

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Introduction to Acting

THTR-101 (4 units)

Section 62602

Fall 2018

Mondays & Wednesdays 8-9:50am

Location: DRC 120

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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
- *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd-Williams
- 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

- *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. Although attendance is not the only factor in your participation grade, please note that being absent for more than 15% of classes, or being late for more than 25% of classes, or a combination thereof, will automatically lower your final grade. Additional points may also be deducted for missed in-class work. In the event of an absence, you are responsible for the content of any missed class time.

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. Both in-class and outside scenework/rehearsal usually 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 Fall season on the back of this syllabus. Students should buy tickets at the USC Ticket Office in August, 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 deduct your participation points for the day.

Attire — Acting is physical and can get sweaty — dress accordingly. Your clothing and shoes should allow you to move freely and comfortably. 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 Final Grade falls between two grades, it 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 (November 9).
- 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 will 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 —** **Aug 20** — Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review.
Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.
Aug 22 — 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 a poem, a passage from a book or script, song lyrics, etc.
Present personal readings. Ensemble, focus, storytelling work.
- Week 2 —** **Aug 27** — Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.
Aug 29 — DUE TODAY: Read lessons 1 & 2 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.
Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.
- Week 3 —** **Sep 3** — Labor Day — NO CLASS
Sep 5 — DUE TODAY: Read lessons 3 & 4 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.
Imagination work. Personal readings, continued.
- Week 4 —** **Sep 10** — Personal readings, continued.
Sep 12 — DUE TODAY: Read lessons 5 & 6 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons*.
Introduce choral work.
- Week 5 —** **Sep 17** — Choral work.
Sep 19 — DUE TODAY: Read *The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods* handout.
Choral work.
- Week 6 —** **Sep 24** — Choral work.
Sep 26 — Choral work.
- Week 7 —** **Oct 1** — Choral work presentation. Begin open scene work.
Oct 3 — DUE TODAY: Read Rehearsal/Actions handout.
Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.
- Week 8 —** **Oct 8** — Open scene work.
Oct 10 — Open scene work.
- Week 9 —** **Oct 15** — Open scene work.
Oct 17 — Open scene work.
- Week 10 —** **Oct 22** — DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Play discussion. Open scene work.
Oct 24 — Open scene work.
- Week 11 —** **Oct 29** — Open scene work.
Oct 31 — Open scene work.
- Week 12 —** **Nov 5** — Open scene presentation. Writing component due with presentation.
Introduce contemporary scene work.

	Nov 7 — Contemporary scene work.
Week 13 —	Nov 12 — Contemporary scene work. Nov 14 — Contemporary scene work.
Week 14 —	Nov 19 — DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Play discussion. Contemporary scene work. Nov 21 — Thanksgiving Break — NO CLASS
Week 15 —	Nov 26 — Contemporary scene work. Nov 28 — Contemporary scene work.
FINAL —	Wednesday Dec 5 — 8-10am (per university final exam schedule) Final presentation of contemporary scene. Written component due. Final self-evaluation written 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 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 Standard <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 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 Fall 2018 Plays

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

Kentucky

By Leah Nanako Winkler

McClintock Theatre | September 27-30

Hiro – a self-made, single woman in NYC – returns to her native Kentucky to stop her born-again baby sister from marrying a man she hardly knows. Will she save her sister and escape back to Manhattan, or will years of therapy be undone by one weekend back home? Identity, religion and love collide in this coming-of-age story.

Street Scene

By Elmer Rice

Bing Theatre | October 11-14

Elmer Rice's Pulitzer Prize-winning play explores the rampant prejudice inherent in the American Dream through the colorful residents of 1929 New York tenements. Surprisingly relevant for today, this remarkable play explores the comedy and tragedy of daily life through the experiences of several working-class families, many of them new immigrants, as America's economic system teeters on the brink of disaster.

Bus Stop

By William Inge

Scene Dock Theatre | October 11-20

A howling snowstorm has halted a bus at a diner west of Kansas City, and the odd-assorted passengers – including a nightclub singer and the naive cowboy who has gone crazy for her – are forced to wait out the storm until the roads are cleared. Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright William Inge mixes moments of uproarious comedy and heartbreaking tenderness to explore the many nuances of love and longing.

When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder?

By Mark Medoff

Scene Dock Theatre | October 12-21

A lonely roadside diner becomes the setting for a tense and gripping drama in Mark Medoff's Obie Award-winning play. Locals and visitors have their lives upended and their dreams and inner desires confronted with the arrival of two couples. Tense and gripping, *Red Ryder* explores the myths of American manhood and heroism with brutality, humor and nail-biting suspense.

———— October 22: SDA Performance Response #1 Due ————

The Penelopiad

By Margaret Atwood

McClintock Theatre | October 25-28

With acerbic wit and inspired originality, *The Penelopiad* is a contemporary take on Homer's *Odyssey* – retold through the eyes of Penelope, the famously faithful wife of the Greek hero Odysseus. Literary icon Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*) flips the classical myth on its head and gives us a moving and darkly funny commentary on war and the women left behind.

Happy End

By Kurt Weill, Bertolt Brecht, Elisabeth Hauptmann, and Michael Feingold

Bing Theatre | November 1-4

Set in the gritty streets of 1920s Chicago, *Happy End* tells the tale of an unlikely love affair between a virtuous Salvation Army worker and a hard-boiled gangster. This steamy musical pairs Bertolt Brecht's biting and witty social satire with a thrilling score from Kurt Weill.

Detroit '67

By Dominique Morisseau

The Carrie Hamilton Theatre at The Pasadena Playhouse | November 8-10

In the summer of 1967, the songs of Motown are breaking records and breaking barriers. Chelle and her brother, Lank, are running an unlicensed after-hours bar in their Detroit basement – risky business – especially during a brutal police crackdown that has set off riots throughout the city. When Lank offers refuge to an injured white woman, tensions erupt in their home and their city, and they find themselves caught in the middle of the '67 riots.

The Receptionist

By Adam Bock

The Carrie Hamilton Theatre at The Pasadena Playhouse | November 15-17

It's the start of a typical day in the Northeast Office and Beverly deals effortlessly with ringing phones and her colleague's romantic troubles. But when a charming rep from the Central Office makes an appearance, the

friendly routine is disrupted. As the true nature of the company's business becomes apparent, *The Receptionist* raises disquieting, provocative questions about the consequences of complicity with evil.

The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window

By Lorraine Hansberry

McClintock Theatre | November 15-18

Sidney Brustein's Greenwich Village apartment in 1964 is a gathering place for an eclectic group of bohemians. As Sidney gets increasingly swept up in the radical issues of the day, however, he ignores the equally dangerous tension mounting between himself and his wife Iris, the one person he holds most dear. With compassion, humor and poignancy, playwright Lorraine Hansberry (*A Raisin in the Sun*) examines questions concerning the fragility of love, morality and ethics, interracial relationships, drugs, rebellion and conformity.

———— **November 19:** SDA Performance Response #2 Due ————