

USC School of Dramatic Arts

SDA #305A Directing

Fall 2024 – Tuesdays and Thursdays– 8 until 9:50 AM

Location: MCC 111

Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer

Office: MCC 204

Office Hours: Mon. and Wed. 12:00 – 1:00 PM in MCC 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

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 developing strength and confidence in the areas of communication and collaboration.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course the student will have:

- Researched, cast, rehearsed and completed in class presentations, excerpts from two theatrical texts.
- Gained practical experience in the role of director through classroom exercises and in the presentation of scene-work (from published plays).
- Assembled a notebook of process and procedures employed by stage directors.
- Compiled and presented two books that document and support the director's artistic choices and processes used in the actualizing and presentation of scene-work.

Learning Aspirations

- To acquire a basic understanding of the skills and procedures required of a stage director to mount a theatrical production.
- To encourage the cultivation of the leadership skills necessary in the creation of an ensemble brought together for the purpose of play production.
- To embrace the role of the director as a collaborative individual, able to articulate and shape vision while embracing the creativity of the design team and actors.
- To gain practical experience in the role of director through classroom exercises and in the presentation of scene-work directed by the student.

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Co-Requisite (s): N/A

Concurrent Enrollment: N/A

Recommended Preparation: THTR 101, THTR 125, THTR 130 or 131

Course Notes, Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Textbooks: (all are available at the USC Bookstore or online)

- *A Sense of Direction*, by William Ball (req.)
- *Key Exchange* by Kevin Wade (req.) available on Amazon, USC Libraries (Leavy) or Scribd
- *The Person I Once Was* by Cindy Lou Johnson (req.) available USC Libraries
https://uosc.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01USC_INST/273cgt/cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_1929315759
- *Steal Like An Artist* by Austin Kleon (req.)
- *A text of your choice* for your vision play. (req.)
- *Notes on Directing: 130 Lessons in Leadership from the Director's Chair* by Frank Hauser (rec.)

Materials:

- A notebook (to serve as your Directors Book) is required. It needs to have the ability to hold inserts and handouts that will be accumulated across the semester. This will be handed in at your midterm and final showings of scenes.
- Students are responsible for providing necessary props, costumes, and set pieces for scene work. Lack of preparation in this area will seriously weaken your grade.
- The syllabus is posted on Bright Space. Necessary day to day updates and communications will be done via USC email.

Assignments and Classwork

A. Project One

- a. **In Class Observed Rehearsals.** Having selected one of the two plays; cast it, rehearse it, and be prepared to share an excerpt in class. Due: October 8th, 15th, and 17th. Assessment: Formative only. Observed rehearsals are where the student director and their actors are working in class so that the encounter can be viewed by instructor and peers.
 - i. Short feedback/question session follows.
 - ii. All costumes, props, set pieces are required as described in the text.
- b. **Midterm. Presentation of First Scene.** Due: Oct. 22nd & 24th Assessment: Summative (20 points). Grading is based on attention to formative feedback from the observed rehearsal.
- c. **Director's Book #1** Due: Oct. 22nd & 24th Assessment: Summative (10 points) In addition to all class notes, observation responses to class exercises, your Directors Book includes (for both midterm and final projects) the following components:
 - i. Class Notes (Include Peer Notes from observed rehearsals)
 - ii. Vision Cornerstones
 - iii. Director's journaling of your rehearsals and process.
 - iv. Reference and research pertinent to the play.
 - v. Ground plan/environment sketches.
 - vi. Your character descriptions and prop lists.
 - vii. Director's rehearsal script with margin notes and beat breakdown.

- viii. A 2-3-page typed summary discussion of your directing experience and development of a process.
- ix. For your summary discussion...what surprised you? Was anything exactly what you expected? What did you find “easy”? What provided the greatest challenge? Be sure to also include ideas/projections as to how you would fine-tune the process next time. Make use of references from *A Sense of Direction*, *Notes on Directing*, *Steal Like An Artist* and pertinent classroom discussions documented in your notebook.

