

THTR 417 (63119) – Stage Combat

Spring 2025 — Monday & Wednesday

10:00 AM – 11:20 AM

Location: MCC 107

Instructor: Edgar Landa

Office: MCC

Office Hours: Mon/Wed 11:30-12:00 and by appointment

Contact Info: (323) 972-4755 OR landa@usc.edu

FINAL EXAM:

Monday May 12, 2024 (8:00AM – 10:00AM)

Course Description and Overview

This course will examine the use of fight and violence in a theatrical context for the stage and for the camera.

Learning Objectives

Topics that will be covered include:

1. **Safety:** How to create the illusion of violence without causing harm to self, an acting partner, the audience, or scenery to create a safe working environment in the classroom and in a professional setting.
2. **Violence & Context:** Discussion of the artist's responsibility to reflect violence safely and accurately so that the actor can deeply explore violence in the service of a given character and text, within a variety of genres and styles.
3. **Basic unarmed stage combat:** Punches, blocks, kicks, falls, rolls, slaps, found objects as weapons. These are all tools that the professional actor will encounter throughout the course of their career.
4. **Action for the Camera:** An introduction to selling the action through the camera.

Principles covered:

1. Supportive Partnering
2. Eye Contact
3. Action-Reaction-Completion (ARC) Principle
4. Pace & Tempo: *Slow is Smooth and Smooth is Fast*
5. Receiver in Control
6. Reversal of Energy
7. Lines of Attack
8. Casting & Diffusing Energy
9. Physical Lines of Dialogue & Story Building

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Suggested Reading

Reference handouts containing overviews and additional information will be given to students throughout the semester.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Assignments:

1. Mid-term Quiz
2. Presentation of fight scene 1 (Unarmed)
3. Presentation of fight scene 2 (Unarmed)
4. Presentation of fight scene 3 (Camera)
5. Final: Fight Scene Presentation

Grading Scale

A	=	96-100
A -	=	90-95
B +	=	86-89
B	=	84-85
B -	=	80-83
C +	=	76-79
C	=	74-75
C -	=	70-73
D	=	60-69
F	=	59 and below

Grading Guidelines

20 Points	Participation
15 Points	Mid-Term Quiz
10 Points	Fight 1 Presentation
15 Points	Fight 2 Presentation
15 Points	Fight 3 Presentation
25 Points	Final Project
100	TOTAL POINTS

* Each scene will be scored as follows:

- 40% - Execution of choreography
- 30% - Execution of storytelling
- 30% - Safety & Partnering

Assessment of "Participation"

20% of the final grade is earned through class participation. This will be defined as:

- Show up on time – students who are more than 10 minutes late are considered tardy. Three unexcused tardy arrivals will result in a deduction of 5 points from the final grade unless special arrangements have been made with the professor. Consistent tardiness within the 10-minute grace period will result in a discussion with the student and a restructuring of the grace period.
- Openness to new methods of working and eagerness to attempt them.
- Energized support of all classmates' work.
- Constructive feedback and observation of one's work and classmates' work.
- Meeting of all deadlines.
- Memorization of assigned material for scene presentations.
- Rehearsal *outside* of class hours with scene partners as necessary.
- Proper class-wear (see below under **Clothing & Gear**)

Attendance, Tardiness and Absences

Tardiness or absences are not excused without proper notification and at the discretion of the instructor. Communication with the instructor is essential in case of emergency or illness.

The structure of this class is cumulative. Missed classes mean you fall behind and your partner falls behind if you miss on a day scheduled for scene work.

***** Zoom is no longer an option for class participation.**

*****Each absence will result in a deduction of 2-points from the overall grade.**

Communication & Brightspace

Communication and information for this class will be relayed via email using your USC email addresses (if you have a non-USC address as your primary email address, please make sure your USC email is bouncing over to your primary address).

Assignments and additional instructional material will be available on Brightspace. As each module is released or additional content is added you will be notified via Brightspace (which uses your USC email address to deliver messages).

Clothing & Gear

- Wear clothing that allows for free and unrestricted movement (preferably black) such as sweat/athletic pants and tights. Shorts are permitted. Tank tops are permitted but short-sleeve or long-sleeve shirts are preferable.
- Wear appropriate footwear (no open-toe shoes, sandals, etc.). Working in socks or barefoot is not permitted.
- A small towel is recommended to dry off.
- Bottled water is advisable.
- Jewelry (rings, watches, earrings, necklaces) should be removed prior to the start of each class session to avoid injury or damage.

