

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## Introduction to Acting

**THTR-101 (4 units)**

Section 62602

Spring 2018

Mondays & Wednesdays 10:30am-12:20pm

Location: MCC 109

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Office: MCC 214

Office Hours: By appointment. Please email to schedule.

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## Course Description and Overview

This course lays the foundation for studying the discipline and art of acting, through exercises, games, reading, discussion, scene work, and analysis. We will clarify the necessity of learning the craft of acting, which requires a disciplined commitment to voice, speech and movement training, and an intellectual rigor in dissecting text. We will focus on the work of the Ensemble above all, cultivating the unique spirit of collaboration that is inherent in the theatre.

## Learning Objectives

Students will be introduced to the basic concepts of acting, and will explore and apply these concepts through classroom exercises and performances.

Students will:

- begin to analyze text and the actor's role in storytelling, including connecting the specifics of text analysis to the emotional and physical portrayal of a role,
- strive to be present and mindful, and open to both their own and others' uniqueness,
- explore their own innate ability to imagine deeply, and fully engage in play,
- respect their body as an instrument, and build its vocal, speech, and physical abilities,
- adhere to the required discipline — being on time, rehearsing outside of class, and staying strong and healthy,
- live in a Process over Result mindset, and think of every exercise as an experiment, with the intent of exploration and discovery,
- think analytically and respectfully in response to others' work,
- and reinforce a spirit of generosity, curiosity, compassion, and courage as we work to build an ensemble.

## Supplementary Materials

### Required Reading

- *Acting: The First Six Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky
- You will be given handouts and/or web links throughout the semester which you are expected to read and retain for discussion.

### Required Viewing

You are required to attend two School of Dramatic Arts performances, and write responses.

### Recommended Reading

- *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd-Williams (HIGHLY recommend for this class)
- *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods, Vol. 1 & 2* by Richard Brestoff
- *An Actor Prepares* and *Building A Character* by Constantin Stanislavski
- *The Art of Acting* by Stella Adler
- *On Acting* by Sanford Meisner & Dennis Longwell
- *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen
- *The War of Art* by Steven Pressfield

### Recommended Viewing

- Additional School of Dramatic Arts performances
- Live theatre of your choosing — I am happy to discuss recommended theatres and productions.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

**Attendance and Punctuality** — Class attendance and enthusiastic participation is the most important part of your success in this class. Your attendance and punctuality is crucial for building an ensemble, understanding the material, and respecting your fellow actor and the work itself.

Absences and tardies are not permitted, except in the case of documented personal illness or family emergency. Absences and tardies will negatively affect your grade, up to 15 points. Additional points may also be deducted for missed in-class work.

Do not be late. You must be present and ready to work at the start of each class.

Please take to heart, from *An Actor Prepares* —

“We have been sitting here waiting, our nerves on edge, angry and 'it seems I am a little late.' We all came here full of enthusiasm for the work waiting to be done, and now, thanks to you, that mood has been destroyed. To arouse a desire to create is difficult; to kill a desire is extremely easy. If I interfere with my own work, it is my own affair, but **what right have I to hold up the work of the whole group?** The actor, no less than the soldier, must be subject to iron discipline.”

There is no better place to learn discipline, and its rewards, than in acting class, where others depend on you to make their art.

**Participation** — *"Art resides in the quality of doing; process is not magic."* — Charles Eames

This is an experience based course, and you are expected to participate and commit with a generous heart, an open mind and a devoted work ethic. You are not graded on 'talent' in this class, you are graded on your Quality of Doing — there is no progress without putting in the work.

**Rehearsal** — You are expected to rehearse with your fellow actors outside of class, as part of the collaborative nature of theatre. We will discuss your outside rehearsals in class. In-class scenework/ rehearsal often requires notes to be taken, please be prepared.

**Written Assignments** — Unless otherwise specified, written assignments should be emailed to me (kqeggers@usc.edu) **as a PDF attachment** before the specified date and time. Written assignments should follow MLA guidelines. Late assignments will not be accepted.

This includes your responses to two SDA productions. I have included a list of the Spring season on the back of this syllabus. Students should buy tickets at the USC Ticket Office in January, as all shows are expected to sell out. Consider seeing multiple productions before deciding the focus of your response. Prompts for responses will be given in class.

**Devices** — No cell phone or electronic devices of any kind may be used in class, unless specifically instructed. This is to encourage your focus, mindfulness, and respect to your peers. You must leave phone/device in your bag, silenced. If needed, bags and backpacks may be quarantined in a designated classroom corner. Unauthorized use of devices will affect your grade.

**Attire** — You must wear clothing and shoes in which you can move freely and comfortably. Acting is physical and can get sweaty — dress accordingly. Your clothing and shoes should not inhibit you in any way, whether by unwanted exposure or physical limitations. Shoes should be closed-toed and stay on your feet — no flip-flops. We may at times work barefoot. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged.

