THTR 101 (Introduction to Acting)
Spring 2015 — Mon & Wed — 8:00 – 9:50a
Location: MCC 107

Instructor: Jeremiah O’Brian
Office: MCC Adjunct’s Office (2nd Floor MCC)
Office Hours: By appointment
Contact Info: jeremiahs_mail@yahoo.com
          (will return messages within 48 hours)

Course Description and Overview
The mission of THTR 101 is to lay the foundation for the fundamentals of acting; Introduction to Acting studies genres, terminology, and disciplines of acting; fundamental techniques necessary for performance; scene study from contemporary plays, etc. This class will introduce you to the central ideas and practices of contemporary American acting through exercises, discussion, writing, monologues, scenework, and improvisation. We will be drawing on ideas from masters in the fields of Acting and Theater including Konstantin Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner, Uta Hagen, Stella Adler, Mel Shapiro, and others.

Learning Objectives
This course is designed to give students a better understanding and appreciation for the art of acting. Students will be introduced to the basic concepts of Acting and will explore these concepts through application in their own performances. Please, think of this class as process-oriented, not result-oriented. It’s better to think of the class as a series of experiments and rehearsals, with the intent of exploration and discovery. The goal of this class, and simultaneously, students will get the most out of the class if they maintain an open mind, relinquish preconceptions about self, take bold risks, cooperate with and respect self and fellow students, be present and punctual (to be early is to be on-time), and learn from each other.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
Required textbook for the class: An Actor Performs by Mel Shapiro, to understand the basic principles of acting. Recommended reading for this class: On Acting by Sanford Meisner, Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen, Body Learning by Michael J. Gelb and highly recommended The Intent to Live by Larry Moss.
The aforementioned texts can be purchased on Amazon.com

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments
Attendance
Attendance is mandatory. The experiences students have in the classroom are the foundation of their learning and each class meeting builds on the previous class. The Theater Department’s policy is that students are not allowed any unexcused absences. Two tardies (which includes leaving class early) equal one unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence lowers the student’s grade by one full letter grade. Further, if you miss class the day of a monologue or scene showing, students will be expected to make up the performance on the day of return. Failure to do so will result in a zero for the project. For any excused absences, please notify the instructor prior to the start of that class. Perfect Attendance will earn students 20 extra credit points.

Class Participation
Acting is a subjective art form and students will not be graded on talent but instead on participation and commitment in class to self, partners/ teammates and the class as a whole. This is an experience based
 coursework where participation in class activities is essential for students to gain a deeper understanding of their work. Keep in mind, that attendance affects the in-class participation and overall grade.

**Class Conduct**
Theater is an offering (a communion of oneself with others); a sharing of beliefs, ideas, emotions, experiences, etc. through the voice, body and mind. Respect and thoughtfulness are essential. Disrespect of any kind is not tolerated, as this work requires trust and safety to work effectively. Under **No Circumstances** are real weapons (of any kind) to be used or any other potentially harmful instrument(s) to be used in a scene, including fists and/or feet.

**Attire**
Wear comfortable clothes and shoes to move freely – this class will be moving around. *Acting is doing;* it’s physical, can be sweaty, and it’s important to be prepared by dressing appropriately. Closed-toed shoes are preferred to bare feet.

**Eating In Class**
There is no eating or drinking in class. (Exception: Water is acceptable in a container that can be closed.)

**Preparation**
Acting is a collaborative art form and students will be required to coordinate rehearsals with scene partners. Rehearsals of monologues and scenes will be done on the student’s time, outside of class, in order to have a prepared and workable piece when presenting in-class.

**Scene Work**
The instructor will assign your scenes unless you request prior to the assignment. Students scenes should be no longer than five minutes (approx. 3 pages of a play), and will be from a contemporary American play. Students will be expected to be memorized and ready to present on the date specified (TBA). Failure to do so will result in a loss of those points. Precise period costumes and props are not required, but the more thought and attention given to costumes and props (exhibiting the student’s comprehension of the acting concepts and world of the play) can only help the work. Based on the student’s discoveries and instructor’s feedback, the scene will be rehearsed for a second presentation.

**Journal**
Students will be required to keep a journal of their thoughts, feelings, reactions and insights about their work in class, after each class. Journal entries will be reflections of any class work or any other observations related to class work and/or ideas. If having trouble writing, start by asking after each class... “What have I learned and how do I feel about it?” This should not be an intellectual exercise per se but rather an exploration of what is connecting, making sense, triggering, energizing or not working for you as an actor to be used in the work.

**Written Assignments**
All work will be typed, double-spaced and stapled in an easy to read font (Comic Sans preferred), 12pt in size. Each assignment should include student’s name, the date, the assignment, and the section of the class – including the day and time the class meets; this will be the students standard heading on all assignments in this class.

1. Journal Response (a descriptive paper describing the students experience of chronicling their progress in the class) – 2 pgs.
3. Students will turn in a two page typed paper, the day of the presentation of your respective scenes, answering the questions from Chapter 4 of Mel Shapiro’s *An Actor Performs*, which the instructor will provide. – 2 pgs.
4. Take Home Final Exam Reaction Response. 1 pg.
Late Assignments - I do not accept late assignments.

Final Exam
The Final Exam will be a take home reaction response to a prompt that I will provide the final week of classes. This exam will be no less than 1 page and will be emailed to me during the final exam hours on Monday, May 11 between 11 a.m.-1 p.m., which this class meetings final exam period.

