**USC**School of Dramatic Arts

**Theatre 252a (62811) – Intermediate Acting I**

**Fall 2016 - Monday, Wednesday 11:00 AM – 12:50 PM**

**Location: PED 202**

**Instructor: John DeMita**

**Associate Professor of Theater Practice in Acting**

**Director of Visual and Performing Arts Studies**

**Office: JEFF 201a, 2nd Floor**

**Office Hours: Mondays, 10 AM – 12 PM and by appointment (ALL OFFICE APPOINTMENTS MUST BE SCHEDULED).**

**Contact Info:** [**demita@usc.edu**](mailto:demita@usc.edu) **/ 213-716-1485 (Call or Text).**

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**Course Description and Overview**

Focusing on the works of American playwrights in the approximate period of 1950-1970, we will expand and refine the techniques used to create believable performances and compelling, eventful scenes. We will investigate not only the characters in a play, but also our own character as creative artists. More than even “talent,” the theatre student, whether an actor, director, playwright, or designer, must discover in themself the fundamental qualities of honesty and courage. Nurture these two qualities, and inspiration will follow.

**Learning Objectives**

Theatre 252a will familiarize students with all pertinent aspects of acting: practical, analytical, and philosophical. By the end of this course students should understand and be able to demonstrate facility with the following:

* Examine and analyze a scene from a mid 20th Century American Play (1950-1970’s).
* Analyze a character and his/her given circumstances.
* Create a fully developed character.
* Construct a strong physical and vocal presentation.
* Define and execute strong intentions on stage.
* Perform with emotional authenticity.
* Practice and test concentration on stage.
* Create and utilize a strong, detailed environment for the character.
* Employ a variety of tactics, while executing with intention.

**Prerequisite:**

Theatre 101.

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

***ALL STUDENTS MUST READ THE ENTIRE TEXT OF EVERY PLAY WORKED ON IN CLASS.***

***ALL DOWNLOADED PLAYSCRIPTS MUST BE BROUGHT TO CLASS IN HARD COPIES ONLY. NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES (PHONE, LAPTOP, TABLET, ETC.) PERMITTED IN CLASS.***

* *Picnic,* by William Inge, Dramatists Play Service Edition (Available on Amazon.com).
* *Toys in the Attic,* by Lillian Hellman, Dramatists Play Service Edition (Available on Amazon.com).
* *A Streetcar Named Desire,* by Tennessee Williams,New Directions Paperback Edition*,* (Available on Amazon.com).
* *All My Sons*, by Arthur Miller, Penguin Edition (Available on Amazon.com).
* EXERCISES, WORKSHEETS, AND OTHER MATERIAL TO BE DOWNLOADED FROM BLACKBOARD.

**Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments**

***Performances, exercises and written assignments will be assessed using the following guidelines:***

* Written assignments (character analysis, character biographies, etc.) must be turned in on or before the scheduled due date. Late work will not be accepted.
* Written assignments MUST be submitted through Turnitin unless a special arrangement has been made between the student and the professor. Do not turn in hard copies in class unless requested!
* Credit will be given for any in-class exercise performed on or before the scheduled deadline, and in a manner that reflects thoroughness of preparation. This includes the utilization of props, costumes, and confident memorization of text.
* If a student is concerned about their grade or progress in class, they should make an appointment to discuss this with the professor. Midterm grades will reflect only a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” score.

**Assessment of “Participation”**

***15% of the final grade is earned through class participation. This will be defined as:***

* Show up on time – students who are more than 5 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.
* Printed copies of all scenes, monologues and play scripts must be brought to every class meeting. No electronic copies (laptops, tablets, phones) may be used in class. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
* Appropriate rehearsal clothing and props for **ALL EXERCISES AND IN CLASS REHEARSALS.**
* Openness to new methods of working and eagerness to attempt them.
* In class active student analysis and commentary on text.
* Constructive feedback on classmates’ acting presentations.
* Energized support of all classmates’ work.
* Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of professor and fellow students on ones own work.
* Meeting all assignment deadlines.
* Memorization of assigned material.
* Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse outside class.

