



Audio Drama - THTR 306

Units: 2

Term—Day—Time: Tu, Th 10-11:20a

Location: MCC110

Instructor: Noel Nichols

Office: JEF 206A

Office Hours: TBD

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Course Description

Audio drama is in the middle of a renaissance. The ease of access to the technology and the distribution platform of podcasts has set the stage for a huge growth in the popularity of this art form. The purpose of this course is to develop a basic understanding of the skills required to effectively develop, create, record, edit, and market an audio drama. Students with an interest in writing, performing, and recording will learn how to create compelling ideas, execute them to a high degree of artistry, and address the challenges of publishing them in the podcast universe.

Learning Objectives

To provide each student with practical as well as skills-based preparation for creating audio drama: to give each student the requisite experience and knowledge of storytelling, production, recording, directing, post-production, and publishing in order for them to generate their own new material.

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Co-Requisite(s): N/A

Concurrent Enrollment: N/A

Recommended Preparation: THTR 236, training with Digital Audio Workstations

Course Notes

This class is designed as a broad introduction to aural storytelling, covering all aspects of the process. Students should have one or more proficiencies in the following skill areas: content creation, direction/dramaturgy, vocal performance, and sound design. While the class and the assignments are generalistic, specialists will also be given opportunities to delve more deeply into their area of skill development.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will be asked to work from either their own devices or from a university maintained design lab. Students must have access to a Digital Audio Workstation of their choosing (ProTools, Logic, Reaper suggested; Audacity, Garageband acceptable). Link information for the [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#). USC Technology Support Links [Zoom information for students](#), [Brightspace help for students](#), [Software available to USC Campus.](#)]

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Bombs Always Beep - KC Wayland - (can be purchased [here](#))

Students must bring a notebook and pencil to all classes to take notes. Laptops will not be permitted in lecture classes.

Students must also provide a portable drive or flash drive to store and transfer audio materials.

Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

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Listening materials will be pointed to in the course and some will require purchase fees or memberships to a podcast platform such as Spotify, Apple Music, or Audible.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Assignments -

- Lecture journals

Homework (short)

- Research Presentation
- Foley Project
- Listen and respond

Projects (long)

- Project #1 - Create small - make an audio story with no words
- Project #2 - Create small - NPR phone exercises or similar, text focused personal story telling
- Final Project - Create big - scripted narrative fully produced

ASSIGNMENTS -

Listen and Respond -

Given a variety of materials, students will listen to and respond to an audio drama, and provide a one page description and response. Responses can include analysis on plot, character, recording technique, music, foley, effects, the only stipulation being that they cite at least two instances in particular of something technical and something in the storytelling.

Foley Project -

Students will be asked to find two objects/gestures each to represent another sound. This will be a small exercise to get an introduction into disembodied sound and how we hear.

Research -

Research and briefly present on various important players in the history of audio drama.

PROJECTS -

Project #1 - Sound Story

Create a 1 minute long audio story with no text. This assignment will serve as an introduction to the challenge of non-visual storytelling, and how time functions differently in the domain of audio narrative. This is also designed to give students an opportunity to experiment with their own sensibilities outside of the context of a script.

Project #2 - Short Monologues

Using the text provided, record and edit a short monologue, adding effects as appropriate. This project will shift students into thinking more about recording technology, delivery systems, and the suspension of disbelief when thinking about the ear of the listener.

Final Project (group project) - Audio Drama

Students will be divided into groups based on a survey of interest to complete production of a short audio drama scene (5-7 minutes). Roles in these teams will include director, recordist, performer(s), editor, foley performer. This project will shift in scope to suit the needs and capabilities of the class. Ex. if we have an imbalance of technical skill. Following the first pass showing of each project, student groups will meet with instructor individually to discuss what is needed to move from the condition of the first pass file to a final submission (i.e. if the group is missing the technical knowledge in a way that is hindering their creative progress, responsibility can be shifted to instructor to facilitate technical completion). Final projects will be submitted in a final bounced stereo format.

WORKING SYLLABUS 11/18/2024

Pending university interest, these projects can also be streamed or showed to a greater audience, though the priority is the development of creation skills and aesthetic sensibility.

Lecture Journal Requirement:

In addition to the assignments above, students are required to complete a journal of lecture notes from all in class lectures and presentations. This should be a typed and edited version of your handwritten notes; it must be legible and easy to follow, and it must be submitted electronically as a PDF File. In addition, you should write a summary and analysis of each reading assignment, which should be included with your journal. (Note - Your class notes should NOT be a copy of the lecture slides from class. Lecture slides are discussion topics only – your notes should include the pertinent information you acquired from each discussion topic.) There will be three submission dates:

Submission 1 – No later than 5pm Friday at the end of Week 5

Submission 2 – No later than 5pm Friday at the end of Week 10

Submission 3 – No later than 5pm Friday at the end of Week 15

Participation

In-class participation is essential to this course; participation will be qualified and represented both by journal entries and by your ability to engage in discussion. Please be prepared to actively discuss assigned materials in class.

