

USC School of Dramatic Arts

SDA #305B Directing

Spring 2024 – Mon. and Wed. – 10:00a.m. until 11:50a.m.

Location: PED 208

Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer

Office: MCC 204

Office Hours: Mon. and Wed. 12:00 – 1:00 PM after class and/or by appointment please. Students are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to speak privately with the instructor about individual in-class progress

Contact Info: shroyer@usc.edu

Course Description

A continuation of the examination of basic directorial principles: Pre-production analysis, casting, rehearsal procedures; relationship of the director to actor; integration of technical aspects of production. Course focus will emphasize conception of a director's vision as well as deepening strength and confidence in the areas of communication and collaboration in the production process.

Course Objectives

- 1) To develop a production concept for a full theatrical performance
- 2) To actualize said concepts through classroom exercises and in the presentation of scene-work from published plays
- 3) To research, compile and present a director's book that documents and supports the artistic choices and processes used to actualize the presentation of scene-work

Learning Aspirations

- 1) To deepen the basic understanding of skills and procedures required of a stage director to mount a theatrical production as introduced in 305A.
- 2) To identify, cultivate and individualize the leadership skills necessary in the creation of an ensemble.
- 3) To explore the role of the director as a collaborative individual, able to articulate and shape vision while embracing the playwrights' intent, creativity of the design team and performing artists/actors.
- 4) To explore and codify the director's obligation to an audience.

Prerequisite(s): 305A

Co-Requisite (s): N/A

Concurrent Enrollment: N/A

Recommended Preparation: Courses in Varied Creative Endeavors

Course Notes, Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Required Texts:

- *A Sense of Direction*, William Ball
- *Play Directing*, Francis Hodge-Michael McClain
- *Notes on Directing, Lessons from a Director's Chair*, by Frank Hauser
- Script for your Vision Play
- *Steal Like An Artist*, by Austin Kleon (PDF available online)

Materials:

- A notebook
- Props, costumes and set pieces.

Assignments and Classwork

A. Admired Director Briefing: Assessment: Formative

- Briefing of a director you admire and why (can show a clip or images of their work if this helps make your point). This can be a theatre or film director whose work inspires you. Pick someone whose work you may emulate enough to study and find out how they “do what they do”. Due Wed. Jan 10th.

B. Vision Project: Assessment: Summative

- **Vision Play Selected and Greenlighted by Instructor:** Assessment: Formative
 - Choose a play that you will work on for the entirety of the semester. You will research the playwright, create a vision roadmap, cast, rehearse and present an excerpt of this as your culminating activity for 305B. Due Wed. Jan. 24th.
- **Vision Playwright Briefing:** Assessment: Formative
 - At the center collaboration is the playwright...our work begins with that artist. We will take this opportunity to know more of the playwrights (and their body of work) whose stories you are envisioning in 305b.
 - Talk to us about: Who influenced your playwright?
 - Prepare for a five-minute reading of your text exemplifying the playwright's use of language. Your classmates will be happy to be cast in the moment as the actors!
 - Due Jan. 29th, 31st, Feb. 5th, 7th
- **Vision Presentations.** Assessment: Formative
 - Comprised of the Cornerstones of Success.

- Be prepared to share based on “Guidelines for a Director’s Research” including general beauty, design concepts, logistics, character, scenic iconography and casting.
 - Vision project production teams coordinated.
 - Due Feb. 12th, 14th, 21st
- **Observed Rehearsals.** Assessment: Formative
In Class Observed Rehearsals Assessment: Formative only. Observed rehearsals average 50 min. where the student director and their actors are working in class so that the encounter can be viewed by instructor and peers.
- Feedback/question/interactive session follows.
 - Costumes, props, set pieces included
 - Due: Weeks 10-14. Schedule TBD
- **Director’s Journal:** Assessment: Summative. While working on your Vision Play you will keep a notebook journaling the vision process. This notebook is due at the final scene showing. Due April 24th 10AM AND May 6th 8:00 AM
- Your journal for the vision project should have the following components:
- Class notes
 - Peer Notes
 - Play analysis
 - Vision/concept statement
 - A journaling of your rehearsals
 - Design guidance for World of Play
 - Your character descriptions & objectives
 - Ground plan/environment sketches and prop lists
 - Reference materials and research pertinent to your project
 - Director’s rehearsal script with margin notes and beat breakdowns
 - Any and all pertinent materials from your semester Director’s notebook
 - A summary discussion (see note below) of the directing experience and development of process. Consider how your work in the theatre might be affected after this experience in Directing 305b
- **Vision Project Final Share:** Assessment: Summative. Present a scene from your play, evidencing your Vision! April 24th 10AM AND May 6th 8:00 AM

