

Instructor: John DeMita  
Associate Professor of Theater Practice in Acting  
Office: JEFF 201a, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 8 – 10 AM and by  
appointment  
(ALL OFFICE APPOINTMENTS MUST BE SCHEDULED).  
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Text).

### Course Description and Overview

“In real life people don’t spend every minute shooting at each other, hanging themselves and making confessions of love. They don’t spend all the time saying clever things. They’re more occupied with eating, drinking, flirting and talking stupidities—and these are the things which ought to be shown on the stage.”

- *Anton Chekhov*

1. Using the writing of 19th – early 20th century European authors, we will delve deeply into the theatrical styles of naturalism and realism as they pertain to acting and the creation of character.
2. We will give particular emphasis to the areas of personalization and emotional commitment, while never losing sight of our responsibility to be clear and compelling storytellers for our audiences.
3. While striving to find our own authentic voices in the text, we will also utilize historical and dramaturgical research so that our mission remains to serve our shared understanding of the author’s intention and the world of the play.

### Learning Objectives

Through exercises, improvisations, and scenes, students will:

- Examine the characters, short stories, poetry, and plays of 19th – early 20th century authors, concentrating on subtext, heightened speech, period style and building and sustaining character.
- Construct a strong physical and vocal presentation.
- Define and execute strong intentions on stage.
- Practice and test concentration on stage.
- Utilize sense / emotion memory in connection with the creation of character.
- Create and utilize a strong, detailed environment for the character.
- Employ a variety of tactics, while executing with intention.

### Prerequisite:

Theatre 252b.

### 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**

- *4 Plays and 3 Jokes*, by Anton Chekhov (translated by Sharon Carnicke)
- *A Month in the Country*, by Ivan Turgenev (translated by Patrick Marber)

### **ADDITIONAL PLAYS UNDER CONSIDERATION (AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD ON BLACKBOARD)**

- *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, by George Bernard Shaw
- *Lady Windermere's Fan*, by Oscar Wilde
- *A Doll's House*, by Henrik Ibsen (translated by Alan Fletcher)
- *The Stronger*, by August Strindberg (translation TBA)

### **Recommended Texts**

- *An Actor Prepares*, by Konstantin Sergeievich Stanislavski
- *Daily Life in Russian Under the Last Tsar*, by Henni Troyat

### **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.
- **Grades are not dictated** by the success of acting presentations, the instructor's subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference.
- **Grades are dictated by active engagement in the class at all times.**

### **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.....	5 Points (15% of grade)
Private Moment Written .....	10 Points (10% of Grade)
Private Moment Performance.....	10 Points (10% of Grade)
Journal (4 Entries X 5 Points Each) .....	20 Points (20% of grade)
Midterm Performance.....	20 Points (15% of grade)
Final Scene Performance.....	20 Points (20% of grade)
Cumulative Class Participation .....	15 Points (15% of grade)

Total .....100 Points

**Grading Scale**

The final course grade is determined according to the following scale:

<b>Excellent:</b>	A (4) = 100-96	A- (3.7) = 95-90	
<b>Good:</b>	B+ (3.3) = 89-86	B (3) = 85-84	B- (2.7) = 83-80
<b>Average:</b>	C+ (2.3) = 79-76	C (2) = 75-74	C- (1.7) = 73-70
<b>Poor:</b>	D (.7-1.3) = 60's	F (0) = 59 and below	

**FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS, POINTS WILL BE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS:**

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**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

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**0% - Unacceptable:** work was not completed on time, with no communication with professor or student partners

*When the GPA 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 have been excellent or good and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average or 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	<p>Introductions. Discuss student expectations and semester goals. Warm ups and Exercises. Storytelling (Color/Advance). <b>DOWNLOAD: Private Moment Exercise.</b> <b>ASSIGN: Read Introduction to Chekhov Collection and "Uncle Vanya."</b> <b>DUE 8/23: Bring in one personal story to be told in 2 minutes.</b></p>
Week 2	<p>Warm ups and Exercises. Share personal stories. Discuss Introduction to Chekhov Collection and "Uncle Vanya." <b>ASSIGN: Read "The Three Sisters," and "The Lady with her Pet Dog."</b> <b>DUE 9/1 @ 5 PM: Journal Entry #1 Uploaded to Turnitin.</b></p>
Week 3	<p>Warm ups and Exercises. Discuss "The Three Sisters," and "The Lady with her Pet Dog." <b>ASSIGN: Read "A Month in the Country" and "The Kiss" and "A Calamity."</b> <b>DUE: Perform Private Moment Exercise (Scheduled).</b></p>
Week 4	<p>Warm ups and Exercises. Discuss "A Month in the Country" and "The Kiss" and "A Calamity." <b>ASSIGN: Casting for Midterm Scenes.</b> <b>DUE: Perform Private Moment Exercise (Scheduled).</b></p>
Week 5	<p>Warm ups and Exercises. In-Class Rehearsals of Midterm Scenes Begins. <b>DUE: Perform Private Moment Exercise (Scheduled).</b></p>
Week 6	<p>Warm ups and Exercises Russian Name Party. Continuation of In-Class Rehearsals of Midterm Scenes. <b>DUE: Perform Private Moment Exercise (Scheduled). Complete by 9/27.</b></p>
Week 7	<p>Warm ups and exercises. Continuation of In-Class Rehearsals of Midterm Scenes. <b>DUE 10/1 @ 5 PM: Journal Entry #2 Uploaded to Turnitin.</b></p>
Week 8	<p><b>SCENE ONE – 10/9, 10/11: Performances (Scheduled).</b> <b>ASSIGN: Read Play(s) from Additional Plays Under Consideration.</b></p>
Week 9	<p>Warm ups and exercises. Discuss Play(s) from Additional Plays Under Consideration.</p>
Weeks 10 - 14	<p>Discuss Play(s) from Additional Plays Under Consideration. In-Class Rehearsals of Final Scenes. <b>ASSIGN: Students must cast themselves in scenes from the plays by 10/23.</b> <b>DUE 11/1 @ 5 PM: Journal Entry #3 Uploaded to Turnitin.</b></p>
Week 15	<p><b>SCENE TWO – 11/27, 11/29 Performances (Scheduled).</b> <b>DUE 12/1 @ 5 PM: Journal Entry #4 Uploaded to Turnitin.</b></p>
December 11 @ 11 AM	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>

## 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/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.

### 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/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/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.