Extra Credit
Extra credit may be offered throughout the session at Instructor’s discretion.
Grading

- Assignments and Grading:
  - 3 written assignments/ critiques: (210 points)
  - Journal Response – 2 pgs. 50
  - Analysis of personal monologues – 2 pgs. 60
  - Scene/ Observation Paper - 2 pgs. 60
  - Take Home Final – 1 page 40

- Participation/ Attendance: (Symbiotic Relationship) (70 points)
  - Participation:
    - Professionalism, integrity, commitment, willingness, effort 50
  - Attendance:
    - Present In Class (Must sign in every class) 20

- Exercises/ Performance: (320 Points)
  - Group Work and Exercises: 100
    - Warm ups
    - Exercises
    - Group work – Discussions, Improvisations, etc.
  - Performance:
    - Personal Monologue 70
    - Neutral/ Open Scenes 70
    - Final Scenes 80

There are a total of 600 points.

The grading scale is as follows:
540 - 600 = A
480 – 539 = B
420 – 479 = C
360 – 419 = D, and below is failing.

A - Indicates work of excellent quality;
B - of good quality;
C - of average quality;
D - of below average quality; and
F - Indicates inadequate work.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written Assignments</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance - Participation</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercises - Performance</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>54</td>
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**TOTAL** 600 100
Assignment Submission Policy
All assignments, with the exception of the Final Exam, will be turned in on the due date in-person. No emailed assignments will be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Additional Policies
Mobile phones should be turned off during class, etc. If students answer phones and/ or text during class, you will be asked to leave the class for that day, resulting in an unexcused absence.
Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (16 Weeks)

Week 1
Introduction to the course – Art, Acting, Ensemble
**Warm ups and exercises** (every class will start with warm ups – “the feeling of ease”, etc.)
Assign Personal Monologue
Read Ch. 1

Week 2 (Important Date – Mon., Jan. 19)
The Work: The Actor’s Instrument, Trust, Respect, Ensemble, Awareness, Focus, and Concentration
Introduce Acting terminology
Read Ch. 2 & 3

Week 3
Acting Terminology
Assign Monologues
Read Ch. 4

Week 4
The Work: Energy, Sensory Awareness, Imagery, Imagination, Improv., Behavior
Acting Terminology
Perform Personal Monologues
Assign Personal Monologue Analysis Paper
Character vs. Self

Week 5
The Work: Trust, Respect, Awareness, Concentration, Environment, Improv., Behavior
Neutral scenes – Relationship, Listening, Moment-to-Moment, and Partner work
Characterization - Creative individuality
Personal Monologue Analysis paper Due

Week 6 (Important Date – Mon., Feb 16)
The Work: Trust, Respect, Awareness, Concentration, Environment, Improv., Behavior
Script Analysis - Actions, Objectives and Obstacles, Given Circumstances, Backstory, etc.
Neutral scenes – Relationship, Listening, Moment-to-Moment, and Partner work
Characterization - Daily activities, pinch and ouch, Tempo (inner and outer)
Read Ch. 5

Week 7
The Work: Trust, Respect, Awareness, Concentration, Environment, Improv., Imagination, Behavior
Script Analysis - Actions, Objectives and Obstacles, Given Circumstances, Backstory, etc.
Characterization – the character’s center
Monologues (Round 1) and notes
Assign Scenes
Read Ch. 6

Week 8
The Work: Trust, Respect, Awareness, Concentration, Environment, Improv., Imagination, Behavior
Characterization – Imagination, Images, Imaginary body
Monologues (Round 2)
Practical problems: Composition of the Performance and the Rehearsal

**Mid-semester Check-In (talk about progress and areas of improvement, etc.)

Week 9
The Work: Trust, Respect, Awareness, Concentration, Environment, Improv., Imagination, Behavior
Characterization – ‘As If’, Atmospheres,
Sensory Memory – Empirical Wisdom
Read Ch. 7

Week 10 (Important Dates – Spring Recess)

Week 11
The Work: Trust, Respect, Awareness, Concentration, Environment, Improv., Imagination, Behavior
Awakening Emotion – The Physiological Gesture, Imagination, Day Dreaming, Sensory triggers
Assign Scene Papers
Read Ch. 8

Week 12
The Work: Amalgamation
Practical problems – Pacing, Tempo, Rhythm, Props, Costume, etc.
Scenework (Round 1)
Read Ch. 9

Week 13
The Work: Amalgamation
Particular attention on Listening and responding and Behavior (Natural impulses)
Journal Response Due
Read Ch. 10

Week 14
The Work: Amalgamation
Particular attention on Listening and responding and Behavior (Natural impulses),
Scenework (Round 2)
Read Ch. 13

Week 15
Contrasts, antithesis, breath marking, Making the best use of rehearsal
Final showings of scenes
Scene Papers Due
Last day for Extra Credit

Week 16
Finish Final showings of scenes
Assign Final Exam Prompt
Wrap semester discussion – learning outcome based on original goals and mid-semester pep talk

Final Examination
Take Home Final - To be emailed to me during the final exam hours on Monday, May 11 between 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

“Remember: Do not toil! Have fun!” – Michael Chekhov

*This syllabus is subject to change in order to fit the needs of the class.
Spring Semester 2015 (Important Dates)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>End Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Classes Begin</td>
<td>January 12</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King’s Birthday</td>
<td>January 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presidents’ Day</td>
<td>February 19</td>
<td>March 16-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring Recess</td>
<td>March 16-21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classes End</td>
<td>May 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>May 6-13</td>
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Final Examination Date:  
Monday, May 11 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

This information can be found online at USC’s site for the Schedule of Classes.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in Scampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards [https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/](https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in Scampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the [Office of Equity and Diversity](http://equity.usc.edu/) or to the [Department of Public Safety](http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us). This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The [Center for Women and Men](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/) provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the [American Language Institute](http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali), which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The [Office of Disability Services and Programs](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [USC Emergency Information](http://emergency.usc.edu/) will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.