

THTR 101: Introduction to Acting

4 Units

Fall 2019—Tuesdays & Thursdays—8-9:50am

Instructor: Kirstin Eggers

Office: MCC 214

Office Hours: By appointment — please schedule via email.

Email: kqeggers@usc.edu

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Course Description

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." — Albert Einstein

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.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

All required readings should be available at the USC Bookstore.

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

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 — You will write responses to two SDA productions. A list of the Fall season shows is at the end of this syllabus. Students should buy tickets at the USC Ticket Office in early September, 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.

Written components for Open Scene and Contemporary Scene will be discussed in class and emailed.

Personal Reading — refer to Week One of Course Schedule.

Choral Work — work will be in small groups as assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class is crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of choral work will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory.

Open Scenes — work will be in pairs as assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class is crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of each open scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory.

Contemporary Scenes — work will be in pairs or groups as assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class is crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of each contemporary scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class Participation — Attendance, focus, attitude, willingness	15	15
Discussion of Readings, Plays, Rehearsals	10	10
SDA Performance Responses (5 points each)	10	10
Personal Reading	5	5
Choral Work and Presentation	10	10
Open Scene Classwork	10	10
Open Scene Presentation	15	15
Open Scene Written Component	5	5
Contemporary Scene Classwork	5	5
Contemporary Scene Presentation (Final)	10	10
Contemporary Scene Written Component (& Final Reflection)	5	5
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

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

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W (November 15).
- I am happy to discuss your work and/or grade with you at any time.

Assignment Submission Policy

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.

Rehearsal and Performance Assignments should be presented in class, and copies of written work do not need to be submitted, although you will refer to your work and must be prepared.

Additional Policies

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.

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.

Break — We do not take an official break in the hour and fifty minutes of class — you should be prepared to stay in the room. In the event of an emergency, observe respectful theatre rules of being discrete and respectful to your fellow actors.

Strike — You are expected to help restore the classroom to neutral at the end of each class.

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	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
WEEK ONE	Tues Aug 27	Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review. Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.		DUE THURSDAY: 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. It should not be something you wrote.
	Thurs Aug 29	Present personal readings. Ensemble, focus, storytelling work.	DUE TODAY: Personal readings. Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way. The piece should be printed on paper, not on an electronic device.	FOR THURSDAY: Read lessons 1 & 2 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.

WEEK TWO	Tues Sept 3	Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Thurs Sept 5	Group movement and voice work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	DUE TODAY: Read lessons 1 & 2 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.	DUE THURSDAY: Read lessons 3 & 4 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.
WEEK THREE	Tues Sept 10	Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Thurs Sept 12	Imagination work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	DUE TODAY: Read lessons 3 & 4 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.	DUE THURSDAY: Read lessons 5 & 6 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.
WEEK FOUR	Tues Sept 17	Ensemble work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Thurs Sept 19	Book discussion. Introduce choral work.	DUE TODAY: Read lessons 5 & 6 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.	DUE THURSDAY: Read <i>The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods</i> handout for discussion.
WEEK FIVE	Tues Sept 24	Choral work.	Choral work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Sept 26	Choral work.	DUE TODAY: Read <i>The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods</i> handout for discussion. Choral work outside rehearsal.	
WEEK SIX	Tues Oct 1	Choral work.	Choral work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Oct 3	Choral work presentation. Begin open scene work.	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION	DUE TUESDAY: Read Rehearsal/ Actions handout. DUE TUES NOV 5: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Season of Plays begins TODAY. Prompts sent via email.
WEEK SEVEN	Tues Oct 8	Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.	DUE TODAY: Read Rehearsal/ Actions handout.	
	Thurs Oct 10	Open scene work.	Open scene work outside rehearsal.	
WEEK EIGHT	Tues Oct 15	Open scene work.	Open scene work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Oct 17	FALL BREAK — NO CLASS		