**Note:** *If a student misses a deadline because of a partner’s unavailability, the available partner will not be penalized. If problems arise, a discussion with the professor with all involved must be arranged before the day of the scheduled scene or everyone will be held equally accountable.* ***BEFORE ANY SCENE MAY BE REHEARSED ON ITS FEET IN CLASS, THERE MUST BE A MINIMUM OF 4 HOURS OF OUTSIDE REHEARSAL.***

**Grading Breakdown**

Feedback, assessment, and grading of the course will be based on the successful completion of the following assignments by their assigned due dates:

Vermont Porch Exercise 10 Points (10% of grade)

Personal Stories (Written and Read Aloud) 10 Points (10% of grade)

Monologue / Scene (Written and Performed) 15 Points (15% of grade)

Research Assignment 10 Points (10% of grade)

Scene Analysis Worksheet 10 Points (20% of grade)

Final Scene 30 Points (30% of grade)

Cumulative Class Participation 15 Points (15% of grade)

Total 100 Points

**FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS, POINTS WILL BE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS:**

**100% - Excellent:** clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight and confident preparation

**75% - Good**: class material has been understood clearly and performed competently

**50% - Average**: class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding and performance remain

**25% - Poor**: there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material, as well as deficiencies in basic requirements such as memorization, blocking, etc.

**0% - Unacceptable:** work was not completed on time, with no communication with professor or student partners

**GRADING SCALE**

A = 96-100 points

A- = 91-95 points

B+ = 88-90 points

B = 85-87 points

B- = 81-84 points

C+ = 78-80 points

C = 75-77 points

C- = 71-74 points

D+ = 68-70 points

D = 65-67 points

D- = 61-64 points

F = 60 or below

The final course grade is articulated as a Letter Grade. This grade is translated into a G.P.A using the following scale:

**A = 4; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.3; C = 2; C- = 1.7; D = 1; F = 0.**

When the average falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class has been good, but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

**CALENDAR (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

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| Week 1 | Introductions. Discuss student expectations, semester goals, and playwrights.  Warm Ups, Exercises.  Positive / Negative / Neutral  Perform monologue / tell story. |
| Week 2 | Warm Ups, Exercises.  Monologues / stories continued.  Review Objectives / Actions / Obstacles  **DOWNLOAD / ASSIGN:** Vermont Porch Exercise, Personal Story Exercise. |
| Weeks 3, 4  *NO CLASS –*  *MONDAY 9/5* | Warm Ups, Exercises.  Read Personal Stories Aloud.  Perform Vermont Porch Exercise (Scheduled).  **DUE 9/12:**  **Submit Personal Story to Turnitin.** |
| Weeks 5 - 7 | Cast Personal Story Monologues.  Rehearse Monologues.  **DOWNLOAD / ASSIGN:** Research Groups and Questions.  **DUE BY 9/28: Completion of ALL Vermont Porch Exercises.**  **DUE BY 10/3: Submit Written Analysis and Text of Personal Story Monologue to Turnitin.** |
| Week 8 | Rehearse and Perform Midterm Monologue.  **DUE BY 10/12: Completion of ALL Midterm Monologue Performances.** |
| Week 9, 10 | RESEARCH GROUP PRESENTATIONS (Scheduled).  Discuss Plays and Playwrights.  Cast Scenes / Begin Outside Rehearsals (MINIMUM 2 HOURS PER WEEK).  **DOWNLOAD / ASSIGN: Scene Analysis Worksheets.** |
| Week 11 - 15 | In Class Rehearsals of All Scenes (Scheduled).  **DUE BY 11/7: ALL SCENES MUST BE MEMORIZED.**  **DUE BY 11/7: Submit First Draft of Scene Analysis Worksheet to Turnitin.** |
| 12/9/16 @ 11 AM | **DUE BY 12/8 @ 5 PM: Final Draft of Scene Analysis Worksheet to Turnitin.**  **FINAL EXAM.** |

**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/>.  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/>.

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/*](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.