

## USC School of Dramatic Arts

**Diction and Dialects THTR 541 Section 63194D  
Fall 2015 Fridays 1:00-2:50 p.m.  
MCC 107**

**Instructor: Kathleen Dunn-Muzingo**

**Office: Adjunct Office-McClintock Bldg.**

**Office Hours: Thursdays 1 to 3 and by Appt.**

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### Course Description and Overview:

A Guided Study of Diction and Dialect Acquisition. Utilizing the International Alphabet, Voice-Diction Exercises, Sensory Explorations, and Pillow Work the student will continue to develop clarity and specificity in voicing classical text as well as developing a personal process of acquiring dialects in support of performance projects.

Learning Objectives: Upon Completion of THTR 541, the M.F.A. theatre student will have:

-Acquired a working knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet and its application to phonetic writing, accent work, and ear training to aid in the specific demands of a particular text or accent.

-Utilizing sensory explorations, movement explorations, and text explorations, the student will add to the repertoire of skills which aid in authentic and organic role creation.

-Developed a process of acquiring an authentic and embodied accent culminating in a performance project.

-Continued development of a vocal warm-up via Pillow Work and Vowel Ladder that is according to student needs.

### Required Reading and Class Materials:

Bringing Speech to Life by Claudia Anderson and Louis Colaianni

One Poem (student's choosing) as text for the IPA Unit-see IPA Unit for suggestions

## *THE IPA UNIT*

*Material Suggestions –Choose a poem that speaks to you. This will be your material for the entire unit. Suggested Poets: Donne, Keats, Langston Hughes, Yeats, Emily Dickinson, Neruda, Wordsworth, Maya Angelou...*

Week One to Three: International Phonetic Process Begins. Sound Exploration and embodiment exercises via Pillow Work. A progressive warm up, based on the Phonetic Alphabet will begin at this time. Introduction of the Vowels will begin.

Week Four thru Six Participation in Pillow work: Drills, Embodiment Exercises and Drawing the International Phonetic Alphabet. Introduction of the Consonants. After this part is completed, we will be able to demonstrate and walk thru the Vowel Ladder.

Week Six thru Eight: Transcription Practice: Transcription exercises via drawing, book work, and writing, cumulating in submission of a transcription of the Sonnet.

Mid-Term: Various text explorations culminating in Mid-Term Presentation of Sonnet.

## *THE DIALECT UNIT*

The Dialect Unit will be chosen based upon upcoming show needs.

Week Nine thru Twelve: Introduction to the Progression of Dialect Training and Prepping an Accented Role:

In Class Sight-reads and Class Explorations: The student will be given the opportunity to do sight readings and explorations on their material.

Sound Lab: The sound lab contains both imitation practice done in class (imitation of the first fifty words of the source), and a written observation of the basic elements of placement, musicality and vowel and consonant changes and areas that require more practice.

Survey: Research paper based on the culture and area of the character.

Weeks Twelve thru Fifteen: Rehearsal and Performances  
Outside Meetings/Coaching during this time.

Final: Presentation of Dialect Unit. Final will be in co-ordination with the other Core Teachers.

## Graded Areas:

### IPA UNIT: 100 points:

Class Work, Drills, Explorations, Exercises:	45%
Vowel Ladder Demo	15%
Sonnet Transcriptions	15%
Sonnet Presentation	25%

### DIALECT UNIT 100 points:

Class Work, Sight Reads, Exploration, Exercises:	45%
Sound Lab/Transcription	15%
Survey Paper	15%
Rehearsal-Performances	25%

### Attendance:

We expect the highest level of commitment from MFA Students. Lateness will not be tolerated without prior notice. Absences will be evaluated on an individual basis. Unexcused absences are unacceptable. Your communication with the instructor regarding this matter is part of your overall evaluation.

### Breakdown of Graded Areas:

Class work, drills, explorations and Exercises: These are subject to change on the needs of the class and individual drill needs of the student. Drill work consists of drawing, identification, practice and completing homework assignments from the workbook. Based on drills and class work time, individual needs of the student will be addressed outside of class in office hours.

### Vowel Ladder Demo:

Upon completion of the vowel unit, the student will have the ability to identify all the vowel sounds and their symbols on a continuum as well as sound by sound basis. The student will also be able at this point to walk thru his text.

### Transcription:

The text written in international phonetic symbols and nuance markings.

### Sound Lab:

Based on imitation of a source, the student will now have the skill to breakdown the basic features of an accent. The student will bring to class an imitation of the first fifty words of the speaker.

Survey Paper: Research paper. Approximately two pages in length, double spaced. Citing at least three sources (play, documentary, book, article or newspaper), the student will write a general overview of where the character is from and the social, economical, and political influences of the area, and how this may or may not influence behavior, physicality or voice. Research papers are to be double spaced and sent via email to [kdunn@usc.edu](mailto:kdunn@usc.edu) on the due date specified.

Presentation-Rehearsal-Performance: The final step in putting skills to work for the artist; in an organic, embodied manner.

## 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](http://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](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.

**USC BLACKBOARD:** Course information, announcement and materials will be posted on **BLACKBOARD**.

**Final note about Grading in Art and Acting:**

**This is an art-form composed of research, application, knowledge and presentation of skills in an organic and truthful performance. One must also embody the dialect as truthfully and organically, to the best of one's ability. Following are descriptions of grades in this class and their meaning:**

**A: Excellent Quality**

**Excellent Quality means understanding and embodying all criteria of the dialect. The student has done exceptional research and homework, attended all rehearsals and participated in all class room exercises. This grade also represents truthful, creative and authentic embodiment according to the circumstances and style of the text.**

**B: Good Quality**

**Clear understanding of the features of the dialect, basic features and all assignments handed in on time. Perhaps there is an element of lateness to one of the assignments and the performance is technically proficient, but lacking creativity and authentic communication.**

**C: Fair Quality**

**General understanding of the features. However, paperwork is missing and carefulness in performance due to words or dialect.**

**D: Lack of commitment to due dates and the training**

**F: No Show/No paperwork**