

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 464: An Actor's Reel (63276R)
Semester: Spring 2025
Units: 2
Location: SHR 105
Instructor: Prof. Bayo Akinfemi
Contact: akinfemi@usc.edu
Office Hour: Thursday 3 - 4pm by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to develop an intricate, yet holistic understanding of all fundamental creative and business elements which are essential to an actor's portfolio. By using the actor's demo reel as a preparatory baseline, we'll explore all areas of the "business" end of "show business" and uncover truths and myths about what is necessary to contend in today's artistic marketplace. The course intends to properly set a strong philosophical base and rigorously engage the actor so they feel confident in assembling their own personal, unique, specific and dynamic portfolio that will become the foundational marketing toolkit of their career.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss and understand the overall business trajectory of show business as it has evolved over the past several decades and how current personal marketing has become an essential tool to compete in Entertainment.
- Understand the various positions (agent, manager, casting director, etc.) involved in an actor's career, how they function, and how they use portfolio tools (headshot, reel, etc.) to aide in (hopefully) procuring work for actors.
- We will watch and discuss current demo reels and various other marketing materials and discuss their effectiveness.
- We will work on various scenes and monologues and, through constructive discourse, understand specifics that make each actor's work unique and how this information must translate in their marketing materials.
- Rehearse and tape monologues that may (potentially) be used on the actor's reel.
- Have complete knowledge of the day-to-day of working actors, covering auditioning, physical and mental health, financial responsibilities and supplemental work.
- We will finish the course with an *entry-level* acting clips that meet basic industry standards and expectations, but is also specific, unique, creative and personal so as to "stand out" and remain competitive.

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.

Grading Breakdown

- First exercise: 20 (Writing: 5, Prep: 5, Shoot: 5, Editing: 5)
- Second exercise: 20 (Writing: 5, Prep: 5, Shoot: 5, Editing: 5)
- Third exercise: 20 (Writing: 5, Prep: 5, Shoot: 5, Editing:5)
- Final Reel Clip: 25
- Attendance and active participation: 15

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 classmates. Therefore daily participation and active engagement in class (discussions, classwork, etc.) is essential and *will* factor into your final grade. **Therefore no absences or late arrivals will be allowed.** *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*

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.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

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

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.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

	Topics / Daily Activities	Readings & Homework	Deliverables
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Week 1 01/17	Intro to course. Discussion: Professional life of a working actor and necessary toolkit.	Collect and bring in marketing materials that you have thus far. Be prepared to discuss materials in class.	Presentation in class on 01/24
Week 2 01/24	BUSINESS A(cont'd): In-class presentations/ discuss individual marketing materials	Pick 2 actors of note whose work you feel is reflective of your own. Bring in one short clip of each to screen and be prepared to discuss their work and what contributes to their appeal and their relevance. Assignment of scene partners. Start looking for scenes. At least, three for the semester. You can also write original material that showcases your brand.	Presentation in class on 01/31
Week 3 01/31	Rehearse and prep scene for shoot		
Week 4 02/07	Shoot day	Assemble rough cut	
Week 5 02/14	Presentation of rough cut for notes.	Final Cut of first material	
Week 6 02/21	Presentation of final cuts		
Week 7 02/28	Rehearse and prep second material		
Week 8 03/07	Shoot day	Assemble rough cuts	
Week 9 03/14	Presentation of rough cuts for notes	Work on final cuts	
Week 10 03/21	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK	
Week 11 03/28	Presentation of final cuts		
Week 12 04/04	Rehearse and prep third and final material		

Week 13 04/11	Shoot day	Assemble rough cut/final cut	
Week 14 04/18	Present final cuts	Assemble a 90 seconds reel	
Week 15 04/25	Present reel for notes	More edits on reels	
Week 16 05/02	Present reel for final notes	Final edits on reels	

FINALS: FRIDAY MAY 9TH; 4:30 - 6:30pm (SCREENING)

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.

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.