

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 499 Ailey/Beatles/Coachella...The ABCs of Producing on Location

Units: 2

Spring 2025—Mondays—12:00 PM-2:50 PM

Lecture Location: KAP 164

Kaprielian Hal

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Practice in Production Management and Producing

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Course Description

The struggle to produce a work is quite astonishing and often unbelievable. The challenging process of germinating an idea, deciding on a venue, assembling a collaborative team, sticking within a limited budget, to finally getting anyone to attend the performance, can keep anyone on the edge of their seat.

This course would focus on the difficulties and considerations of producing work at non-traditional performance spaces over three types of projects: a play/music/dance in a site-specific location (Sleep No More, The Industry, Elizabeth Streb London Olympics), a pop-up museum (Museum of Ice Cream, Refinery 29, Vincent Van Gogh Experience), and a music festival (Outside Lands, Coachella, Glastonbury).

Learning Objectives

Students will be challenged in this course to use all available tools to form a creative idea, successfully plan for all production possibilities, and somehow drive a profit when the dust settles. Students are expected to be inquisitive, humble, driven, and self-starting. The depth of learning for each participant will depend on how much they want to explore the creative process, budgetary constraints, and production perils and pitfalls.

Students will gain more than just specific knowledge on the topic at hand, their minds will be sharpened to tackle many, if not all, that the post-graduate professional world throws at them.

Prerequisite(s): None

Co-Requisite(s): None

Concurrent Enrollment: None

Recommended Preparation: Background or interest in live performance, theme parks, and/or film/TV.

Course Notes

This course is a seminar course with the focus on the work in class. It will involve three main projects of varying scales, outside interviews with working professionals, and some off-campus site tours. Students will receive a letter grade for their work in this course.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students should have a laptop computer to bring to class for notes and research. Familiarity with Google Drive & Suite (Sheets & Slides) preferred.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

All reading and material will be provided digitally through Brightspace, as well as through a shared class on Google Drive.

Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

Students will be encouraged to do their own research outside of class (articles, YouTube links, social media) and share those materials with their fellow classmates.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

INTERVIEWS: Students will engage producers across the field of production and throughout the United States to interview them about their process of producing live entertainment. They will be seeking answers to topics such as budgeting practices, schedule formation, organizational methods, and communication strategies. Grading for these will be based on students seeking and conducting thoughtful interviews with leaders in their field of study and reporting back what insight they have gleaned from the interviewee. Subjects for the interviews will be motivated by the class topics and student interest.

PROJECTS: Projects will come in three levels of collaboration and difficulty. Specifics relating to the deliverables for each project will be shared upon assignment.

Project #1 will offer insight into the basic expectations of producing a live performance on location. This project will be a group project to encourage teamwork, time management, task delegation, and in-person presentation/critique skills.
Deliverables - A pitch deck that includes a limited budget & simple schedule for production elements, labor, and performances

Project #2 will demonstrate the difficulties of producing a known commercial product, such as a pop-up museum from scratch, and attempting to turn a profit while doing so. This project will be a solo project to encourage creative exploration/integration/development, time management, profit analysis, and in-person presentation/critique skills.
Deliverables - A pitch deck that includes marketing materials, budget and schedule for production elements, labor, and live entertainment.

Project #3 will demonstrate the difficulties of producing a high-stakes multi-faceted music festival. This project will be a solo project to encourage creative exploration/integration/development, time management, profit analysis, large-scale contingency planning, and in-person presentation/critique skills.
Deliverables - A pitch deck that includes marketing materials, budget and schedule for production elements, labor, and musical performances, and a contingency plan for a possible last-minute dilemma.

Participation

Attendance in class is the basis for participation. This course aims to engage students in their interest and foster discussion and active participation. The weekly class will be prompted and led by the lecturer, but students will drive the depth of discussion. Learning for this course happens both in and out of the

classroom. The class will go on at least one field trip off campus to tour locations near campus to see production practices in the field.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Participation	15	15
Interviews	10	10
Preliminary Project #1	15	15
Midterm Project #2	25	25
Final Project #3	35	35
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are submitted both virtually on the shared Google Drive by Monday at 10 AM, as well as in person during the class presentation period.