**Eating** — Food and drink (except water) is not permitted in any SDA classroom. Absolutely no gum.

**Strike** — You are expected to help restore the classroom to neutral at the end of each class.

**USC SDA GRADING CRITERIA:**

The final course grade is articulated as a Letter Grade, determined using the following scale:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Below Average</u>	<u>Inadequate</u>
A = 95-100 pts	B+ = 87-89 pts	C+ = 77-79 pts	D+ = 67-69 pts	F = 59 or below
A- = 90-94 pts	B = 83-86 pts	C = 73-76 pts	D = 63-66 pts	
	B- = 80-82 pts	C- = 70-72 pts	D- = 60-62 pts	

- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive for students with excellent/good attendance and class participation, and toward the negative for those with average/poor attendance and participation.
- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W (April 6).
- I am happy to discuss your work at any time.

**Grading Breakdown**

Class Participation — Attendance, focus, attitude, willingness	15 points
Discussion of Readings, Plays, Rehearsals	10 points
SDA Performance Responses (5 points each)	10 points
Personal Reading	5 points
Choral Work and Presentation	10 points
Open Scene Classwork	5 points
Open Scene Presentation	10 points
Open Scene Written Component	5 points
Contemporary Scene Classwork	5 points
Contemporary Scene Presentation (Final)	15 points
Contemporary Scene Written Component	5 points
Final Self-Reflection	<u>5 points</u>
TOTAL	100 points

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*Please note: due to the fluid and creative nature of this course, weekly structure may change to accommodate the needs of individuals and the ensemble. You are asked to remain flexible, and you will be informed of any changes as much as possible.*

Every class will begin with group work, exploring foundations of voice, physicality, relaxation, concentration, imagination, focus, storytelling, playfulness, and ensemble-building.

- Week 1 —**      **Jan 8 —** Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review.  
Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.  
**Jan 10 —** DUE TODAY: Personal readings. Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way. This may be from a poem, a passage from a book, song lyrics, a script, etc.  
Present personal readings. Ensemble, focus, storytelling work.
- Week 2 —**      **Jan 15 —** MLK Jr Day — NO CLASS  
**Jan 17 —** DUE TODAY: Read lessons 1 & 2 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.  
Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.
- Week 3 —**      **Jan 22 —** Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.  
**Jan 24 —** DUE TODAY: Read lessons 3 & 4 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.  
Imagination work. Personal readings, continued.
- Week 4 —**      **Jan 29 —** Personal readings, continued.  
**Jan 31 —** DUE TODAY: Read lessons 5 & 6 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.  
Introduce choral work.
- Week 5 —**      **Feb 5 —** Choral work.  
**Feb 7 —** DUE TODAY: Read *The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods* handout.  
Choral work.
- Week 6 —**      **Feb 12 —** Choral work.  
**Feb 14 —** Choral work presentation. Begin open scene work.
- Week 7 —**      **Feb 19 —** Presidents' Day — NO CLASS  
**Feb 21 —** Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.
- Week 8 —**      **Feb 26 —** Open scene work.  
**Feb 28 —** Open scene work.
- Week 9 —**      **Mar 5 —** DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Play discussion. Open scene work.  
**Mar 7 —** Open scene work.
- SPRING BREAK —
- Week 10 —**     **Mar 19 —** Open scene work.  
**Mar 21 —** Open scene work.

- Week 11** — **Mar 26** — Open scene work.  
**Mar 28** — Open scene work.
- Week 12** — **Apr 2** — Open scene presentation. Writing component due with presentation.  
Introduce contemporary scene work.  
**Apr 4** — Contemporary scene work.
- Week 13** — **Apr 9** — Contemporary scene work.  
**Apr 11** — Contemporary scene work.
- Week 14** — **Apr 16** — Contemporary scene work.  
**Apr 18** — Contemporary scene work.
- Week 15** — **Apr 23** — DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Play discussion. Contemporary scene work.  
**Apr 25** — Contemporary scene work.
- FINAL** — **Monday May 7 — 8-10am (per university final exam schedule)**  
Final presentation of contemporary scene. Written component due. Final written self-evaluation in-class or emailed by midnight.

#### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>. Information on intellectual property at USC is available at: <http://usc.edu/academe/acsen/issues/ipr/index.html>.

#### **Statement on 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.

## **Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

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.

## **Disruptive Student Behavior**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

## **Support Systems**

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 - 24/7 on call  
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255  
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call  
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center  
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance - (213) 740-5086  
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support  
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs  
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710  
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student, ex: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC  
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information  
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety - 213-740-4321 (UPC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.  
Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

## The USC SDA Spring 2018 Plays

More information at <http://dramaticarts.usc.edu/on-stage/>

### **The Matchmaker**

By Thornton Wilder

Scene Dock Theatre | February 2-March 1

Wealthy Horace Vandergelder gets more than he bargains for when he hires legendary matchmaker Dolly Gallagher Levi to find his perfect mate. Wilder's hilarious farce reminds us to live fully and embrace the unexpected.

