

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**THTR 427-AUDITION TECHNIQUE FOR FILM,  
TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA  
(2.0 Units)  
Fall 2024, Fridays, 2:00-3:50 PM  
DAB B10**

**Instructor: DAN SHANER**

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## **Health Objective**

Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow University guidelines. If you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, please NOTIFY ME and stay home to protect others. It will be your responsibility to continue to keep up with class notes and assignments.

## **Course Description and Overview**

To provide each actor-student with practical as well as skills-based preparation for a professional career, to integrate instructors' direction, criticism and feedback in a positive and professional manner, and develop confidence, presence and professional decorum on-camera and in a collaborative environment.

## **Learning Objectives**

This course develops and perfects auditioning skills needed to successfully build a career as an actor and compete at a professional level in a variety of film, television and new media venues. Focus includes:

- Identifying type, essence and age range as it applies to choosing roles and branding and marketing
- Breaking down and analyzing sides and scenes to discover emotional complexity and uniqueness of character to aid in making bold, unique choices
- Sharpening on-camera skills, including practical technical aspects of filmed auditions
- Developing professional etiquette and decorum
- Learning the art of researching, self-taping and self-submitting on projects
- Demystifying pilot season casting
- Assessing personal habits and fears that might inhibit effective auditions
- Collecting and preparing appropriate audition materials
- Integrating acting skills into fully realized audition pieces

**Prerequisite: THTR 101 and THTR 252B**

### **IMPORTANT DATES:**

**Friday, August 30, 2024 – First day of class**

**Friday, October 4, 2024 – Mid-term assignment**

**Friday, October 11, 2024 – Fall Recess (No class)**

**Friday, November 29, 2024 – Thanksgiving (No class)**

**Friday, December 6, 2024 – Last day of class**

**Friday, December 13, 2024 – Final exam essay due (No class)**

## Grading Scale and Criteria:

**A** indicates work of excellent quality (**100 to 90%**); **B** of good quality (**90 to 80%**); **C** of average quality (**80 to 70%**); **D** of below average quality (**70 to 60%**); and **F** indicates inadequate work (**50% and below**)

- A= In addition to technical competence, student has demonstrated creativity, originality and imagination in his/her approach to the work.
- B = Student has achieved the goals stated for the course, certain skills being stronger than others, but without consistent application.
- C = Student comprehends the goals intellectually, but is not able to apply them on a consistent basis and does not use his/her creativity and imagination fully. Student may not fully demonstrate a professional and disciplined approach to the work.
- D = Student lacks comprehension of the goals and/or is inadequate in achieving them. Student has serious problems with professionalism and/or discipline.
- F = Student fails to comprehend the goals stated for the semester.
- The instructor reserves the right to consider studentship in determining the final grade.
- +/- may be added to any grade

## Grading Breakdown:

Course will contain **two homework assignments**:

1. What's My Type? Exercises (**5%**) – Due Week Two (9/6)
2. Self-tape submissions, emailed to me before class on Week Seven (10/4) (Mid-term exam) (**20%**)

**AND four practical application assignments:** The analysis, breakdown and performance of scenes given in class. Grades will be based on assessment of understanding the basic principles of diagramming a scene discussed in week two, as well as creativity and bold choices.

3. Guest Star scenes (**15%**)
4. Co-Star scenes (**15%**)
5. Appropriateness of scenes chosen based on age range, character type and overall suitability (**10%**)
6. Final reflection essay, via email, due on **Finals day, Friday, 12/13 at 2:00 PM (20%)**
7. Studentship (Attendance, Professionalism, Discipline, Responsibility and Participation) (**15%**)

**Studentship (Attendance, Professionalism, Discipline, Responsibility and Participation) will play a part in determining the final grade. Viewing of films also counts towards studentship.**

**WATCH LIST:** Choose one film to watch, and be prepared to talk about it at the beginning of each class. Choose a film from each decade, then start over again. I want you to challenge yourself, pick films and genres that wouldn't ordinarily appeal to you. Do a little research before or after viewing the film, anything about it that interests you, and be prepared to talk about that as well.

