

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Theatre 252a (62814) – Intermediate Acting I
Fall 2018 – Tuesday, Thursday 10:00 – 11:50 AM
Location: PED 206

Instructor: John DeMita
Associate Professor of Theater Practice in Acting
Office: JEFF 201a, 2nd Floor
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8 – 10 AM and by appointment
(ALL OFFICE APPOINTMENTS MUST BE SCHEDULED).
Contact Info: demita@usc.edu / 213-716-1485 (Call or Text).

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 themselves 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.

Class Meetings

- This course entails in-class acting exercises; rehearsals of assigned scenes in and outside of class; in-class performances; and critical assessment and discussion of required readings.
- Students are required to participate fully in all classes; to work collaboratively with their peers; and to show disciplined commitment to acting.
- Students are required to sign up for in-class exercises on a shared Google Document, and are responsible for performance of all exercises on the assigned time and day.
- If you have a religious conflict with any class or class assignment, email Professor DeMita within the first two weeks of the semester.
- If you are unable to attend a class or will be late for any reason, email Professor DeMita **PRIOR TO CLASS**. Failure to do so will count as an unexcused absence.
- **NO ELECTRONIC DEVICES (PHONE, LAPTOP, TABLET, ETC.) PERMITTED IN CLASS.**

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

**ALL STUDENTS MUST READ THE ENTIRE TEXT OF EVERY PLAY WORKED ON IN CLASS.
ALL TEXTS AND PLAYSRIPTS MUST BE BROUGHT TO CLASS IN HARD COPIES ONLY.**

- **Actions, the Actor's Thesaurus**, by Marina Caldarone and Maggie Lloyd-Williams
- TBA – PLAYS TO BE CHOSEN AND CAST DURING THE SEMESTER.
- The professor will assign scenes and exercises. However, if there is material you wish to be considered for in-class work, please bring it to the professor's attention. Once you are assigned a scene or monologue, you will need to acquire the full text of the play, online, in the library, or at a bookstore, and bring it to class. In addition, exercises and written assignments will be available for download on the Blackboard website for the course.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

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

- Written assignments must be turned in on or before the scheduled due date. **Late work will not be accepted.**
- Written assignments **MUST be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard** 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:

- Students are required to be on time for all scheduled sessions unless they are genuinely too ill to attend or affected by unavoidable personal or external circumstances. **If the student has more than 3 absences or late arrivals during the course they will not be able to fulfill their ability to fully participate in class. Additionally, students must keep the teacher informed of any absence or late arrival IN ADVANCE.** Failure to do so also constitutes a lack of participation and points will be deducted.
- 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 2 HOURS OF OUTSIDE REHEARSAL.*

FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS, POINTS WILL BE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS:

There is a rubric for performance evaluations available for download on Blackboard. Student is responsible for familiarizing this rubric. Please address any questions about this prior to performing any scenes for a grade. In addition, exercises and activities assigned will be scored by the following criteria:

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 Breakdown

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

In-Class Exercises	10 Points (10% of grade)
Vermont Porch Written Analysis	10 Points (10% of grade)
Vermont Porch Performance	10 Points (10% of grade)
Written Scene Analysis (2 X 10 Points Each)	20 Points (20% of grade)
Scene 1 Performance (Download Rubric).....	15 Points (15% of grade)
Scene 2 Performance (Download Rubric).....	20 Points (20% of grade)
Cumulative Class Participation	15 Points (15% of grade)

Total100 Points

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.

Further Grading Notes

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W.
- If you are confused or concerned about your performance or the work we are doing in class, please

request a meeting to discuss this with me.

CALENDAR *(This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace and unpredictability of the creative process of the class.)*

Week 1	Introductions. Discuss student expectations, semester goals, and playwrights. Perform Introductory Monologues. Designate Warm-up Groups. ASSIGN: Personal Story.
Week 2	Share Personal Stories / Discuss Elements of Storytelling. DOWNLOAD / ASSIGN: Vermont Porch Exercise.
Weeks 3, 4	Warm Ups, Exercises. Perform Vermont Porch Exercise (Scheduled). Cast Scene 1 / Begin Outside Rehearsals (MINIMUM 2 HOURS PER WEEK). DOWNLOAD: Scene Analysis 1. ASSIGN: Read Play(s) for Scene 1.
Weeks 5 - 7	Warm Ups, Exercises. Discussion of Assigned Plays and Playwrights. Review Scene Analysis in Progress. Rough Draft May be Submitted for Feedback. Perform Vermont Porch Exercise (Scheduled). In-Class Rehearsals of Scene 1 (Scheduled). DUE BY 9/27: Completion of ALL Vermont Porch Exercises.
Week 8	MIDTERM: Perform Scene 1 – Groups and Dates Assigned. DUE BY 10/9: Final Version of Scene Analysis 1. DOWNLOAD: Scene Analysis 2. ASSIGN: Read Play(s) for Scene 2.
Week 9	Individual Student Conferences (Scheduled). Discussion of Assigned Plays and Playwrights. Cast Scene #2.
Weeks 10 - 15	Warm Ups, Exercises. In-Class Rehearsals of Scene 2 (Scheduled). Review Scene Analysis in Progress. Rough Draft May be Submitted for Feedback. DUE BY 11/27: Final Version of Scene Analysis 2. DUE BY 11/27, 11/29: Perform Scene 2 – Groups and Dates Assigned.
12/11/18 @ 8 AM	FINAL EXAM

KEY DATES:

Monday, August 20: Fall semester classes begin
Monday September 3: Labor Day, university holiday
Friday September 7: Last day to register and add classes
Friday September 7: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund
Friday October 5: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W”
Friday November 9: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W”
November 22-26: Thanksgiving recess
Friday November 30: Fall semester classes end
December 1-4: Study days
December 5-12: Final examinations
December 13-January 6, 2019: Winter recess

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/departement-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.