### **Buenaza/Cabrón**

By David Bridel and the MFA Acting Class of 2018

Scene Dock Theatre | February 3 - March 3

A business in ruins. A woman disappeared. A mysterious relative. Created by the company, *Buenaza/Cabrón* follows two reporters who chase down a story of goodness, only to find the dark secrets that live in our hearts. Inspired by the writings of Bertolt Brecht.

### **A Bright Room Called Day**

By Tony Kushner

Scene Dock Theatre | February 10 - March 4

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner's eerily prophetic play is the haunting story of a group of artists and activists struggling to preserve themselves in 1930s Berlin as the Weimar Republic falls to its knees. The play transcends historical drama as we witness the parallel narrative of a contemporary woman who is morally outraged at the government.

### **Macbeth**

By William Shakespeare

Bing Theatre | February 22-25

Shakespeare's bloody psychological thriller about a fearless warrior tempted by a prophecy, and encouraged by his wife into his own all-consuming ambition. Filled with some of the Bard's most vivid characters, *Macbeth* probes the recesses of our subconscious drives, illuminating our essential humanity with rich poetry and unforgettable power.

### **Great Expectations**

By Barbara Field, from the novel by Charles Dickens

McClintock Theatre | March 1-4

Dickens' classic work of orphan Pip and his journey from poverty and ignominy to safety and respectability is brought to vivid life in this adaptation by Barbara Field.

———— **March 5:** SDA Performance Response #1 Due —————

### **The Labyrinth of Desire**

by Caridad Svich

Scene Dock Theatre | March 29 - April 1

When Florela's fiancé leaves her to compete with other suitors for the hand of the rich and beautiful Laura, Florela goes undercover to keep her man. Filled with clever deceptions and hilarious disguises, this who's who comedy of romantic intrigue explores the delightful and essential mystery of love. This stylish and contemporary adaptation proves that long before *Sex and the City*, intuition and infatuation have challenged the boundaries and fluidity of human desire.

### **West Side Story**

Based on a conception of Jerome Robbins | Book by Arthur Laurents | Music by Leonard Bernstein | Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Bing Theatre | March 29 - April 8

From the first notes to the final breath, *West Side Story* is a poignant, provocative, and emotionally powerful musical that transports William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to mid-1950s New York City, as two young, idealistic lovers find themselves caught between warring street gangs. Their struggle to survive in a world of hate, violence, and prejudice is one of the most heart-wrenching and relevant musical dramas of our time.

### **Family Riots (New Works Festival Year Two)**

By Gideon Jeph Wabvuta

Massman Theatre | April 6-8

*Family Riots* is the story of a family that's on the cusp of breaking apart and it happens to be the day of the food riots in Zimbabwe, 1998. The family struggles to stay safe indoors, resulting in emotions getting high, truths being spoken, relationships being destroyed and secrets being unearthed.

### **Tunnels (New Works Festival Year Two)**

By Mariana Carreño King

Massman Theatre | April 13-15

When grandmother dies, Ester and Lil Joe follow her voice through a series of tunnels. They encounter a group of kids trying to form an army of Tunnel Soldiers. Will Ester and Lil Joe stay with the soldiers and look for Ma Sabina or try to make it back outside?

### **Don't Go**

Created in association with Sojourn Theatre

Scene Dock Theatre | April 19-22

Join us for the premiere of a new theatrical work created by the innovative Sojourn Theatre Company — a nationally acclaimed ensemble that employs theatre to engage communities and create positive social change — in collaboration with our students. Blurring the borders between theatre and civic engagement, this participatory, site-specific theatrical work will bring diverse audiences together to create meaningful connections across differences.

### **Love's Labor's Lost**

By William Shakespeare

McClintock Theatre | April 19-22

The King and his friends take an oath to dedicate themselves to a life of study and avoid the company of women for three years. No sooner have they made their idealistic pledge than the Princess of France and her ladies-in-waiting arrive, presenting the men with a severe test of their high-minded resolve. *Love's Labor's Lost* is a comedy about young love, with an unexpected ending.

### **Counting (New Works Festival Year Two)**

By Aja Houston

Massman Theatre | April 20-22

"Welcome to Spooks Anonymous, a fellowship of men and women young and old alike who help each other not to be feared." Welcome to The Middle, the afterlife for those who were killed for being threatening, for being Black, for being Spooks. For hundreds of years this place has existed with millions of black souls seeking redemption. Newcomer Proctor tests the veteran members Bland, Till, Martin, and Gray's ties to each other, their beliefs and resolve to keep working the program.

———— **April 23:** SDA Performance Response #2 Due —————