

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**THTR 506 63224D Advanced Creating Characters**  
**Spring 2024 Thursday 4 – 6:20 pm**  
**Location:** DRC Conference Room **Section** 63224D  
**Instructor:** Paula Cizmar

**Office Hours:** Wed 2:30 - 4 pm; Tuesday Noon – 3 pm; please note that office hours are by appointment only; contact me via email or phone, at least 24 hours in advance. For appointments outside these hours, I am available by videoconference.

**Contact Info:** [cizmar@usc.edu](mailto:cizmar@usc.edu); 323.376.1216 mobile;  
[www.paulacizmar.com](http://www.paulacizmar.com)

**ITHelp:** USC Information Technology Services  
<http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke, Contact Info: [shirke@usc.edu](mailto:shirke@usc.edu); 213.740.1288. MCC

## Course Description

**Catalogue description:** *THTR 506* An advanced writing workshop that focuses on continuing development of the crafting of character, centering on depth, breadth, dimensionality, and authenticity.

In most good stories, it is the character's personality that creates the action of the story. If you start with a real personality, a real character, then something is bound to happen.

--Flannery O'Connor, *Writing Short Stories*

## Course Overview

Advanced Creating Characters is a writing workshop for graduate student writers who already have done the foundational work of character development and are looking to delve deeper into the human psyche, with an emphasis on character complexity and authenticity. Original characters, not stereotypes, with distinct voices, quirks, and traits are the goal. The course is also an opportunity for writers to engage in an exploration of sensitivity, empathy, diversity/inclusivity versus cultural appropriation. MFA writers will be challenged to be proactive in the class and develop and apply a set of diagnostic tools that they can use to fix ailing characters on their own in future scriptwriting. The course work will include not only character creation and scene writing, but also the critical analysis of the work of other contemporary writers, including memoirists who write about writing. In taking a look at the latter, we can determine if it is possible to adapt parts of their process for writing fictional plays. Advanced Creating Characters also looks at how to harness the dark side of human nature—inner demons, desires, lies, secrets, and fatal flaws—to craft dramatic stories. Characters will be viewed as a key component of every dramatic work—serving not only as story generators, but also as creators of the world of the piece and the source of movement in the work. Particular emphasis will be placed on establishing and maintaining empathy, especially when working on difficult and/or dangerous characters, as well as using metaphor to deepen characters and subtext. Note: This class can support writing done in other MFA courses as well as work for special projects involving dramatic writing.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- apply various strategies for character creation;
- establish for each character a unique voice;
- use multidimensional characters as a point of origin for stories;
- establish the “lore” of the play and how this expands the lead character;
- provide constructive feedback on character development and scenes;
- devise a diagnostic tool and a process for reworking/strengthening character;
- continue work on special projects

## And Beyond...

We’re also adopting key elements of USC’s 21<sup>st</sup>-century vision as our own by paying attention to Sustainability, Connection, Transformation.

### *What does this mean?*

**SUSTAINABILITY** - This class lives in the world of the Green New Deal. No printing. All work, including the Final Project, will be turned in electronically. Handouts and course materials will be paperless, available online via Blackboard.

**CONNECTION** means that we will make contact in several ways—with each other, with the creative community, with the world at large. We’ll connect with each other to form a support network so that everyone feels secure taking artistic risks; plus we’ll connect via text message and online to keep up to the minute on what’s going on in class; you may even want to connect in smaller groups or creative clusters via Zoom. We’ll also stay attuned to what’s going on in American theatre—**particularly how theatre adjusts/is adjusting to the pandemic and post-pandemic world**--and we’ll look at what’s going on locally and globally and explore how we can use art for growth and healing. Let’s take a look at the stories that have gone untold and the people who have gone unrecognized and determine what we can do to change that.

**TRANSFORMATION** means that we will be looking at theatre writing as a way to effect transformation in our lives, and in the lives of others; we’ll look at creating theatre from a place of empathy, from a place of heart-driven concern for humanity; we’ll look at culture and trends and attempt to define and redefine playwriting for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Prerequisite(s):** None

## Suggested Readings and Supplementary Materials

UNPUBLISHED PLAYS (to be supplied as PDFs by instructor; determined after discussion)

On your own, take some time to read these plays and guides for a richer insight into what is theatre and how many ways there are to develop characters:

AUBERGINE. Julia Cho.

ANIMALS OUT OF PAPER or DESCRIBE THE NIGHT. Rajiv Joseph.

FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS, PARTS 1,2,3. Suzan-Lori Parks.

(continued)

INDECENT. Paula Vogel.

MR. BURNS – A POST-ELECTRIC PLAY. Anne Washburn.

PLAYWRITING BRIEF AND BRILLIANT. Julie Jensen.

THE EMPTY SPACE. Peter Brook.

Published texts available via the USC Bookstore or online at Amazon. They may also be found via the USC library. Unpublished plays and various articles, essays supplied as PDFs.

Recommended for psychology of characters:

THE SOUL'S CODE. James Hillman.

The School of Dramatic Arts' Dramatic Writing Program guidelines call for each student in playwriting courses to read at least seven plays as part of the course and to investigate them critically. You are encouraged, in particular, to read contemporary work. Plays will be suggested in class. The more you read, the more you will become aware of the diverse styles, voices, and structural forms open to you as a writer.

### Special Note

All students enrolled in MFADW are required to attend program events. This includes all of the New Works Festival events (NWF I, II, and III), all Western Edge Playwrights' Salon events, and the student orientation held in late August. While some of these dates are not yet solidified, please put the times/dates in your calendar as soon as you can. Because we are monitoring professional development in every course that you take, and in the MFADW overall, your participation in these program events will have a direct impact on your annual review.

Please make any and all travel plans for after the last of the New Works Festivals.

### Additional Fuel

Please remember, throughout the course of the workshop, to keep reading and viewing—current and classic work, comedic and dramatic, realistic and non-. Try, also, to make a habit of looking at visual art and visiting museums: LACMA, MOCA, the Japanese American National Museum, the Getty, the Norton Simon, Museum of Latin American Art, California African American Museum, the Huntington Library, the Autry, etc. Expand your senses. Allow music to inspire and awaken emotions and images. During a focused creative effort it is important to be constantly refueled. The work of other artists from other media provides imaginative stimulation resulting in ideas, inspirations, and solutions to problems you might not have come to otherwise.

### Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

**Grading criteria:** The quality of work for all components (see list under "Grading Breakdown") is determined by the thoroughness of the effort, the continuing process, and the imagination displayed.

**Grading Scale for SDA:** **A** indicates work of excellent quality; **B** of good quality; **C** of acceptable quality; **D** of below average quality; and **F** indicates inadequate work.

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

Acceptable: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: D+ (1.3) = 69 – 66; D = 65-64 (1); D = 63 - 60 (0.7) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

*Note: A minimum passing grade for graduate students is C.*

- “Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight, as demonstrated by their work; “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material and has done the work well; “Acceptable” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps; “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the class material; “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material.
- When the average 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 good, and will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

### **Grading Breakdown**

Your grade will be based on multiple components: the creation of a character inspiration/research presentation; the development of character banks/character recipes/monologues; critical analysis (which includes reading and discussion of assigned texts as well as other participants’ work); the ongoing special theatre project; in-class exercises; creating a personal diagnostic tool; ongoing writing and revision; a portfolio of selected work for the semester.

Please bear in mind that you earn your grade based on the timely completion of your work, plus the quality of your work. Late assignments are marked down due to missed deadline. Assignments are accepted only within one week of due date. After that, they are considered a missed assignment, which counts as zero. (Note: A late assignment is marked down one grade notch, approximately 5 points; i.e., an assignment that would have earned an A receives an A- for missing the deadline; an assignment that would have earned a B+ receives a B for missing the deadline, etc.)

Components of the overall grade are weighted as follows:

Character Inspiration/Research Presentation	15 percent
Character Bank/Character Recipes/Monologues/etc	5 percent
Critical Analysis (reading and discussion)	5 percent
Work for SZLA Interactive Project	15 percent
Individual Character Diagnostic Tool & Process	10 percent
Participation (In-Class, Exercises, etc.)	10 percent
Ongoing writing and revision	25 percent
Final Portfolio	15 percent
TOTAL	100 percent