**For Course Assignments:**

**All assignments are due when requested. LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

**Required Textbook:** “How To Audition on Camera: A Hollywood Insiders’ Guide for Actors” -**Second Edition** By Sharon Bialy (2016) Available on Amazon and <https://www.bkstr.com/usctextstore>

**Highly Suggested Additional Textbook:** “Working Actor” by David Dean Bottrell (2019) Available on Amazon.

**Sides/Scenes:** Will be distributed ahead of time, via Brightspace or email, unless otherwise specified.

**Additional Policies:**

- All students are expected to bring and keep a separate notebook or tablet for lecture notes. **I WOULD VASTLY PREFER WRITTEN NOTES TO TAKING NOTES ON A LAPTOP OR PHONE. IT IS TOO HARD TO TELL IF YOU ARE ACTUALLY WRITING, OR SURFING THE NET.** Please keep all assignments and homework returned to you.
- You are responsible for your own sides and the sides for your reader. **I will not have copies to give you.**
- **CELL PHONES ARE NOT ALLOWED IN CLASS** except for students with emergency situations discussed privately and approved by instructor, or when specifically requested for research or exercises.
- **ATTENDANCE IN CLASS IS MANDATORY, EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF ILLNESS.** If you **MUST** miss class, please notify me **AHEAD OF TIME**, in writing. I cannot guarantee that all in-person classes will be automatically available on Zoom.
- **LATE ARRIVALS ARE NOT ALLOWED. IF YOU ARE NOT SITTING IN YOUR SEAT AT THE START OF CLASS, YOU WILL BE CONSIDERED ABSENT. THREE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL IMPACT YOUR STUDENTSHIP GRADE.**
- **GENERAL ETIQUETTE AND DECORUM.** Students are expected to behave professionally, be dressed appropriately for class, and treat guests and each other with respect and dignity. Students are requested to arrive **ON TIME (which means early) to class.** It is preferred that students be on camera at all times, and sitting upright at a table or desk, if at all possible, if class is on Zoom.
- **PROFESSIONALISM IN CLASS IS PARAMOUNT.** This includes talking or leaving the room while others are speaking or performing scenes and treating others with courtesy and respect.
- **EMAIL.** Our preferred method of communication outside of class will be your USC.edu email address. It will be your responsibility to check your email often, respond **promptly** to any messages, and inform me immediately if this is not the best way to reach you. If, for some reason, your correct email address is not in the University grading and roster system, please let me know ASAP.
- **EATING OR DRINKING DURING CLASS IS PROHIBITED.**

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

(NOTE: Dates and discussions subject to change, especially regarding availability of Guest Stars. Assignment due dates will not change without advanced notice.)

### WEEK ONE

8/30

#### TELLING YOUR STORY, DISCOVERING YOUR ESSENCE, AND TYPECASTING IN FILM AND TV

- Teacher introduction. Review of syllabus and materials.
- **HANDOUT:** “What Is Your Type?” on Brightspace
- **HANDOUT:** Resources for Actors on Brightspace
- Review types of Auditions and Casting Situations.
- Discovering your type, age range, and essence. Self-perception vs. how others perceive you.
- Choosing roles that are “right” for you.
- The differences between “miscast” and “typecast.”
- **HANDOUT:** Watchlist on Brightspace
- **HOMEWORK:** Fill out adjective list on Brightspace, according to HOW YOU PERCEIVE YOURSELF. Bring blank copies of your adjective list and go to the Village or other public place and ask strangers THEIR PERCEPTION OF YOU. (Both lists due Week two (9/6))
- **TEXTBOOK:** Forward, Authors Note, Introduction.

## WEEK TWO

9/6

### **DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION OF HOMEWORK FROM WEEK ONE**

**DISCUSSION:** Identifying style/tone/genre/pace of scenes and shows. Dissecting the basic principles of analyzing and breaking down a scene:

- What is the problem your character is trying to solve? (What is going wrong?)
- How does your character attempt to fix it?
- What does what your character want?
- Making bold and surprising choices every time
- The actors' signature: Things you do to make the character your own.
- Finding the transitions, subtext, and action words of the scene. What does punctuation mean?
- To improvise or not improvise?

### **RESEARCHING THE SHOW/SHOWRUNNERS/FILMMAKERS**

- **DISCUSSION:** Who are the principals or "elements" in the project, how to find out more about them, and why it matters.
- **HOMEWORK:** Analyze and break down assigned scenes emailed to you.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 1-4

## WEEK THREE

9/13

### **PREPARING TO AUDITION**

- What to wear.
- Appropriate use of props, costumes, furniture and pantomime.
- The three Ps: Professionalism, Punctuality, Preparation.
- Submission deadlines
- The reader.
- The camera.
- The Actors Survival Set-up

### **ON-CAMERA AUDITIONS**

- **EXERCISE:** Begin auditioning homework scenes assigned in Week 2
- Each student will have the opportunity to perform scenes twice with feedback.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 5-12 (Chapters are short)

