

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

Theatre 452a (63064) – Advanced Acting  
Fall 2019 - Tuesday, Thursday 3:00 – 4:50 PM  
Location: PED 208

Instructor: John DeMita  
Associate Professor of Theater Practice in Acting  
Office: JEFF 201a, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:30 – 10:30  
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).
- Contemporary Plays TBA
- 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 (Beckett) .....	15 Points
Final Scene (Contemporary) .....	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+ (3.3) = 89-86</b>	<b>B (3) = 85-84</b>	<b>B- (2.7) = 83-80</b>
<b>Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76</b>	<b>C (2) = 75-74</b>	<b>C- (1.7) = 73-70</b>
<b>Poor: 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: 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: Contemporary Plays to be chosen by Students.</b>
Week 9, 10	Warm ups and exercises. 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. <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 17 @ 2 – 4 PM	<b>FINAL EXAM: Presentation of Mission Statement.</b>

## 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](http://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](mailto: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:

*Campus Support & Intervention (CSI) – (213) 740-0411*

Campus Support & Intervention is an office within Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention. We are a team of professionals here to assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues. Whether you are here seeking support for yourself or someone else, we are available to help you problem solve, understand options, and connect with resources. <https://uscса.usc.edu>

*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](http://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](http://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](http://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: <https://titleix.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](http://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. <https://titleix.usc.edu/>

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

*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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)