The Character Inspiration/Research Presentation is a creative project in which each writer presents the various sources that provide the background for the characters of a play and for the world of the play. In addition to being a research component of writing—this project is also a way to get in touch with your unconscious motivators. These presentations may include visual art, musical inspirations, charts, graphics, articles/news stories/essays, photographs, podcasts, archival documents—any kind of source material. If desired, the presentations may be done in a specific format, such as Powerpoint, Prezi, Keynote, Tumblr, etc. Be prepared to discuss your

resources and inspirations for your characters/story both in a creative/metaphoric language, as well as pragmatically. Note that this presentation is a “vision board” and is useful whenever beginning a creative work; it may include items that inspire you in general, or items that relate particularly to the characters you have in mind right now (even if you don’t know what to do with them), or items that are even more specific and directly relate to a play you want to write. This a tool with which you can tap into your imagination; you can use it as an active, multimedia form of brainstorming, as a way to start to explore ideas, as a way to begin to frame your thoughts, as a way to visualize characters, and, in this class in particular, as a way to promote discussion with other artists to enhance your vision. The “board” part of this vision board presentation is virtual—we’ll project/share your inspirations on a screen.

Character Banks, Character Recipes, and Monologues are early explorations of character traits and the unique voices of characters. They may also serve as a virtual journal or resource bank of characters to work on in the future; or as a way to brainstorm with yourself; or as a map to the ongoing development of specific characters.

Critical Analysis is vital to every writer because it provides a process for assessing artistic work. In the analysis of already published/produced plays, you gain experience in taking a deeper look at character, language, and structure—which can then be applied to evaluating your own work, to assist you in revision. In the analysis of the work of other writers in the workshop, you gain experience in providing useful guidance to text that is still in-progress and that may be at a more ephemeral stage of development. Both these skills are important in your ongoing life as a writer.

Note: The University of Southern California has vast resources. The libraries not only have hard copies of books and research materials, but they also offer access to online archives, etc. Further, there are Special Collections available to you, including Chicano studies writings, the Feuchtwanger papers, Alice in Wonderland archives, etc. In addition, there are vast multimedia archives at the Shoah Foundation, which you may access many ways including via their iWitness program; the testimonies may be used to develop characters for fictional work, documentary work, future projects, etc.

#### What is the diagnostic tool?

Each of you will devise some sort of strategy or process-oriented method for checking your characters for authenticity, voice, and integrity. These will be individualized to your needs/desires as a writer (and perhaps, also, individualized to the requirements of the play you’re working on).

#### What does participation entail?

Participation includes: presentations; in-class exercises; ongoing work on developing characters; ongoing work on the SZLA project; discussion of assigned reading; and, most important, constructive, guided feedback provided for the other writers’ work. The participation grade is determined as follows: For each class session, you get a check mark for showing up (which constitutes a B); you get a check mark with a plus sign (+) if you participate diligently (which constitutes an A); you get a check mark with a negative sign (-) if your participation is less than adequate (which constitutes a C). Please respect your community of writers and be on time. Chronic lateness will constitute a lowering of the participation grade. [[Note for Spring 2023: We are aware that covid protocols and/or testing may require you to quarantine. Please COMMUNICATE and let me know when these issues arise.]]

Your Final Portfolio is a collection of creative material you select that illustrates your understanding of multidimensional characters plus your ability to develop and use such characters. The project will be graded on artistic merit, comprehension of character principles, and progress, i.e., your growth from early exploratory work to later drafts. Re: The Final Portfolio – These will vary; some of you may use this class to develop characters for a play you’re working on in another class; some of you may use this class to create an entirely new play, whether full-length or one-act or ultra-short; some of you may have an alternate idea. We’ll take time to discuss this in the workshop and you can pitch your ideas to me. Anything goes—as long as it’s clear to me that you are working diligently and the work you’re doing is meaningful.

HINT: Keep a Creative Journal! This is an archive of your explorations for writing; it may include jottings off the top of your head, stuff from your Inspiration Board, research, ideas, resources for current and future writing, and exercises and raw material from class. NOTE: It’s no longer necessary to keep an actual journal, on paper. Due to the proliferation of smart phone and tablet apps for storing notes, etc., the Creative Journal may now be electronic. But do keep one. It will make your writing so much easier!

**Note: The SDA GUIDELINES on GRADING state that:**

- *There shall be no unexcused absences.*
- *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. Under such exceptional circumstances, no late penalties will accrue.*

### **Additional Policies**

This course is modeled along the lines of a professional, artistic workshop; thus, as a member of such a workshop, your participation is necessary not only for the development of your own work, but for the development of your colleagues’ work as well. Theatre is a highly collaborative, community-oriented medium and play development is a key part of the life of a playwright. Indeed, in this class, one of our projects depends upon collaboration. Please honor your obligation to your colleagues’ work and contribute to the discussion. Absences must be for reasons of illness or emergency and must be accompanied by a written explanation; in your absence, please prepare the assigned work that is due and turn it in immediately upon return to the workshop.

