

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**THTR 453– Taking It on The Road and Beyond  
Spring 2025 Monday & Wednesday 2:00-3:50**

**Location: MCC 102 (Conference Room)**

**Instructor: Scott Faris**

**Office: DAB 408**

**Office Hours: By appointment**

**Contact Info: [scottfar@usc.edu](mailto:scottfar@usc.edu),**

**Cell: 917-825-2739**

## **Course Description and Overview**

This course provides specific information needed to prepare Stage Managers for the processes and subtleties of working as a stage manager in professional entertainment including Broadway, touring, regional, television, corporate, theme park, Las Vegas, cruise ship, as well as other possible careers choices. The course will apply the processes and tools learned to date in the BFA Stage Management program to synthesize accumulated knowledge and explore professional avenues of employment after graduation. Through a series of field trips, guest lecturers, classroom lecture and discussion, the course will provide a deeper exploration of the specific working environments in each of these areas of production. All students will be required to participate in the final presentation of their paper on career strategy, as well as culminating Stage Manager's Panel.

## **Learning Objectives**

To prepare students for a career in the professional entertainment world. By the end of this course, students will know of viable options available in fields related to their skill set and interests, will have created both theatrical and business resumes, and written a business plan, in addition to learning practical skills of rehearsing, teching and calling a show.

During the course, students will be required to:

- Demonstrate a fluency in theatrical equipment, terminology and areas of a variety of theaters.
- Practice how to problem solve crisis situations during rehearsal.
- Analyze a script in preparation for production.
- Demonstrate an ability to "call" a show.
- Demonstrate advanced practices in stage management.
- Complete a "reflective paper" after each guest visit summarizing what they took away from the visit.
- Create a "Theatrical" and "Corporate" resume
- Create a business plan for pursuing a career in their chosen area of the entertainment industry.

**Prerequisite(s): THTR 131, THTR 333, THTR 430**

**Co-Requisite (s):**

**Concurrent Enrollment: None**

**Recommended Preparation: At least two THTR 397 theatre practicum units**

### **Course Notes**

Brightspace will be used to post notices, course content and for final exam. Please familiarize yourself with basic functions of Brightspace [Brightspace Help for Students](#)

### **Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

Have your own laptop, if possible.

### **USC technology rental program**

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please [Computer loaner program](#) The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

### **USC Technology Support Links**

If you have technical issues either with Brightspace or Zoom, please reach out to [USC IT Services](#), which is available 24/7 at:

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Brightspace help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

### **Classroom norms**

- Please report to class on time
- Please present yourself professionally, i.e., dressed properly, sitting up.
- No phones in class

### **Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment**

USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

### ***SCampus Section 11.12(B)***

*Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. 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 relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).*

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials:**

- *Production Stage Management for Broadway: From Idea to Opening Night and Beyond* by Peter Lawrence, 2015 published by Quite Specific Media Group Ltd.

**Optional Reading:**

- *Notes on Directing* by Frank Hauser
- *Theatrical Index* -- provided by instructor

**Grading Breakdown**

- A** Excellent work is neat, concise, detailed and complete as well as on time.
- B** Good work but less neat; still detailed and complete.
- C** Fair quality work may contain errors in substance or style or be late.
- D** Work does not meet the letter of the assignment.
- F** Projects are not turned in or are inadequate to the assignment.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class Participation	15	15
Reflective papers on guests	20	20
Stage management skills	40	40
Final Action Assignment	25	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	100	100

**Description of Grading Criteria**

- Class participation is essential. Absences from class will have an impact on the final grade, unless for pre-arranged SDA activities.
- Weekly one-page essays; you will be required to turn in a one-page double spaced paper, throughout the course of the semester, reflecting on that week’s guest-speaker or field trip. Essays may be submitted to the instructor by e-mail as a PDF.
- Stage management skills include clarity in paperwork and communication, attention to detail, timeliness, precision in calling cues, and a clear understanding of the “soft skills” of managing people in the theatre.
- Final Paper and Cover Letter are a final 5-page project which will be worth 25% of the grade and is described in more detail in the week-to-week section below.

### **Additional Policies**

- Students should ideally be able to bring a laptop to class to work on assignments in class.
- Because communication and timeliness are central to excellent project management, all assignments will be graded for neatness, spelling and completeness, as well as for clarity in communication.
- No late assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises shall be accepted unless advance extensions have been arranged between the student and the instructor or unless exceptional circumstances occur.

### **Assignment Submission Policy**

Late homework will not be accepted for credit unless advance arrangements have been made with the instructor or unless exceptional circumstances occur. If pre-approved by the instructor, you may email assignments [scottfar@usc.edu](mailto:scottfar@usc.edu). **All paperwork must be original for this class.**

### **Class Participation**

As punctuality is an essential component of good stage management, your prompt attendance at each class session is mandatory. If you must be late or absent, you are required to inform the instructor prior to 10:00AM on the morning of the class. The telephone number and e-mail addresses are at the top of this syllabus. If you miss a class for whatever reason, you are responsible for the material covered and the homework assigned.

