

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 397: Screen Acting Practicum (63131R)

Semester: Spring 2025

Instructor: Prof. Bayo Akinfemi

Office: Tue & Thur 3 - 4pm (By appointment)

Contact: akinfemi@usc.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to guide students through the creation and development of a media project with an emphasis on screen acting. Students will work together in pairs or trios to produce a 3 - 5 minute short film. All members of a team **MUST** appear on screen. Bold and innovative ideas are strongly encouraged. This is not a filmmaking practicum; it's about screen acting. Filmmaking will serve as the vehicle for achieving the primary objective. In addition, students in this practicum will audition for, and participate in SCA student film projects. Students will also be credited for participation in other projects beyond SCA and USC.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will need internet access as well as access to a working digital camera. Mobile phones or tablets are desirable for easy mobility and access. Basic editing software (ie iMovie, Movie Maker, etc.), access to basic sound and lighting equipment may also be useful, but *not* required.

Suggested Readings

- *Directing Actors: Creating Memorable Performances for Film and Television* by Judith Weston. 1996
- *Shooting to Kill* by Christine Vachon & David Edelstein. 2002

PLEASE NOTE: *This course has no traditional scheduled time for class meetings. Each team will arrange to meet with instructor on a weekly basis or as necessary for guidance, progress reports, feedbacks and instructions on individual and group projects.*

Grading Breakdown

- Project proposal: **5** (This is your pitch document. It should include your project title, logline, synopsis and character description.)
- Script: **10** (3 - 5 pages standard industry format)
- Pre-production: **10** (Location scouting, rehearsals, wardrobe, props, hair & make-up prep)
- Production: **15** (Filming)
- Post-production: **15** (picture and sound editing)

- Production Journal: **10** (One journal will be submitted for the entire team at the end of the semester. It should include detailed information about your project from inception to completion. All items such as project project proposal, script, pictures of your location, wardrobe, props should be included. Detailed notes about your preparations, rehearsals should include dates and specific responsibilities of each team member. Needless to say that each team member's contribution to the project and the journal MUST be identified.)
- Collaborative Effort: **15**
- Personal Journal: **10** (Please make detailed notes of all submissions, self tapes and in-person auditions for SCA and all other projects both in and outside of USC. Your notes should include project title, audition date and time, callback information and production dates, if you book the project. Create a file for saving all your self-tapes. Due for submission at the end of the semester.)
- SCA Projects and others: **10**

Total: 100 points

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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

Further Participation Notes:

All aspects of a life in the entertainment Industry is nothing short of a fully collaborative, immersive process. I cannot emphasize enough how much (more) you will learn by listening to, working with, and supporting your fellow teammates.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be discussed in detail at the end of each class period. Assignments will be either emailed, uploaded, or presented in class.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date & time. Grades on late assignments will be deducted appropriately. I reserve the right to not accept late assignments at my discretion.

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

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: A Weekly Breakdown.

Deviation from the weekly schedule of tasks and deliverables may result in grade deductions.

	Topics / Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverables
Week 1	Intro to course. Team formation.	Team members work together on ideas for project.	Proposal. Must include project title, logline, synopsis and character description.
Week 2	Submission of project proposal.	Team will meet with instructor to discuss project idea. Write first draft of script.	
Week 3	Feedback from instructor on first draft of script.	Write second draft of script. Begin pre-production.	
Week 4	Notes on second draft.	Final pass on script. Pre-production continues...	
Week 5	Table read script with instructor. Feedback.	Lock script. Rehearsals. (On location, if possible.)	
Week 6	Finalize prep. Discuss production with instructor.		
Week 7	Production		
Week 8	Screen dailies with instructor Production		

Week 9	Screen dailies with instructor Production. Wrap production.		
Week 10	Editing. Rough cut. (Assemble storyline)		
Week 11	Screen rough cut with instructor. Feedback	Second cut.	
Week 12	Screen second cut with instructor. Feedback	Final cut	
Week 13	Screen Final cut with instructor. Feedback	Picture lock. Sound & music edit	
Week 14	Screen final cut with music and sound. Feedback	Final edit. Lock picture and sound.	
Week 15	Final Screening. Submission of production journal. Submission of personal journal.		

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.

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.