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Journals	30	30
Participation	5	5
Foley Project	5	5
Research Presentation	5	5
Listen/Response	15	15
Project #1 - Sound Story	10	10
Project #2 - Short Audio Drama	10	10
Final Project - Long Audio Drama	20	20
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

The due dates for all assignments will be given in class. Failure to complete an assignment by the due date will result in lowered grading for that work.

Assignments will all be submitted through Brightspace. Audio submissions must ALSO be submitted through Google Drive. A shared drive will be created for the class for both submitting assignments and for sharing audio files between students and peers for the final project.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

FOR SDA Assignments: Grades will be assigned according to the above criteria. Students can check their progress at any time by scheduling an appointment with the instructors during office hours.

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

Course Specific Policies

Students must bring a notebook and pencil to all classes to take notes. Laptops will not be permitted in lecture classes.

Attendance

Attendance and participation in class and in person is mandatory.

Excused Absences - An excused absence is due to serious illness, grave emergency or significant acting work with appropriate SDA leave of absence.

Unexcused Absences - Any absence not falling under the above. If you need to miss class for any other reason, you must inform the instructor as soon as possible. Unexcused absences will impact your participation points. Students with more than 2 unexcused absences will be subject to letter grade deduction or failure from the course.

Please inform the instructor directly of **any** absence. You are responsible for all work missed. An extended absence, even if excused, could seriously affect your work and grade in class. Please consult with instructor if such a situation arises.

TARDIES: Please respect the time of your peers and be prepared to begin working with us promptly and on time. If you have any issue joining class on time, notify your instructor as soon as possible. Repeated tardiness will be considered an unexcused absence.

If you miss the class in which an assignment is given, it is YOUR responsibility to get the assignment details from another student in the class. Absences from class will not alter the due date of material.

Classroom norms

We will review classroom etiquette and define a few [classroom agreements](#). Please take note of these agreements in your journals and return to them frequently.

Zoom etiquette

Hybrid classes will not be held for this course. If classes need to pivot to Zoom, the full class will be held on zoom, and students will be required to provide their own space and laptop in a quiet environment with headphones in. Students are required to keep cameras on for the duration of any zoom based classes.

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.

AI POLICY

This course aims to develop creative, analytical, and critical thinking skills. Therefore, all 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. Therefore, using AI-generated text, code, or other content is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

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 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

WORKING SYLLABUS 11/18/2024

intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

[Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. The process and intent of the end-of-semester evaluation should be provided. In addition, a mid-semester evaluation is recommended practice for early course correction. [Contact CET](#) for support in creating a mid-semester evaluation.]

Course Schedule

Week #	Lectures/Mid Week Rehearsals	Assignment
Week 1	Course Intro lecture History - Aural Storytelling, overview of professional process, critical listening	Reading: Selection TBD
Week 2	History - Broadcast Radio, live performances, US and UK	Reading: Selection TBD Assign: Listening and response assignment#1 Assign/Due: 'Foley' project
Week 3	History - Podcasting, digital narrative fiction, scripted vs. unscripted Discuss listening assignment, critical listening review	Reading: Selection TBD Due: Listening and response assignment#1 Assign: Listening and response assignment #2
Week 4	Storytelling - Narrative structure, conflict review, Aristotelian time Discuss listening assignment, critical listening review	Due: Listening and response assignment #2
Week 5	Aural storytelling- what matters and what doesn't, sound as poetry, navigating the visual disconnect, using cliché and baggage	Reading: Selection TBD Assign: Project #1 - A Story in Sound
Week 6	Intro to DAWs, USC Sound Library and tools Time based editing How to source content	Reading: Selection TBD Continue: Project #1 - A Story in Sound
Week 7	Recording techniques - microphone basics, room treatment, and common pitfalls Listen to Project 1	Due: Project #1
Week 8	CASTING, Scheduling, and production logistics	Reading: Selection TBD
Week 9	Vocal performance for audio drama (Guest	Assign: Project #2 - Phone

WORKING SYLLABUS 11/18/2024

	lecture, Gabby?)	Monologues
Week 10	Work session for Project 2	Weekend Recording for Project 2
Week 11	Listen to Project 2 Roles in Audio Drama teams, workflows, timelines, order of operations	Due: Project #2
Week 12	Business - production pipelines, hiring, licensing, streaming and publishing models	Assign Project #3 - Short Productions
Week 13	In class work session - Project #3 Rehearsal, asset planning, direction	Weekend Recording for Project #3
Week 14	In class work session First pass class review	Take notes and revise Project #3, Weekend Recording
Week 15	In class work sessions - instructor meetups	
FINAL	Final Project Listening Session	Due: Project #3

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. 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.

WORKING SYLLABUS 11/18/2024

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.