### **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.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university 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.

### **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.

#### **EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training: TBD**

As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be canceled to support involvement in this effort.

#### **Final Exam:**

**The Final Exam will be administered on Monday 5/12/2025 at 2-4pm, which is the Mandatory Final Exam Meeting Time.**

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#### **Course Schedule:**

**(Exact dates of lectures will change due to availability of guest speakers)**

#### **Guests Speakers will be from the following areas:**

- **Broadway/Tours/Large Events**
  - TBD – SMs from touring production, Broadway or large event stage management
  
- **Disney Entertainment**
  - Guest TBD
  
- **Television**
  - Jessica Major, Script Supervisor

- Guest will about specifics to working in television and career possibilities
  - Alec Potter, SM Jimmy Kimmel Live -- TBD
- **International/themed entertainment opportunities**
  - Francois Bergeron, Chief Operating Officer – THINKWELL
    - <https://thinkwellgroup.com>.
- **Spectacle/Corporate/Live Events**
  - Kevin Lee Harvey, CEO & Founder of Senovva
    - <http://www.senovva.com>
    - Senovva provides production services to the Grammys, Oscars and other Corporate events
  - Melissa Rae Mahon, freelance producer -- TBD
  - Jeff Markowitz,
- **Las Vegas/Broadway**
  - Mary Barnett, PSM, Cirque du Soleil
  - Randall C. White, PSM
  - Jason Daunter
- **Rock & Roll Production Management**
  - Marty Hom, Tour Mgr.
    - Particulars to management structure and touring life
  - Jake Berry, production mgr.
- **Management in Film**
  - Zane Weiner, producer for the Hobbit film series and unit production manager for the LOTR films
    - transitioning from theatre to film
- **Cruise Ship Stage Management**
  - Melissa Trupp, Disney Cruise Lines
  - Damaris Eddy , Norwegian Cruise Lines
- **Financial Management**
  - Melissa Bondar, financial advisor and stage manager
- **Cirque du Soleil:**
  - Mary Barnett, General Stage Manager Cirque du Soleil, Michael Jackson One

**Lectures: Order will vary depending on guest visits and field trips**

- **Lecture 1 – Review class goals:**
  - Each week will try to cover a different aspect of live entertainment

- You will be required to turn in a one-page paper on the previous week's subject using one of the following prompts:
  - How can you apply what you learned today to your work at SDA?
  - Is there something in particular you learned today that might influence your own career choices? Please describe.
  - Was there anything that was shared that has clarified or changed how you view working in professional theatre/entertainment?
  - Acknowledge if this is a possible career option for you.
  - Please include any questions you might have about the subject discussed.
  - The prompts will be adapted accordingly for each week's subject.
- Coordinate guest speakers, as well as off-site visits and shadowing opportunities with professional entertainment companies
- Weekly lectures will take place during classes without guest speakers.
  
- **Lecture 2 – Auditions, Preproduction, Rehearsals & Reports**
  - Casting
  - Preproduction
  - Studio rehearsals
  - Reports; both rehearsal & performance
  
- **Lecture 3 – Tech rehearsals/dress rehearsal/orchestra rehearsals/recordings**
  - Tech rehearsals
    - Effective practice for running a tech
  - Orchestra rehearsals
  - Dress rehearsals
  - Outside recordings – voice over, augmentation, click-tracks
  
- **Lecture 4 – Calling Musicals – TBD**
  - Practice calling musicals
  
- **Lecture 5 – Professional Practices, protocols & structure**
  - Quiz – odd theatre terminology
  - Professional practices:
    - Senior management
    - Designers
    - Music department
    - FOH
    - Unions – rule books and maybe guests from these unions...?
    - AEA Production Contract Rulebook
      - Rule 58. Rehearsals, pp. 83-85 (stop at (D) Breaks &
      - Rule 61. Rest Periods & Days Off, pp. 91-94
      - Rule 62. Safe & Sanitary, p. 95-100
  - IATSE – Discussion of basic rules and management structure
  - Local 802 (musicians)

- Rule IV Rehearsal Conditions, pp. 6-12
    - Focus on hours not salary
- **Lecture 6 – How to run a show/overcoming communication challenges**
  - Lecture – How to run a show
  - Crisis management:
    - Learn how to deal with confrontation
    - Egos
  - Getting what you want
  - How/when to speak up in rehearsal
  - Guiding a director
- **Lecture 7a – The Finish Line:**
  - **Resumes/Networking/promotion**
- **Lecture 7b – practice interviews**
- **Final Action Paper & Cover Letter – 5 pages**
  - Write a detailed paper with a synopsis of your career plan after graduation, laying out production companies, people and dates as part of your action plan. Describe in detail the key characteristics of the areas that interest you. List why you would be a perfect candidate for work in this area and any areas of weakness that you could improve upon to become more employable. The final page should be in the form of a cover letter that you can use to seek employment.
- **SM showcase panel**

**Final Examination Date: Monday, May 12, 2025**

**2 - 4pm**

### **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.