Grading Timeline

Grading for the 3 projects will come with 1 week of submission and presentation of the materials in class.

Course Specific Policies

Students are asked to arrive on time; on-time being in their seats, laptops open and phones silent before class instruction begins. Tardiness will not be tolerated, and persistent tardiness will result in a lower participation grade.

Projects not submitted by start of class on the due date will result in $\frac{1}{3}$ lower grade. If submitted the day after it is due, 1 full grade will be deducted. Beyond that, the project is considered not submitted and will receive 0 points.

Attendance

In-person attendance is required for this course unless extenuating circumstances (pre-approved by the lecturer) are requested. In such case, Zoom participation may be allowable and attendance will still be required virtually.

Classroom Norms

Classroom norms, also referred to as discussion norms or community agreements, describe the behaviors that are encouraged and discouraged during class. They can be a powerful tool for establishing a supportive learning environment. Refer to the CET resources on [creating community agreements](#).

Zoom Etiquette

In rare situations will Zoom be provided for class usage. In these instances, students are required to be on camera (unless pre-approved by the lecturer), muted when not speaking, and respectful of other students both on camera and in the chat.

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.

Policy for the Use of AI Generators

This course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. That being said, AI-generated imagery to help support your creative pitches, examples being graphics, logos, renderings, and merchandise will be allowed to some degree, and labeled as AI-generated in your citations. Using AI-generated text, code, or other substantive portions of your work or in lieu of your creative ideas around this project will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an "F" grade on the assignment or the course.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit the 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 relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

There will be an opportunity towards the end of the semester to offer formal feedback and an evaluation of this course. Otherwise, the instructor welcomes feedback throughout the semester at any point.

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.

Course Schedule

Wk #	Wk of	Class	Lesson Plan/Homework
1	Jan 13	Review Syllabus - Intro to Course	HW: Create Producer Questionnaire
2	Jan 20	Interview a Producer #1 Intro to Producer's Process & Locations	HW: Create a Site Inspection Questionnaire
3	Jan 27	Evaluating A Location	Site Visit - LA Coliseum and BMO Stadium HW: Interview a Producer #2, Revise the Interview Questionnaire
4	Feb 3	Intro to Schedule - Logistics	HW: Prelim Tech Schedule
5	Feb 10	Intro to Budget - Venue & Labor	HW: Prelim Budget and Revised Tech Schedule
6	Feb 17	Intro to Budget - Materials Contingency Planning	HW: Finish Project #1
7	Feb 24	Review Project #1 Debriefs Intro to Pop-Ups	Project #1 - Site Specific Performance Due HW: Prelim Pop-Pop Deck Research and Location
8	Mar 3	Revenue, Merch, and Marketing	HW: Prelim Budget, Tech Schedule, and Revised Deck
9	Mar 10	Permitting, Insurance, and Inspections	HW: Finish Project #2 and Watch FYRE on Netflix
10	Mar 17	<i>Spring Break</i>	
11	Mar 24	Review Project #2 Intro to Music Festivals Review Fyre Festival	Project #2 - Pop-Up Experience Due HW: Interview a Producer #3, Select Headliners, Lineup, and Theme for Final Project
12	Mar 31	In-Class Project	HW: Select Festival Location, Dates, and Begin Marketing Deck
13	Apr 7	Riders, Contracts, and Force Majeure	HW: Create Prelim Site Plan and Train Schedule
14	Apr 14	Touring & Remounts	HW: Prelim Revenue Budget and Schedule
15	Apr 21	Unlimited Budgets Course Evaluations	HW: Interview a Producer #4, Prelim Expense Budget, Revised Revenue, and Schedule
16	Apr 28	Worst Case Scenarios	HW: Finish Project #3
Final	May TBC	Review Project #3	Project #3 - Music Festival Due

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 well-being. 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, and 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 the 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 avenues 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.