B. Project Two

- a. **Vision Presentations.** Having found a play of your choosing and greenlighted by the instructor; develop a director's vision. Due: Nov. 5th and 7th. Assessment: Formative only. Following the Cornerstones of Success from William Ball’s A Sense of Direction, research, compile a Director’s Vision Presentation to be presented in class that articulates your concept/approach/vision for a production of a play of your choosing.
 - i. Use of Visuals, Power Points, Audio Files is encouraged.
 - ii. Length of presentation is 5 min. in length. Five-minute feedback/discussion session follows.
 - iii. Peer Observation Notes begin and carry on for the remainder of the semester’s work. (These are turned in at the Final, Dec. 17th)
- b. **Environment Set-up Lab** for vision play Due: Nov. 12th.
 - i. Assessment: Formative Only. Group work, peer feedback and instructor interaction/feedback modalities.
- c. **Observed Rehearsals** Due: Nov. 14th, 19th, 21st, 26th. Assessment: Formative only. Observed rehearsals average 20-25 min. where the student director and their actors are working in class so that the encounter can be viewed by instructor and peers.
 - i. Emphasize usage of space and vision elements.
 - ii. Short feedback/question session follows.
 - iii. All costumes, props, set pieces are required.
- d. **Presentations** Present an excerpt of the play. Due: Dec. 5th, and Dec. 17th. Assessment: Summative (25 pts)
- e. **Director’s Book #2** Due: Dec. 5th, and Dec. 17th. Assessment: Summative (10 pts) Include the following components:
 - i. Class Notes (Include notes from peer’s vision presentations, observed rehearsals, final shares)
 - ii. Vision Cornerstones
 - iii. Director’s journaling of your rehearsals and process.
 - iv. Reference materials and research pertinent to your Vision play/playwright.
 - v. Ground plan/environment sketches.
 - vi. Prop lists.

- vii. Character descriptions, levels of objectives and relative obstacles (Universal, Super and Scene)
- viii. Director's rehearsal script with margin notes (beat objectives, actions and director beat markings)
- ix. A two-to-three-page typed summary discussion of your directing experience and development of a process.
- x. For your summary discussion...what surprised you? Was anything exactly what you expected? What did you find "easy"? What provided the greatest challenge? Be sure to reference your trajectory from the first project and include ideas/projections as to how you would fine-tune the process going forward. Make use of references from A Sense of Direction, Notes on Directing, Steal Like An Artist and pertinent classroom discussions documented in your notebook.

C. Peer Notes

Observe and assess your colleague's work throughout the Project 2 progression. Write your reflections of the exercises including aspects of Vision, Environmental and Presentation.

Due: Dec. 17th, 6:30p.m. Assessment: Summative (5 points)

D. Classwork

Students will be assessed upon their active participation in class including contributions to class discussions, exercises and active listening throughout the semester.

Assessment: Summative (30 points)

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 305A relies on the following:

- Active contribution to research and discussion during tablework.
- 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.)
- Observed rehearsals are graded in concert with grading of classwork.
- Scenes are graded based on clear evidence of preparedness (all props, costumes, set evidenced) and fulfillment of your directors' vision, as articulated in your Director's Book journal.

I look to see that what is on the page has found its way onto the stage!

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Classwork	30	30%
Project One	20	20%
Directors Book #1	10	10%
Project Two	25	25%
Directors Book #2	10	10%
Peer Notes	5	5%
TOTAL	100	100%

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.

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following 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 Bright Space, your 305A 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.
- Instructor and peer feedback for in class exercises and scene work is regular practice in our class sessions.
- Students can receive written feedback for all performance assignments immediately if the student wishes to capture electronically my handwritten notes.
- Formalized grading of performance and written work can be expected within 3 class sessions from the due date.

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.

Time Requirements:

- Rehearsals outside of scheduled class time are required for a successful outcome in 305a. Note...Scenes need often be cast with students outside of this section’s enrollment. You may not act in your own directing scene.
- Logistical prowess in terms of time management for self and others is required.
- Students are responsible for providing necessary props, costumes, and set pieces for scene work. Lack of preparation in this area will seriously weaken your grade.
- Each student will maintain a **Director’s Book** containing; classroom notes, observations, comments upon viewing other students in class rehearsals (peer notes) and scene presentations and documentation of your directing process as described above in “Assignments”. This may be checked and referenced during observed rehearsals and is turned in to me in two increments: Directors Book for first play at midterm and for second/vision play at final periods. *See “Hint” below*
- Peer Observation Notes from in class exercises, observed rehearsals and presentations.