C. Creative Expansion Discussions: Assessment: Summative. Throughout the first six weeks of the semester, survey creativity principles as outlined in a book

addressing such. (Consider either *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, *Art and Reality* or *The Art Spirit* or *another book of your finding*). After selecting a topic inspired by one of the books, draft a question that challenges or defends a posit brought or found forward in your chosen text. Bring your question, to class and be prepared to facilitate a group discussion around your intrigue. **Due: Feb. 26th, Feb. 28th, March 4th, and 6th.**

- The director as collaborative theatre artist must above all else be able to consider multiple ways to view possibility in order to avoid rigidity in creative thinking. The purpose of this exercise is to:
 - a. Expand our notion of the creative process.
 - b. Facilitate provocative yet useful discussion ignited by your question. The challenge is to create a “room” where all have been heard and valued, and to move the group “forward” surrounding the notion. (Please consider that “forward” doesn’t necessarily mean agreement or resolution).

D. Peer Notes

Observe and assess your colleague’s work throughout the semester. Write your reflections of the exercises including aspects of Vision, Environmental and Presentation

Due: May 6th. Assessment: Summative (5 points)

E. Creative Expansion Reflection Paper: Assessment: Summative. After you’ve led your class discussions, take time to reflect, and then distill your thoughts into a paper addressing the following:

- Theorize value at conclusion of (and in the aftermath of) your discussion. Did the process of this discussion *expand* rather than *contract* creative thinking?
- Do you see creative value in the challenging of the idea as well as its embrace? How so or how not so?
- Articulate what have you learned about your group’s dynamic through this process.
- Finally, are you able to put into words a process for expanding *your* creativity? Feel free to embrace or reject the sourcebook that began this midterm adventure!

Due: Wed. March 6th.

Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

100 possible points. All points are awarded and based on prompt and effective completion of the stated requirements. The best experience in 305B relies on the following:

- Active contribution to research and discussion during classwork.
- Constructive feedback of classmates' acting scene shares.
- Willingness to experiment and apply instructor and/or peer feedback during scene shares and classroom exercises.
- Prompt completion of all assignments and meeting due dates for written and/or performance work.
- Memorization of text.
- Availability to rehearse outside of class. (For context: for each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester.)
- In class rehearsals are graded in concert with grading of class-work.
- Scenes are graded based on clear evidence of preparedness and intended objective in each presentation effort (all props, costumes, set evidenced) and fulfillment of your directors' vision, as articulated in your Director's Book journal and in class presentations.

Levels of achievement are defined as follows:

Excellent: evidence of clear understanding of class concepts coupled with original and creative insight and confident preparation

Good: an understanding of class concepts is evidenced with competence

Satisfactory: a general understanding of class concepts but definable gaps are in evidence

Poor: definable gaps in class concepts and lack of preparation are in evidence.

Unsatisfactory: absence of preparation, work not completed on time and no communication with professor and student partners.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Classwork & Obs Rehearsals	30	30%
Creative Expansion Discussion	20	20%
Creative Expansion Paper	10	10%
Vision Project	25	25%
Director's Journal	10	10%
Peer Notes	5	5%
TOTAL	100	100%

*** Two extra credit points can be achieved by acting in a classmate's scene. ***

Grading Scale

A	95-100	C	73-76
A-	90-94	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 -0

Assignment Submission Policy and Grading Timeline

- Assignments due as described above.
- All paper-work submissions must be compiled into portfolio form and turned in to me electronically through Blackboard, your 305B Google Folder or USC email. Note that I will have “spot observed” your Director’s Book during class time throughout the semester.
- Once submitted, please look for email confirmation from me that I can access your submissions. If there is a problem with the digital submission, I will contact you and we will trouble-shoot to complete successful transfer of your materials.

