

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 101
INTRODUCTION TO ACTING
Units: 4
Semester: Fall 2018
Days: Monday & Wednesday, 8-9:50am
Location: MCC 112

Instructor: RODNEY TO
Office: MCC Adjunct Office
Office Hours: (Per request)
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Course Description and Overview

This course is an introduction to the study, discipline, and appreciation of Acting. It is intended to be the outset of the acting student's discovery of various techniques, skillsets, and emotional levels that will comprise their unique contribution to the characters they will portray in their work and hopefully, expand their curiosity, appreciation, understanding, and compassion of the world at large. Through readings, games, voice/speech/movement exercises, constructive discourse, & attending productions, students will gain the essential foundational acting tools necessary to continue on their journey to becoming professional actors.

Learning Objectives

Throughout this course with me, students will:

- Be introduced to experts of the craft (Hagen, Meisner, Stanislavski, etc.) who have laid the foundation for many standard acting techniques employed today.
- Be introduced to a myriad of theater games which are intended to foster technique, pinpoint one's physicality, access emotion, and/or encourage ensemble work essential to the theatre.
- Gain basic knowledge of the fundamental language (terminology, references, etc.) involved in Theatre, TV, & Film acting.
- Keep a personal *handwritten* journal which will log the student's personal daily discoveries throughout the semester.
- Gain understanding of the true discipline that is essential to the life of an actor. We will focus on the *process* which is paramount, the *result* being inconsequential.
- Explore, explore, explore.
- Have a blast!

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Respect for Acting (*abbreviated as R4A here)

by Uta Hagen

with Haskel Frankel

Note: I am requiring the student to obtain a hard copy(either hard or soft cover) of the book. I'll be encouraging students to highlight and write in their book, which will continue to be an invaluable resource for years to come. It is available in the campus bookstore, but also (cheaper) online via Amazon.

Journal

As aforementioned, students are required to keep a *handwritten* journal in this class. Entries will be made at the end of class - time will be set aside for this. Journals are often extremely personal and sensitive - I am well aware. While I will be reading journals, if there is something particularly private and personal, I ask that the actor fold the page and trust that I will respect their wishes and not read it. I will keep all journals confidential. In addition, random entries will be made(prompted by me) throughout the semester and *may* be subsequently read in class and incorporated into class exercises. Again, nothing personal will be read without your permission. *You will be graded on the consistency of your journaling in this course.*

GRADING: Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Grading Criteria

- * You will *not* be graded based on your “talent”. This class is *not* a competition. Instead, through my guidance, you will be graded on your efforts in uncovering and fostering it.
- * The quality of work for all components(see *Grading Breakdown*) is determined by the willingness & thoroughness of the effort, class contributions, comprehension, process, follow-through, rehearsal, and the imagination displayed.

Grading Scale:

A work of excellent quality / A = 100-95, A- = 94-90

B work of good quality / B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82-80

C work of average quality / C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70

D work of below average quality / D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60

F work of poor, inadequate quality / F = 59 and below

Further Grading Notes

- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with EXCELLENT in-class participation. Grades will be weighted towards the negative end of the scale for those with POOR in-class participation.
- I am available to discuss work and progress at anytime.

Participation

I can't stress enough how much you will also learn from each other - from sitting and watching, to contributing to discussions. Being available to your fellow actors/classmates is not only respectful, but necessary. Therefore *no absences or late arrivals will be allowed*. Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.

Grading Breakdown

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Written Assignments | 20pts |
| Scenes/Scene work | 25pts |
| Mid Semester Analysis (<i>attend production w/ written analysis</i>) | 15pts |
| Final Analysis, Scene Work, & Scene | 25pts |
| Journal | 5pts |
| Weekly participation (discussions, contributions, etc.)* | 10pts |

Total Points

100pts

Assignment Submission Policy

Games, rehearsal, scene work, class scenes, and presentations will be presented in class. Written assignments will be either emailed or a hardcopy will be provided to me per my instruction. If a video assignment is requested, files will be uploaded and submitted through a file-sharing program.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: Assignments are expected to be completed **by the due date & time**. Late assignments will **NOT BE ACCEPTED**. I am going to treat you like mature professionals-in-training. I expect a lot from you, as you should expect from yourselves. (Timeliness in regards to both attendance and assignment deadlines is certainly required, but it sure does score “bonus points” with me. Keep that in mind.)