WEEK NINE - TEN	Tues Oct 22 - Thur Oct 31	Open scene work.	Open scene work outside rehearsal.	
WEEK ELEVEN	Tues Nov 5	Play discussion. Open scene work.	DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Open scene work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Nov 7	Open scene work.	Open scene work outside rehearsal.	DUE TUES NOV 26: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Season of Plays continues TODAY. Prompts sent via email.
WEEK TWELVE	Tues Nov 12	Open scene work.	Open scene work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Nov 14	Open scene presentation. Writing component due with presentation. Introduce contemporary scene work.	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION	
WEEK THIRTEEN	Tues Nov 19	Contemporary scene work.	Contemporary scene work outside rehearsal.	
	Tues Nov 21	Contemporary scene work.	Contemporary scene work outside rehearsal.	
WEEK FOURTEEN	Tues Nov 26	Play discussion. Contemporary scene work.	DUE TODAY: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Contemporary scene work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Nov 28	THANKSGIVING BREAK — NO CLASS		
WEEK FIFTEEN	Tues Dec 3	Contemporary scene work.	Contemporary scene work outside rehearsal.	
	Thurs Dec 5	Learning Experience Evaluations. Contemporary scene work.	Contemporary scene work outside rehearsal.	
FINAL	TUESDAY DECEMBER 17 @ 4:30pm	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION	Written component due — specifics given in class. Final self-reflection format TBD.	

EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS AND ISPs

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, home work that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

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. dps.usc.edu

The USC SDA Spring 2019 Plays

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

Men on Boats

By Jaclyn Backhaus | McClintock Theatre | October 3-6

Spinning historical, theatrical and gender conventions on their heads, this subversive tale of 10 men, four boats and two rivers contains none of the above. Backhaus' deliciously original play is the true(ish) history of an 1869 expedition, when a one-armed captain and a crew of insane yet loyal volunteers set out to chart the course of the Colorado River.

Amsterdam

By Maya Arad Yasur | Scene Dock Theatre | October 10-20

A pregnant Israeli violinist sets out to trace the origins of a gas bill from 1944, which she found outside her door. Over the next 24 hours, she gradually becomes aware of the significance of her own origins in an increasingly xenophobic and misogynist environment.

Trouble in Mind

By Alice Childress | McClintock Theatre | October 31-November 3

In 1956, pioneering African American playwright Alice Childress won the Obie Award for *Trouble in Mind*, her scathingly funny backstage study of racism in the theatre world that could have been written today (or tomorrow). Wiletta Mayer is a talented but struggling actress who has the opportunity to become the first leading lady of color on the Great White Way, but is she willing to compromise her beliefs to make the career leap?

——— November 5: SDA Performance Response #1 Due ———

The Cider House Rules, Part One: Here in St. Cloud's

By P. Parnell, J. Irving, T. Hulce, J. Jones | Bing Theatre | October 31-November 9

This sweeping epic is a two-part stage adaptation of the beloved and controversial John Irving novel that follows the life of Homer Wells, a precocious orphan who leaves his home and life-long tutor, Dr. Wilbur Larch, to explore the world and to find himself. Seven generations of rich characters in and surrounding the St. Cloud's Orphanage in rural Maine grapple with ethical dilemmas of practicing medicine that seem pulled from today's headlines.

The Cider House Rules, Part Two: In Other Parts of the World

By P. Parnell, J. Irving, T. Hulce, J. Jones | Bing Theatre | November 1-10

See Part One above.

Mad Forest

By Caryl Churchill | Scene Dock Theatre | November 14-24

When rebellion brings down a dictator, what is left in the void? How will you use your freedom? Written in the aftermath of the 1989 Romanian revolution, *Mad Forest* depicts insanity unleashed when a country must suffer the leadership of a deeply unbalanced, corrupt and morally bankrupt individual.

Barbarians

By M. Gorky, K.H. Blair, J. Brooks, M. Weller | McClintock Theatre | November 21-24

The quiet life in a small provincial town is suddenly disturbed by the imminent arrival of the first railroad. In *Barbarians*, Maxim Gorky investigates the terrifying cost of progress and gives us a sharp and often comic portrait of people under the corruptible influence of power and love.

——— November 26: SDA Performance Response #2 Due ———