### **Zoom Etiquette**

**If it becomes necessary to Zoom:** “Netiquette,” or “internet etiquette,” is important for collaborative work. Please respect the following guidelines:

- Whenever possible, please use your computer to log-in to the class rather than your phone. This will help us with the quality of visuals and audio, plus it will present fewer problems when sharing screens.
- If you have technical issues during class, please contact: USC Information Technology Services <http://itservices.usc.edu>; School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke. Contact Info: [shirke@usc.edu](mailto:shirke@usc.edu); 213.740.1288.
- Your camera must be on at all times, unless you are requested to hide video.

- Please attempt to log-in from an environment that does not have distracting background noise, such as pets, family members, machinery, music. If you find yourself in a situation with distracting noise, please use ear buds or headphones.
- When not speaking (for example, during a reading of a scene, when you are not playing a role), please mute your microphone. During discussions feel free to leave your mic on.
- Remember that you are in class, therefore behavior appropriate to class should be followed. Please do not walk around, leave the room, read, play games, etc. during class.
- You may use your devices for research that enhances the discussion during class, but please stay attuned to what is going on while engaged in research.
- Try to take turns speaking. Remember that Zoom creates problems when voices overlap.
- The chat box will be available to you to use during class, however please don't abuse it. For example, remember that everyone can see what you type in the chat. Therefore your comments should not contain private messages to another class member—which can be read in the saved chat. Also, try to use chat to enhance the discussion, rather than interrupt it.
- Remember: The class session is being recorded. (This includes the chat.)
- Be respectful of others at all times.
- Remember: We're all in this together. Now more than ever.

### Sharing of Course Materials Outside of the Learning Environment

USC has a policy that 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

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
<b>Weeks 1 – 3</b>  Jan 11 to Jan 25	<b>Preparation &amp; Gathering</b> Introduction: Where Are We and Where Are We Going? Assessment, Diagnosis, and Challenge.  Consider: Surprising yourself; writing the best play you <i>can't</i> write; writing beyond your comfort zone; uncovering the people whose stories haven't been told.	<b>Discussion:</b> Throughout the course of this workshop we will look at the various elements that go into creating characters including: Laying the Groundwork. Complex Characters and Deep Characterization.  Heroes/Myths from the Millennia—Ancient to Contemporary. True Life Characters—Advantages and Major Disadvantages of Characters from Real Life.	Week 1: Begin to collect your resources, e.g., research, burning ideas, poetic impulses, images, emotional foundation, monologues, character banks, music/soundtrack. Read the materials on Blackboard; read plays provided as PDFs.  Week 2: Present Inspiration Boards/Vision Boards, character banks & profiles.