Course Notes**Hint about the Written Work of a Director**

Be diligent about documenting your curiosities. Don’t put off jotting down thoughts!! An idea may seem so vivid at the time it occurs to you but you’ll find setting down to write 24 hours (or 8 weeks) after you had the idea is a sure way to lose it. Don’t know what to write about? Write about what you observe in the work of others. How effective is the work in final production? Watching, assessing the result of other processes is a sure way to clarify your own.

Staging

- No actual weapons can be used in scenes, and if you intend to use a prop weapon, please discuss this with me. Anything resembling an actual weapon must be cleared with Els Collins and the USC Dept. of Safety. In addition, if your choice of material includes the need for intimacy coordination, please discuss with me.
- Since our directing class is occurring while we must still be “COVID Conscious” please take all COVID precautions listed and/or updated in the Trojan Health App when you gather to rehearse. We all want you to be safe and healthy so we can remain in person in our collaborative art form!

Note from the Instructor

Directing is a process that takes time to experiment with, absorb and understand. Do not become impatient. Remain positive and curious about the work. Remember the results are not instantaneous. Your commitment to the directing

process is of much greater importance than a definitive result. Each student works, learns and leads in a unique manner.

Additional Policies

Attendance:

- This is a *process-oriented* class. Attendance is imperative. Class exercises and discussions are experiential in nature and “make-up” work is not possible. Scheduled observed rehearsals that are missed will not be rescheduled.
- There are no excused absences. Three tardy episodes constitute one absence.
- Since our directing class is occurring while we must still be “COVID Conscious” please take all COVID precautions listed in the Trojan Health App when you gather to rehearse. We all want you to be safe and healthy so we can remain in person!

Health and Participation in Class:

- There is no online attendance, observation, participation option for this class. All classes are held in person, on ground in PED 208. Classes will not be recorded for future viewing and there is no zoom option for 305B.
- While being mindful of the importance of being in class, our hope is that if you are feeling ill, you will use your best judgement as to whether you need to be absent.
- We will ensure that you have opportunity to access lecture notes (should there be any) or schedule office hours so that you can remain current in content covered during your absence but know that there is no way to reconstruct missed sessions in totality.
- 305B is a highly participatory, experiential, activity-based class. It requires extensive group exercises, large and small group discussion, outside rehearsal and peer observation/feedback of in-class presentations. If I, as your instructor, or you find your health presents a consistent interruption in your engagement with the above we will meet to decide best way forward under the circumstances.
- The University, as of this writing, states masks are highly recommended in the classroom but not required. We will follow University health protocols as adjusted throughout the semester.

Classroom Rules:

- Class exercises and discussions are experiential in nature and “make-up” work is not possible. Scheduled observed rehearsals that are missed will not be rescheduled.
- Late work will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

- To give yourself the most positive experience in 305B; be punctual, prepared, and responsible, as other students are depending on you. Remember, you are the *Director*.
- Acting in a classmates 305B scene is encouraged and will count as 1-point of extra credit toward your final grade. If this occurs in another section of Directing (305A), please bring documentation of participation. A maximum of 2-extra credit points is possible per semester.
- Scheduling rehearsal space should be done according to the SDA scheduling protocol.
- Check your USC email regularly. Scheduling changes and other timely information will be sent via email.
- Cell phones are to be turned off for the duration of class.
- Electronic capture of any portion of class is strictly prohibited without prior written approval of the instructor. When granted the files are to be used only for the purpose of educating that specific student and may not be distributed or shared for any purpose whatsoever.