Course Schedule: Weekly Breakdown

Week 1

Mon Jan 13: Class Intro & Overview / The Warm-Up / Physical Lines of Dialogue
Hand Strike Techniques 1 (The Roundhouse Punch)

Wed Jan 15: Hand Strike Techniques 1 (The Roundhouse Punch) - Review
Arm & Hand Blocking Techniques 1 (Static Defenses)

Objectives: Distance/Measure, Eye Contact, Breath, Cueing, In Slow/Out Fast, Casting Energy, Clap Knaps, Physical Lines of Dialogue, Reality Speed vs Theatrical Speed

Week 2

Mon Jan 20: **NO CLASS – SCHOOL HOLIDAY**

Wed Jan 22: Review of Roundhouse Strikes and Arm/Hand Blocks
Hand Strike Techniques 1 (Variations)
Hand Strikes 2 (Non-Contact Slap Techniques)
Strikes & Evasions

Objectives: Making Your Partner Look Good, Action-Reaction-Completion (ARC), Aggressor/Victim vs Sender/Receiver, Slow is Smooth & Smooth is Fast, Clap Knaps, Vocal Cues, Cueing & Timing, Illusion of Violence, Hiding the Knap

Week 3

Mon Jan 27: Fighting & Movement – The Compass Rose (ARC Movement)
Evasions
Review of Hand Strike Techniques 1
Review of Arm & Hand Blocking Techniques 1

Wed Jan 29: Choreography & Story Building
Fight Values & Intent

Objectives: Specificity of Movement, Acting the Fight, Controlled Chaos, Pace & Rhythm, Spatial Awareness

Week 4

Mon Feb 3: Full Body Contact 1 (Shoves/Pushes, Grappling, Headlocks & Disengages)

Wed Feb 5: Full Body Contact 1 (Shoves/Pushes, Grappling, Headlocks & Disengages)
Review Choreography & Story Building

Objectives: Shared Knaps, Dispersing Energy, Placing Energy, Sharing Energy & Weight, Receiver in Control, Personal Safety & Boundaries

Week 5

Mon Feb 10: Hand Strikes 3 (Stomach Punches & Back Strikes)

Week 5 (cont'd)

Wed Feb 12: Hand Strikes 3
Full Body Contact 2 (Bear Hugs, Hair Pulls, Hair Drags)

Objectives: Reversal of Energy, Presenting the Target, Receiver in Control, Vocal Cues, Touch Cues, Visual Cues

Week 6

Mon Feb 17: **NO CLASS – SCHOOL HOLIDAY**
Hitting the Floor 1 (Knee Drops, Sit Falls, Forward Falls, Aikido Rolls)
Leg Sweeps, Throws, Takedowns

Wed Feb 19: **Presentation of Fight Scene 1**
Hitting the Floor 1
Full Body Contact 3 (Shoulder Rams, Hip Throws)

Objectives: Body Control, Controlled Chaos, Receiver in Control

Week 7

Mon Feb 24: Hitting the Floor 1 (cont'd)
Full Body Contact 3 (Shoulder Rams, Hip Throws) – cont'd

Wed Feb 26: Foot Strikes 1 (Knee strike to the stomach)
Arm & Hand Blocks 2 (Chop Blocks)

Objectives: Off-Line Targeting, In-Line Targeting, Body Knaps

Week 8

Mon Mar 3: **Mid-Term Quiz**
Bottle, Box, Rope – Found Weapons

Wed Mar 5: Tables, Walls, Elevators and Kitchens - Architecture & Environment

Objectives: Prop Safety, Environmental Awareness, Creative Storytelling

Week 9

Mon Mar 10: Creating the Fight - Part 1 (Adding Dialogue)

Wed Mar 12: **Presentation of Fight Scene 2**
Creating the Fight - Part 2 (The Space)

Objectives: Building the Fight, Rhythm and Pace

Spring Break Week

March 16 – 22: **SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES**

Week 10

Mon Mar 24: Hair Pulls, Drags & Throws

Wed Mar 26: Putting the Fight Together (Character Choices)

Objectives: Learning Fight Choreography

Week 11

Mon Mar 31: Putting the Fight Together (Choreography)

Wed Apr 2: Putting the Fight Together (Ties, Frocks, Capes, Boots & Heels)

Objectives: Creative Choices

Week 12

Mon Apr 7: TBD (Action for the Camera)

Wed Apr 9: TBD (Action for the Camera)

Objectives: TBD

Week 13

Mon Apr 14: TBD (Action for the Camera)

Wed Apr 16: TBD (Action for the Camera)

Objectives: TBD

Week 14

Mon Apr 21: TBD (Action for the Camera)

Wed Apr 23: TBD (Action for the Camera)

Presentation of Fight Scene 3 (Camera)

Objectives: TBD

Week 15

Mon Apr 28: Final Scene Choreography

Wed Apr 30: Final Scene Choreography

Objectives: Review & Closure

Final Examination Date

Monday May 12, 2025 (8:00AM – 10:00AM)

SDA PRODUCTIONS

SDA productions are courses and therefore do not supersede any other courses in which you are enrolled. When in an SDA production, students must not register for evening classes that conflict with regularly scheduled rehearsals. In short, being involved in an SDA production is a curricular assignment and must be treated as any other curricular assignment.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS AND ISPS

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

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.

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.

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 is comprised 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) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

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.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater 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>
