

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).  
Contact Info: [demita@usc.edu](mailto:demita@usc.edu) / 213-716-1485 (Call or  
Text).

### Course Description and Overview

Post Modern Plays and Playwrights, with an emphasis on Theatre of the Absurd. Class performance and critique. The mission of the class is to assist the actor in developing acute interpretation skills that will enable him or her to discover the vision of the playwright and the complex subtleties of each character in the play and in so doing help the actor define his or her own philosophical and artistic vision. To remind the actor that in the pursuit of the art of acting, the actor must be disciplined, dedicated, and committed to learning the craft of the theatre which requires precise attention to detail. To respect the role of the audience upon which the actor relies in order to fulfill his or her creative function.

### Learning Objectives

Through exercises, improvisations, and scenes, students will learn to:

- Examine the plays and playwrights of in the styles of absurdism and surrealism, with particular emphasis on the actor's role in bringing these texts to life on stage.
- Develop and hone a PERSONAL ARTISTIC MISSION STATEMENT.
- Construct a strong physical and vocal presentation.
- Define and execute strong intentions on stage.
- Practice and test concentration on stage.
- Invent Nothing, Deny Nothing, Accept Everything, and Get On With It!

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- *After Liverpool*, by James Saunders (Available for Download on Blackboard).
- *Waiting for Godot*, by Samuel Beckett (Available for Download on Blackboard).
- *The Maids*, by Jean Genet (Available for Download on Blackboard).
- *Three Tall Women*, by Edward Albee (Available on Amazon.com).
- RESEARCH MATERIAL TO BE DOWNLOADED FROM BLACKBOARD.

### Suggested Readings

- *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*, by David Mamet (Available on Amazon.com).

### Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

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

- Written assignments (character analysis, journals, character biographies, etc.) must be turned in on or before the scheduled due date. **LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**
- Written assignments may only be submitted online. **NO HARD COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED IN CLASS.**

- Credit will be given for any in-class exercise or scene 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.
  - “Excellent” work reflects the student’s high level of preparation, creative problem solving, and initiative. The student has fully committed to his or her choices, and risks have been taken in the performance.
  - “Good” work meets the minimum standards of confident blocking, memorization, and fully realized production values (costumes, props. etc.) This is safe, but uninspired.
  - “Fair” work is indicated when students are “going through the motions,” uncertain of lines and cues, speaking inaudibly, and physically disengaged. The student takes no risks and has made no distinctive choices.

### Assessment of “Participation”

**15% of the final grade is earned through class participation. This will be defined as:**

- Show up on time – students who are more than 5 minutes late are considered tardy.
- Lead the class in a 5-10 minute warm-up when assigned.
- 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 instructor 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 instructor with all involved must be arranged before the day of the scheduled scene or everyone will be held equally accountable.*

### Grading Policy

**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.**

### 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:

Dialogue Fragments (5 Points Each) .....	15 Points
Written Scene Analysis (10 Points Each) .....	20 Points
Mission Statement (Written) .....	20 Points
Midterm Scene .....	15 Points
Final Scene .....	15 Points
Cumulative Class Participation .....	15 Points

Total ..... 100 Points

### Grading Scale

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

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

**Excellent** = clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight

**Good** = class material has been understood clearly

**Average** = class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain

**Poor** = there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material

**Failure** = gaps in the completion of work is coupled with poor understanding of class material.

*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	Introductions. Discuss student expectations and semester goals. Warm ups and exercises. Distribute Artistic Mission Statement Exercise. Discuss Theatre of Isms, and Artistic Mission Assignment. <b>ASSIGN: Dream Journal. Read Antirealism Overview and After Liverpool.</b>
Week 2	Warm ups and exercises. Staging Dreams. Discuss Theatre of the Avant-Garde, View Scenes from Possession. <b>ASSIGN: Memorize Dialogue Fragments from After Liverpool, Prepare Version One (Avant-Garde).</b>
Week 3	Warm ups and exercises. Hot Seat TBA. <b>DUE: Version One / Dialogue Fragments from After Liverpool. Avant-Garde.</b> <b>ASSIGN: Read Waiting for Godot, ACT Words on Plays.</b>
Week 4	Warm ups and exercises. Hot Seat TBA. Waiting for Godot – Introducing Language / Key Speech. <b>DUE: Version Two / Dialogue Fragments from After Liverpool. Expressionism / Metatheatre.</b> <b>ASSIGN: Students Must Choose Scenes / Partners for Waiting for Godot.</b>
Weeks 5 – 7	Warm ups and exercises. Hot Seat TBA. <b>DUE: Version Three / Dialogue Fragments from After Liverpool. Alienation / Absurdity.</b> Rehearse Scenes from Waiting for Godot. <b>DUE 10/11: Written Scene Analysis for Waiting for Godot (Uploaded to Turnitin).</b>
Week 8	<b>MIDTERM 10/11: Performance of Scenes from Waiting for Godot (MIDTERM).</b> <b>ASSIGN: Read The Maids, Three Tall Women, Chapter Four, Pages 198-217.</b>
Week 9, 10	Warm ups and exercises. Table Work on The Maids, Three Tall Women. Artistic Mission Statement Q&A. <b>ASSIGN: Students Must Choose Scenes / Partners for Scene 2.</b>
Weeks 11 - 15	Warm ups and exercises. Rehearse Scenes from The Maids, Three Tall Women .

	<b>DUE 11/22: Written Scene Analysis for Scene 2 (Uploaded to Turnitin).</b> <b>DUE 11/29: Final Performances of Scene 2.</b> <b>DUE 11/29: Written Artistic Mission Statement (Uploaded to Turnitin).</b>
December 11 @ 2 – 4 PM	<b>FINAL EXAM: Presentation of Mission Statement.</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.