## **WEEK FOUR**

**9/20**

### **ON-CAMERA AUDITIONS CONTINUED**

- **EXERCISE:** Call-backs. What to do differently or the same. Wardrobe choices.
- Each student will have the opportunity to perform scene twice with feedback.
- Playback of film and critique.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 13-20

## **WEEK FIVE**

**9/27**

**Possible Guest Star Speaker: Self-tape Expert (TBD)**

### **ALL ABOUT THE SELF-TAPE**

- Lighting
- Sound
- Framing
- Slates
- Etiquette
- Equipment (Handout on Brightspace)
- Delivery platforms

## WEEK SIX

10/4

### **SELF-SUBMITTING**

- **DISCUSSION:** Finding auditions.
- Choosing worthwhile projects and ones to avoid.
- Dos and don'ts of self-submitting
- Each student will shoot a self-tape audition with material they have chosen and email to me before Week Seven.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 20-25

## WEEK SEVEN

10/11 (Fall Recess-No Class)

## WEEK EIGHT

10/18

**REVIEW OF SELF-TAPES** (This assignment will serve as a mid-term assessment to gauge understanding and application of skills learned thus far)

- **EXERCISE:** Feedback, critique and re-directs. Re-shoots as necessary.
- **HOMEWORK:** Prepare co-star and featured "one-liner" roles.

## WEEK NINE

10/25

### **HOW TO AUDITION FOR CO-STAR AND FEATURED ROLES ON CAMERA**

- **DISCUSSION:** How not to stand out.
- Tricks and techniques including S.L.A.P. (Say it like a person).
- Miscasting and typecasting, and the differences between them.
- **EXERCISE:** Auditioning scenes on camera. Scenes handed out in class.
- Feedback and re-directs.
- Second round of auditions will feature several actors reading the same role.
- **HOMEWORK:** Prepare scenes for mock casting session.
- **TEXTBOOK:** Chapters 26 - Conclusion



## WEEK TEN

11/1

### **MOCK CASTING SESSION AUDITIONS ON-CAMERA**

- **EXERCISE:** Two or more actors will receive the same material. The rest of the class will be the Casting Directors.
- Re-directs and discussion of actors.
- Call-backs.
- **DISCUSSION:** How is a cast assembled? How does type, look, essence, personality, physicality and talent come into play when choosing a cast? What happens when no one is chosen?
- **TEXTBOOK:** Glossary and Audition checklist.

## WEEK ELEVEN

11/8

### **PILOT SEASON -- PILOT PRE-READS AND CALL-BACKS ON CAMERA**

- **EXERCISE:** Two or more actors will receive the same material, (Distributed as Week Nine Homework). The rest of the class will rotate as Casting Directors.
- Re-directs and call-backs. Two or more actors will move to Studio Testing phase.
- **DISCUSSION:** Quotes, holds, contracts, and testing preparation.
- **HOMEWORK:** Choose your own material for Film auditions in Week 12.

## **WEEK TWELVE**

**11/15**

### **STUDIO TESTS-AUDITION AT STUDIO OR PRODUCTION COMPANY LEVEL ON-CAMERA**

- **EXERCISE:** Director work session.
- Studio Executive casting session. We will attempt to re-create Studio Environment as much as possible. At least one actor per role will be eliminated and join Executive/Producer panel.
- **DISCUSSION:** What works, what doesn't. Creating a cast. Dealing with stress, anxiety, nerves and rejection.

## **WEEK THIRTEEN**

**11/22**

### **NETWORK TESTS-AUDITION AT NETWORK LEVEL ON-CAMERA**

- **EXERCISE:** Network casting session. We will attempt to re-create actual Network environment as much as possible.
- One actor for each role will be chosen. Or not. As actors are eliminated, they will join the Executive/Producer Panel.
- **DISCUSSION:** What happens now? The ins and outs of Network casting, screen tests, self-tapes. Competing in the global marketplace.

## **WEEK FOURTEEN**

**11/29-THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (No Class)**

## **WEEK FIFTEEN**

**12/6**

### **NETWORK TESTS-AUDITION AT NETWORK LEVEL ON-CAMERA**

- **EXERCISE:** Network casting session. We will attempt to re-create actual Network environment as much as possible.
- One actor for each role will be chosen. Or not. As actors are eliminated, they will join the Executive/Producer Panel.
- **DISCUSSION:** What happens now? The ins and outs of Network casting, screen tests, self-tapes. Competing in the global marketplace.

## **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.

## **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](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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.