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 relationship 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 Schedule

WEEK	ACTIVITY
1 - 3	Course Introduction. Steal Like An Artist (Admired Director Briefings). 305A Foundations Review (honing a shared vocabulary for 305B).
4 & 5	“Steal Like An Artist 2.0” The Playwright. At the center collaboration is the playwright...a director’s work begins here. We will take this opportunity to learn more about each of the playwrights (and their body of work) who wrote this semesters’ chosen vision plays.
6 & 7	Vision Presentations/Building Your Team
8 & 9	Creative Expansion Discussions: The creative advantage of viewpoint diversity in your rehearsal room.
10 - 14	Observed Rehearsals.
15	Semester Wrap-up. Activities TBD.

A Weekly Breakdown

Week 1	1/8	Introduction. Course outline. The role of the director. Begin Search for your Vision play. What is Director’s Vision? For Wed. Briefing on a Director whose work you admire and why (can show a clip or images of their work if this helps make your point)
	1/10	Briefings of a director you admire. Have read: Article by Louis Jovet, “The Profession of the Director”
Week 2	1/15	Martin Luther King Day. University Holiday.
	1/17	Complete director briefings. The Directors Toolbox and The Cornerstones of Success. Play analysis, World of Play, Given Circumstances and Dialogue, Dramatic Action, Character, Beats, Idea/Initial instinct, Objectives... <i>Vision!</i> Have read: Article by Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, “The Three Faces of the Director” & <i>A Sense of Direction</i> , pages 3 through 36. Vision Play Search check in.
Week 3	1/22	The Directors Toolbox Cont. Discuss a director’s primary study of text.
	1/24	Artivism and Directors Vision. Where does responsibility lie?

<https://www.artandobject.com/articles/artivism-making-difference-through-art>

Vision Plays greenlighted.

- Week 4 1/29&1/31 “Steal Like An Artist 2.0” The Playwright. Individual briefings.
- Week 5 2/5&7 “Steal Like An Artist 2.0” The Playwright briefings cont.
- Week 6 2/12&14 Vision Presentations. Cornerstones of Success. Be prepared to share based on “Guidelines for a Director’s Research.” General Beauty/Design Concepts/Logistics/Character/Scenic Iconography/Casting. Vision project production teams coordinated.
- Week 7 2/19 Presidents Day.
2/21 Vision Presentations Completed. Vision project production teams coordinated. Have read: Articles by David Belasco, “Creating Atmosphere”, Nikolai Okhlopkov, “Creative Interplay”, Chapter 17 “Directing is Designing” Hodge McLain.
- Week 8 2/26&2/28 **Midterm. Creative Expansion Discussions**
- Week 9 3/4 **Midterm. Creative Expansion Discussions**
3/6 **Midterm: Creative Expansion Discussions cont.**
Midterm: Creative Expansion paper due: Wed. 3/9
- ***Spring Break March 10th – 17th***
- Week 10 3/18&20 Begin Observed Rehearsals. Table Reads. Have read pp. 154-163 in Hodge McLain. At your leisure peruse *A Sense of Direction*, pages 70 through 92 and Part II, “Communication”, and pp.57-154, Hodge McLain
- Week 11 3/25&3/27 Observed Rehearsals Composition/Picturization
- Week 12 4/1&4/3 Observed Rehearsals Composition/Picturization
- Week 13 4/8&4/10 Observed Rehearsals First Showings Vision Project Scenes
- Week 14 4/15&17 Observed Rehearsals First Showings Vision Project Scenes cont.
- Week 15 4/22 Semester Wrap-up. Round table discussion and feedback from first presentation of vision scenes. Troubleshooting session for rehearsal questions. Directing as a Career.
Read: “Your Future as a Director” pp.373 Hodge McLain

4/24 Begin final presentation of second scenes, Wed. April 24th and cont. Mon., May 6th 8a.m.- 10p.m. (Director's Paper Packet due at time of students' scene presentation).

Final Exam: Final Presentation of *Vision Project* continues. *Directors Journal* and *Peer Notes* **Due:** Monday, May 6th 8:00-10:00a.m.

- * Process and Progression subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group.
- * Reading assignments should be completed by the day listed. Additional reading may be assigned as necessary.

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.

****The following statements and disclosures portion of this document are subject to SDA updates. Addendums will be posted on the Blackboard posting of this syllabus/contract****

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.

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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.

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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.

*****This syllabus serves as your contract for course 305B, Spring Semester 2024*****