Additional Policies

- No technology during class. Phones must be on silent and put away. Unless I invite you to do so, phones may only be taken out during breaks.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- All students must help with the set up and strike of every class. I will ensure time is allotted to do so.
- Barefoot or socks is sufficient for movement classes. Otherwise, please always wear closed-toe shoes that are flexible and good with movement (ie sneakers, dance shoes, etc.). No flip flops or boots please - this is for your safety and comfort.
- Students must wear proper rehearsal clothes - loose fitting, comfortable clothing that you are ok moving around in and (possibly) getting a little dirty. Again, let's be professional, mature, and respectful - wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Bring a towel and or something to wipe your body and feet. You'll probably break a sweat occasionally.
- Safety is important. Physical and emotional safety is the first rule of performance. We will be working hard to establish trust with myself and your fellow classmates. Please respect each other at all times in and out of class. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently. However, please do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class.

Acting is a craft, not unlike cobbling. A cobbler uses various techniques she/he has learned over the years to make or repair a pair of shoes. Since each pair is unique, some techniques will work and others will not. The same can be said about each acting experience. I will present to you an array of methods, techniques, and anecdotes that I have found useful in my own experience. My hope is that by the end of the course, you will have a solid understanding of what methods and tools work for you as an actor. This class is not about one's talent. Instead, it is about your willingness and commitment to learning and growing as an artist.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*****THIS WILL CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

| | Topics/Daily Activities | Readings and Homework | Deliverable/ Due Dates |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Week 1 | | | |
| 8/20 | Dept Intro w/ MaryJoan Negro & Intro to course | Read assigned chapter from R4A | |
| 8/22 | Warm up, discussion, game | Continue reading R4A | Written Analysis #1 (due in class 8/22) |
| Week 2 | | | |
| 8/27 | Warm up, discussion, game | Read from assigned chapter from R4A | |
| 8/29 | Warm up, discussion, game | Continue reading R4A | Written Analysis #2 (due in class 9/3) |
| Week 3 | | | |
| 9/3 | LABOR | DAY | NO CLASS |
| 9/5 | Warm up, discussion, game | Read assigned chapter from R4A | Written Analysis #3 (due in class 9/10) |

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| Week 4 | | | |
| 9/10 | Begin Neutral scenes | Choose scene | Rehearse 1st neutral scene |
| 9/12 | Present 1st neutral scene | Continue reading <i>R4A</i> | |
| Week 5 | | | |
| 9/17 | Neutral scenes | Choose scene | Rehearse 2nd neutral scene |
| 9/19 | Present 2nd neutral scene | Receive copy of <i>American Hero</i> by Bess Wohl | Read <i>American Hero</i> by Bess Wohl |
| Week 6 | | | |
| 9/24 | Discuss <i>American Hero</i> | | See <i>American Hero</i> at Pasadena Playhouse |
| 9/26 | <i>American Hero</i> production discussion | | <i>American Hero</i> written analysis |
| Week 7 | | | |
| 10/1 | Begin scene study/lecture | | Read assigned play #1 (TBA) |
| 10/3 | Discussion | Receive assigned scenes | Rehearse on your own |
| Week 8 | | | |
| 10/8 | Work on scenes in class | | Continue rehearsal |
| 10/10 | Present scene #1 | | Read play #2 (TBA) |
| Week 9 | | | |
| 10/15 | Discussion | Receive assigned scenes | Rehearse scene #2 |
| 10/17 | Work on sc 2. | | Rehearse on your own |

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| Week 10 | | | |
| 10/22 | Present scene #2 | | Read play of USC Production (TBA) |
| 10/24 | Discuss USC Student production | | See USC Production (TBA) |
| Week 11 | | | |
| 10/29 | Discussion of USC Production (TBA) | | Written Analysis |
| 10/31 | (GUEST LECTURER TBA) | | |
| Week 12 | | | |
| 11/5 | Final Project Discussion | Choose Final Scenes | Read plays |
| 11/7 | Begin table work for final scene | | Rehearse |
| Week 13 | | | |
| 11/12 | Continue Table Work for final play | | Rehearse |
| 11/14 | Check-ins w/ Rodney & continue Table Work | | R4A FINAL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (DUE BEFORE CLASS ON 11/26!!!) |
| Week 14 | | | |
| 11/19 | | | |
| 11/21 | THANKSGIVING | BREAK | NO CLASS |

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| Week 15 | | | |
| 11/26 | CONTINUE WORK ON FINAL w/ Rodney | | REHEARSE |
| 11/28 | FINAL RUN-THRU (times will be assigned) | (LAST IN-HOUSE CLASS) | REHEARSE |
| FINALS WEEK | | | |
| 12/5 | FINAL SCENE PRESENTATION | FINAL SCENE PRESENTATION | FINAL SCENE PRESENTATION... and CAKE! |

Final Examination Date: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5.
Location TBA

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/departments/departments-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.

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.