	<p>Consider: What is a character-driven script?</p>	<p>The Psychology of Characters—Profiles/Temperaments/Archetypes, plus Depth Psychology (see James Hillman).</p> <p>Character Flaws, Secrets, Quirks, Contradictions, Desires, Demons, Inconsistencies.</p> <p>Introduction to the Character’s Voice.</p> <p>Introduction to Tools: The Inspiration Board; Character Banks; Creative Journal.</p> <p><i>TBD: The “assessment-challenge” plays, i.e., who should read what? Please participate in the suggestions for each other.</i></p>	<p>Week 3: <b>For future work:</b> Expand your character bank. For the character bank, derive and develop at least one from <b>myth</b>, one based on <b>testimony research</b>, one based on a <b>current event or historical figure</b>, and one totally from your <b>imagination</b>. <b>For current work:</b> What characters from your plays in other courses need development?</p> <p>Week 3 and ongoing: Write an exploratory monologue for selected characters. (Hint: Pay attention to sound and rhythm of our character’s voice. Your characters may start to generate story and scene ideas as they talk. Let them!)</p> <p><b>Note: We will be doing many things at once. We will be exploring and developing characters, analyzing already existing characters, working on the special project, and writing/preparing the Final Portfolio. Some people will be working on different types of material—and I will be offering different kinds of guidance to different people depending on what phase their work is in. Sometimes you will not be able to present your work—but don’t wait! Keep working on your characters, on your writing, on your documentary components, etc., even if in class we are working on something else. Sometimes you will be the only one working in a particular mode. No</b></p>
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			<p>worries. Be prepared to be flexible. Remember that there is no one way of writing a play, no one way of getting there. Please stay on top of things and continue to develop your work in your way—but on time and diligently.</p>
<p><b>Weeks 4 - 12</b></p> <p>Feb 1 to Apr 4</p> <p>NOTE: No class Mar 14, Spring Break.</p>	<p><b>The Process: From Exploration &amp; Experimentation to Mission &amp; Transformation</b></p> <p>Active Characterization: Characters as Story Generators.</p> <p>Character Voice—Including Rhythm, Diction, Slang.</p> <p>Sensory Work and Metaphor—The Character as Creator of the World of the Play.</p> <p>The Physical Mission Versus the Personal/Psychic Mission; The Flip from Want to Need.</p> <p>Insight &amp; Evaluation: What Did You Intend—and Where Are You Now? (For good or for bad.)</p> <p>Introduction to The Personal Diagnostic Tool.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing Discussion</b></p> <p>Checklist: Empathy. Metaphor. Rituals. Self and Shadow Self—The Inner Character, Inner Child, Inner Demon, Inner Life. Exploration of the Character’s Often-Invisible Motivators. Dream Time - Waking Dreams, Day Dreams, Dreamspace, Nightmares. Transformation. The Dark Side, Too—Antagonists and Anti-Heroes. The Fun Stuff: Subtext, Contradictions, Lies, Misdirects, Miscommunication, and the Unreliable. Working Beyond the One Dimensional for Supporting Players: Sidekicks, Mentors, Catalysts, Clowns. The Worst-Case Scenario—Pushing Your Character to the Edge. Anticipating an Ending. Character Epiphanies and Revelations.</p>	<p>Weeks 4 – 5. Write the BFF interviews. “Interview” the people around your character and write up the interview sessions. Write exploratory/experimental scenes based on characters from character banks.</p> <p>Week 5: Read the “assessment-challenge” plays.</p> <p>Weeks 5-12: Write and workshop new exploratory scenes. (Note: It may be the first scene of a play, a scene from the middle, or the last scene of the play. It’s not necessary that you write in order at this point. You may also write a scene that is purely exploration and ultimately doesn’t make it into the play. That’s fine. This is all part of the process.)</p> <p>Note: Alternate assignment. If I asked for a particular type of scene or exploration or another type of writing, please produce.</p> <p><i>Hint: Look at your writing exercises and monologues for possible raw material for your work on characters for Final Project portfolio and for other plays you are writing.</i></p>

<b>Weeks 13 - 15</b>  Apr 11 To Apr 25	<b>Works in Progress</b>	<b>Discussion</b>  Consider: What changes everything? What is missing? What does the character need for the play to go deeper?  How do you motivate yourself to do YOUR work?	Week 13: Present your own personal diagnostic tool.  Weeks 13 – 15: Assess the raw material you’ve created, along with the pages you’ve generated. Assess risk-taking and construct a challenge. Look to your sources of inspiration. Present revised pages from your work (writer’s choice).  TURN IN: Your Final Portfolio portfolio. <b>Due May 9, 2024.</b>
<b>FINAL</b>  Thursday May 9	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>  4:30 – 6:30 pm	<b>Artistic Review: Group Feedback &amp; Critique of Scripts.</b> Plus: Last Look Q&As. Where to go next.	Date: For confirmation of the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at <a href="http://www.usc.edu/soc">www.usc.edu/soc</a> .

*REMINDER: Use Blackboard as a resource. Class materials, information, handouts, additional essays, source materials, etc., are posted on the class site on Blackboard.*

We all have two heads and two memories. A head of clay, which will turn to dust; and another, forever invulnerable to the gnawings of time and of passion. One memory that death kills, a compass that expires with the journey, and another memory, the collective memory, which will live as long as the human adventure in the world lives. –Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire: Faces and Masks*

### **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](http://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](mailto: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.

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### **Health and Participation in Class**

You are expected to stay up to date with University policies on coronavirus, including screenings and testing, etc. The University sends out guidelines on a regular basis, and we must all expect things to change as the number and type of infections change. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of covid, 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 University health and safety instructions. If you test positive, if you are feeling ill, or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, please stay home to protect others. SDA will work to assist you and help you continue to participate in class in some alternative way so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC recommends that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. I will be wearing a mask. As the semester proceeds, the recommendation may become a requirement. If it does, face coverings should cover your nose and mouth. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by airborne particles. 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/>).

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### **Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://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](https://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](https://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.