I do not accept late work for any unexcused absence.

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE (As Director and Actor)

Being absent for an in-class *or from a scheduled out of class rehearsal is not acceptable.* Be early and ready to work for all rehearsals. Be responsible for creating a good working environment. Be respectful of others. **Set up agreed rehearsal times and honor them.** Any physical demands (intimate, violent) must be simulated and properly discussed and rehearsed so as not to endanger yourself, your actors & scene partners, or classmates. This includes the use of or throwing of properties. Weapons of any sort (real knives, guns etc...) are not to be used in scene work, ever. If your scene requires a weapon of any sort, discuss it with the professor. These policies apply to all in-class rehearsals and out of class rehearsals.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

1. *Respect the course and your colleagues.* Everything you do in class is reflected in your grade, especially your participation and collaboration with your colleagues. Please respect the studio space, your colleagues, and the working environment
2. No eating /no food allowed in class at any time
3. Please use restroom before class and during break, ***do not interrupt the flow of class with leaving studio*** unless for an emergency
4. If you are outside of our studio while class is in session for any reason – ***wait*** until the work that is happening in space is finished before you re-enter studio.
5. There is absolutely no technology allowed during class .No cellphones, no computers. no texting , no social media – **TURN THEM OFF AND PUT THEM AWAY UNLESS THEY ARE BEING USED AS A TOOL TO PRESENT YOUR SCENES**
6. Students must be in proper rehearsal clothes at the start of class if presenting a scene.
7. Please refrain from distracting unfocused unprofessional behavior during class – you are expected to practice the focused respectful behavior displayed in the professional world and in keeping with the mature professional culture of SDA. Behave as an observing participant

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Printed copies of all scenes, monologues and play scripts must be brought to every class meeting.
2. Correct props and costumes are expected for all in class rehearsal and scene presentations
3. Assembled prompt book in 3-ring binder must be utilized even if "in-process" for all in-class rehearsals – leading a rehearsal from a few loose script pages without the prompt book, and applicable work applied is not acceptable. No electronic copies (laptops, tablets, phones) may be used in class .
4. When participating as an actor wear appropriate rehearsal clothing for all in class rehearsals.
5. When participating as a director – appropriate props for all rehearsals must be provided – no pantomime or imaginary "air / space objects" please.
6. Openness to new methods of working and eagerness to attempt them.
7. In class active student analysis and commentary when requested.
8. Constructive feedback on classmates' presentations when requested. •
9. Energized support of all classmates' work.

10. Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of professor and fellow students on one's own work.
11. Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse outside class.

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 Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

NOTE: Since this is a live studio style class where we work on the craW live during class time this schedule is always subject to change
IMPORTANT: In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing, and other academic activities. **For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester.**

Week 1 1/9 Introduction. Course outline and expectations. Assignments given for “The Discovery Project”
1/11 “The Discovery Project” Design team assembled and casting

Week 2 1/16 “The Discovery Project” First Reads
1/18 “The Discovery Projects” Blocking

Week 3 1/23 “The Discovery Projects” Advanced Rehearsals
1/25 “The Discovery Projects” Presentations

Week 4 1/30 Director's Round Table
2/2 Preparing the director’s Image scenes, prompt book, and pitches

Week 5 2/6 Director pitches
2/8 Director pitches

Week 6 2/13 Observed rehearsals for Image Scenes
2/15 Observed rehearsals for Image Scenes

Week 7 2/20 Observed rehearsals for Image Scenes
2/22 Observed rehearsals for Image Scenes

Week 8 2/27 Observed rehearsals for Image Scenes
2/29 Observed rehearsals for Image Scenes

Week 9 3/5 Image Scene Presentations
3/7 Image Scene Presentations
Director’s Prompt Book Due

Week 10 3/12 Spring Break
3/14 Spring Break

Week 11 3/19 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes
3/21 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes

Week 12 3/26 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes
3/28 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes

Week 13 4/2 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes
4/4 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes

Week 14 4/9 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes
4/11 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes

Week 15 4/16 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes
4/18 Observed rehearsals for Scripted Scenes

4/23 Semester wrap up and finals troubleshooting
4/25 Begin Finals 5/2 Finals

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 (Video 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.

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.