

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Introduction to Acting

THTR-101 (4 units)

Section 62602

Spring 2019

Mondays & Wednesdays 10:30-12:20pm

Location: MCC 109

Kirstin Eggers, Adjunct Faculty

Office: MCC 214

Office Hours: By appointment. Please schedule via email.

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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.

There are no excused absences or tardies. 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 (or leaving early) 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 (kqegggers@usc.edu) as a **PDF attachment** before the specified date and time. Written assignments should follow MLA guidelines. Late assignments will not be awarded full points.

This includes your responses to two SDA productions. I have included a list of the Spring season at the end of this syllabus. Students should buy tickets at the USC Ticket Office in early January, 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.

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 (April 5).
- I am happy to discuss your work or grade 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	15 points
Open Scene Written Component	5 points
Contemporary Scene Classwork	5 points
Contemporary Scene Presentation (Final)	15 points
Contemporary Scene Written Component (& Final Reflection)	5 points
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 —** **Jan 7** — Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review.
Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.
Jan 9 — 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 —** **Jan 14** — Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.
Jan 16 — DUE TODAY: Read lessons 1 & 2 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons* for discussion.
Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.
- Week 3 —** **Jan 21** — NO CLASS — Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan 23 — DUE TODAY: Read lessons 3 & 4 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons* for discussion.
Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.
- Week 4 —** **Jan 25** — Imagination work. Personal readings, continued.
Jan 27 — DUE TODAY: Read lessons 5 & 6 from *Acting: The First Six Lessons* for discussion.
Personal readings, continued.
- Week 5 —** **Feb 4** — Introduce choral work.
Feb 6 — DUE TODAY: Read *The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods* handout for discussion.
Choral work.

- Week 6 —** Feb 11 — Choral work.
Feb 13 — Choral work.
- Week 7 —** Feb 18 — NO CLASS — President's Day
Feb 20 — Choral work presentation. Begin open scene work.
- Week 8 —** Feb 25 — DUE TODAY: Read Rehearsal/ Actions handout.
Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.
Feb 27 — Open scene work.
- Week 9 —** Mar 4 — DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am.
Play discussion. Open scene work.
Mar 6 — Open scene work.
- SPRING BREAK Mar 11 & 13**
- Week 10 —** Mar 18 — Open scene work.
Mar 20 — Open scene work.
- Week 11 —** Mar 25 — Open scene work.
Mar 27 — Open scene work.
- Week 12 —** Apr 1 — Open scene work.
Apr 3 — Open scene work.
- Week 13 —** Apr 8 — Open scene work.
Apr 10 — Open scene presentation. Writing component due with presentation. Introduce contemporary scene work.
- Week 14 —** Apr 15 — Contemporary scene work.
Apr 17 — Contemporary scene work.
- Week 15 —** Apr 22 — DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am.
Play discussion. Contemporary scene work.
Apr 24 — Learning Experience Evaluations. Contemporary scene work.
- FINAL —** Monday May 6 — 8-10am (per university final exam schedule)
Final presentation of contemporary scene. Written component due. Final self-reflection format TBD.

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 Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. 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>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

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. 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. 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. 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: 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-4321 - HSC: (323) 442-1000 - 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community.

The USC SDA Spring 2019 Plays

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

Children of the Sun

By Maxim Gorky & Andrew Upton | Scene Dock Theatre | February 1-28

Maxim Gorky's darkly comic play is set in Russia on the eve of the revolution. The country's new middle class flounders about, philosophizing and flirting, blind to their impending annihilation. Protasov wants only to immerse himself in his experiments and is oblivious to the advances of the half-crazed widow and his best friend's pursuit of his wife, let alone the cholera epidemic and the starving mob.

Gnit

By Will Eno | Scene Dock Theatre | February 2-March 2

Meet Peter Gnit, a recklessly aspiring, self-deluded anti-hero. This twisted adaption of Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* is a rollicking and cautionary tale that challenges what we think we know about this classic character. At this unique moment in U.S. history, the questions and problems raised are alive with relevance.

Swimmers

By Rachel Bonds | Scene Dock Theatre | February 9-March 3

Coyotes evading police. Billboards predicting the end of the world. It's been a strange day at the office, and it's only 9 a.m. Moving floor by floor from the basement to the roof, scenes between employees in a corporate office explore the angst-ridden relationships between those that people often take most advantage of: their coworkers.

The Two Gentlemen of Verona

By William Shakespeare | Bing Theatre | February 21-24

Young Proteus only has eyes for his hometown sweetheart, Julia. But one look at the beautiful Silvia on a trip to Milan changes everything. Now he's smitten with his best friend's lover and his sweetheart has no intention of going away quietly. Events spin out of control as romantic rivals face off in this wild comic tale.

Holy Ghosts

By Romulus Linney | McClintock Theatre | February 28-March 3

Coleman Shedman arrives at the rural meeting house of a southern Pentecostal sect with a lawyer in tow, seeking to retrieve his runaway wife (and the possessions she has taken with her). But his wife, Nancy, is unwilling to forsake the love and protection of her new "husband," the Reverend Obediah Buckhorn, and return to the brutal, hard-drinking Coleman. Rich with atmosphere and the feel of Southern rural life, the play blends humor and poignancy as it probes into the circumstances and stories of the various cult members.

———— **March 4:** SDA Performance Response #1 Due ————

The Busybody

By Susanna Centlivre | Scene Dock Theatre | March 28-31

First performed in 1709, this brilliantly witty and fast-paced comedy follows the characters Miranda and Isabinda as they attempt to arrange marriages to the men they love. Meanwhile, the hapless "busy body" Marplot tries to help his friends, but his valiant efforts only succeed in leading them closer towards disaster.

Sunday in the Park with George

By Stephen Sondheim & James Lapine | Bing Theatre | March 28-April 7

Inspired by the painting "A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte" by Georges Seurat, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's stunning musical masterpiece, merges past and present into beautiful, poignant truths about life, love and the creation of art. One of the most acclaimed musicals of our time, this moving study of the enigmatic painter, Georges Seurat, won a Pulitzer Prize and was nominated for an astounding 10 Tony Awards, including best musical.

Black Sky

By Amanda L. Andrei | Massman Theatre | April 5-7

In a near future world where the government trains teenagers to manage disasters, five young women embark on a training scenario to fix a regional electrical grid. When a freak solar storm hits the grid and injures the teens, they must fight for their bodies, relationships, and lives.

A Stone Is Nobody's

By Noa Gardner | Massman Theatre | April 12-14

Gently is a soft and sheltered kid living alone with his manic mother. The two of them shut themselves off from the rest of the world, but when Gently catches a taste of what the outside world has to offer, he must now grow up fast and decide what truths to believe and myths to leave behind.

Rough Magic

By Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa | Scene Dock Theatre | April 18-21

Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa's action-adventure-fantasy conjures a mythical, magical meta-universe in which evil sorcerer Prospero steps out of the pages of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and threatens death and destruction in modern-day Manhattan. To combat this supernatural foe, a quartet of unlikely heroes (including a dramaturg with magical powers) will emerge from the ashes to save the city and its citizens from complete and utter destruction.

———— **April 22:** SDA Performance Response #2 Due ————