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 305A.
- 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.
- 305A 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 and then will be docked no less than 2-points per day past due.
- To give yourself the most positive experience in 305A; be punctual, prepared, and responsible, as other students are depending on you. Remember, you are the *Director*.
- Acting in a classmates 305a scene is encouraged and will count as 1-point of extra credit toward your final grade. If this occurs in another section of 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).

Hint about the Written Work of a Director (Your Class Notebook/Directors Book/Peer Observation Notes)

- 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 sitting down to write 24 hours (or 8 weeks...yikes!) after you had an idea or thought is a sure way to lose it.
- Don't know what to write about in your entries? Write about what you observe in the work of others.
- How effective is the work in final sharing? Is what they set forth to accomplish evidenced? Why or why not?

- Watching and then analyzing the result of other processes is a sure way to clarify your own.

Note on Staging/Out of Class Rehearsals

- No actual weapons can be used in scenes, and if you intend to use a prop weapon, please discuss this with me. In addition, if your choice of material includes the need for intimacy then coordination, please discuss with me.
- Since our directing class is occurring while we must still be “COVID Conscious” please take all COVID precautions and follow USC policy in the USC Student Handbook. <https://sites.google.com/usc.edu/ay23covid/?pli=1&authuser=2>

Process and Progression

Week 1	8/27	Introduction. Course outline.
	8/29	Discussion: the role of the director. Assignment: Read <u>Key Exchange</u> and <u>The Person I Once Was</u> by Jan. 18 th .
Week 2	9/3	Martin Luther King Day. University holiday.
	9/5	Getting Started... Where do I begin?! Play Analysis. Initial instinct. The Cornerstones for Success. Have read; <u>A Sense of Direction</u> pages 3 through 44. Assignment: Answer questions for Directors Play analysis for <u>Key Exchange</u> and <u>The Person I Once Was</u> .
Week 3	9/10	Auditioning. Casting. Have read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 44 through 69.
	9/12	Casting cont.
Week 4	9/17	Creation of the ensemble. How do I talk to the actors? How do I encourage them to talk to each other? Have read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 70 through 92.
	9/19	Rehearsal. The journey of storytelling begins. Sense of place and time. Your rehearsal environment. Introduce beats/objectives. Have read: <u>Sense of Direction</u> , pages 93-124.
Week 5	9/24 & 26	Continue work on objectives. Composition and Picturization. Directorial shaping of the scene. Stages in rehearsal progression. ** Note: Begin search for second (vision play) project. **
Week 6	10/1	Physicalizing of Action in “Blocking”. Secondary activity and physical action that supports story and character objectives.
	10/3	Continue Physicalizing of Action in “Blocking”. Movement Patterning.
Week 7	10/8	Observed Rehearsals (<u>Key Exchange</u> and <u>The Person I Once Was</u>). Search for, and chose, second project (Vision play).
	10/10	Fall Break. No Class
Week 8	10/15 & 17	Observed rehearsals. Script for Vision play green-lighted by instructor.
Week 9	10/22 & 24	Midterm share. Presentation of <u>Key Exchange</u> and <u>The Person I Once Was</u> scenes. Director’s Book #1 Due.

Week 10	10/29 & 31	Director's Vision. World of the Play. Technical elements. Have read: <i>Sense of Direction</i> pages 125 to end of text.
Week 11	11/5 & 7	Vision Presentations
Week 12	11/12	Presentation of Vision play environment set-up and use of playing areas. Group feedback/discussion.
	11/14	Observed Rehearsals. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
Week 13	11/19 & 21	Observed Rehearsals. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
Week 14	11/26	Observed Rehearsals continued. Attention to environment/place is imperative.
	11/28	Thanksgiving Break. No class.
Week 15	12/3	Semester Wrap-up. Questions/Observations/Troubleshooting.
	12/5	Begin final presentation of Project 2, Thurs. Dec. 5 th and cont. Tues., Dec. 17 th 4:30-6:30p.m. (Director's Book #2 due at time of students' scene presentation).

Final Exam Period: Tues., Dec 17th 4:30 until 6:30p.m. Director's Book #2 due at students' final presentation of Project 2. Peer Notes Due.

*** Reading assignments should be completed by the day listed. ***

*** Process and progression subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group ***

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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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.

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 Bright Space ****

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theatre 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>

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

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.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

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 consists 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) 740-2500

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 #305A, Fall Semester 2024*****