

THTR 101: Introduction to Acting

4 Units

Spring 2020 – Mondays & Wednesdays – 10:30am-12:20pm

Location: MCC 109

Instructor: Kirstin Eggers

Office: MCC 214

Office Hours: By appointment. Please schedule via email.

Email: kqeggers@usc.edu

Phone: (c) 323.898.7388 – emergencies only, email preferred.

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,
- study concepts of acting theory, as put forth by prominent acting teachers and actors,
- 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 physical and vocal abilities, including mind-body connection,
- 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 books should be available at the USC Bookstore. Additional readings may be available via ARES/USC Library. You will be informed of e-availability as much as possible.

Required Reading

- *Acting: The First Six Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky
- *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd-Williams (*Actors' Thesaurus* app also acceptable)
- 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 recommend 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.

Collaboration/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 require notes to be taken – please be prepared.

As a class, you should establish an information sharing group (platform of your choosing) early in the semester. You must be able to contact each member of your ensemble easily.

Written Assignments – You will write responses to two SDA productions. A list of the Spring season shows is 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.

Written Component of the Open Scene and the 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 are 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 are 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 are 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
Participation — Attendance, focus, attitude, willingness	15	15
Discussion of Readings, Plays, Rehearsals	10	10
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 (inc. 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 (April 3).
- I am happy to discuss your work and/or grade with you at any time.

Assignment Submission Policy

- Written Assignments should be emailed to me (kqeggers@usc.edu) as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time, unless otherwise specified. Written assignments should follow MLA guidelines. Late assignments will not be awarded full points. Do not send links to Google Docs.
- Rehearsal and Performance Assignments are 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 — 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 must be prepared to stay in the room. In the event of an emergency for which you must leave the room, observe theatre rules of being discrete and respectful to your fellow actors.

Strike — You are expected to 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	Mon Jan 13	Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review. Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.		DUE WEDNESDAY: 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. Please bring a hard copy, NOT an e-copy.
	Wed Jan 15	Present personal readings. Ensemble, focus, storytelling work.	Personal readings. Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way.	FOR WEDNESDAY: Read Lessons 1 & 2 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.
WEEK TWO	Mon Jan 20	NO CLASS — Martin Luther King Jr. Day		
	Wed Jan 22	Group movement and voice work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	Read Lessons 1 & 2 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.	FOR WEDNESDAY: Read Lessons 3 & 4 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.
WEEK THREE	Mon Jan 27	Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Wed Jan 29	Imagination work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	Read Lessons 3 & 4 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.	FOR WEDNESDAY: Read Lessons 5 & 6 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.
WEEK FOUR	Mon Feb 3	Ensemble work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Wed Feb 5	Ensemble work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	Read Lessons 5 & 6 from <i>Acting: The First Six Lessons</i> for discussion.	DUE WEDNESDAY: Read <i>The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods</i> handout for discussion. DUE MONDAY MARCH 2: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 10:30am. Season of Plays begins this weekend. Prompts sent via email.
WEEK FIVE	Mon Feb 10	Introduce choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
	Wed Feb 12	Choral work.	Read <i>The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods</i> handout for discussion.	Choral work rehearsal.
WEEK SIX	Mon Feb 17	NO CLASS — President's Day		
	Wed Feb 19	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
WEEK SEVEN	Mon Feb 24	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
	Wed Feb 26	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
WEEK EIGHT	Mon Mar 2	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION. Begin open scene work.	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION.	

Week	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Wed Mar 4	Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.		Open scene work rehearsal/prep. DUE MONDAY MARCH 9: SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 10:30am.
WEEK NINE	Mon Mar 9	Play discussion. Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.	SDA Performance Response #1, emailed as PDF attachment before 10:30am.	DUE WEDNESDAY: Read Rehearsal/ Actions handout. Open scene work rehearsal/prep.
	Wed Mar 11	Open scene work.	Read Rehearsal/ Actions handout.	Open scene work rehearsal/prep.
SPRING BREAK — NO CLASS — MARCH 16-20				
WEEKS TEN - THIRTEEN	Mon Mar 23 - Wed Apr 15	Open scene work.		DUE MON APRIL 27: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 8am. Prompts sent via email. Open scene work rehearsal/prep.
WEEK FOUR TEEN	Mon Apr 20	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION. Introduce contemporary scene work.	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due with presentation.	Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Wed Apr 22	Contemporary scene work.		DUE MONDAY: SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 10:30am. Prompts sent via email. Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
WEEK FIFTEEN	Mon Apr 27	Play discussion. Contemporary scene work.	SDA Performance Response #2, emailed as PDF attachment before 10:30am.	Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Wed Apr 29	Learning Experience Evaluations. Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
FINAL	MONDAY MAY 11 — 8-10am	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION.	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due — specifics given in class. Final self-reflection format TBD.	Happy Summer!

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

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, 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 engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255 www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.
- Sexual Assault Resource Center sarc.usc.edu
Visit website for information about how to get help, help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources.
- Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086 equity.usc.edu
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class.
- Bias Assessment Response and Support studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.
- The Office of Disability Services and Programs dsp.usc.edu
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations.
- Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic.
- Diversity at USC diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students.
- USC Emergency Information emergency.usc.edu
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.
- USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 community.dps.usc.edu
24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC.

The USC SDA Spring 2020 Plays

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

Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)

By Suzan Lori Parks | Scene Dock Theatre | February 7–March 5

Set during the Civil War, this explosively powerful new drama by Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks follows a slave, Hero, from West Texas to the Confederate battlefield. Filled with music, contemporary wit and epic theatricality, this trilogy tells a timeless story about the struggle to hold on to who we are and what we love in a country that forces us to fight battles we didn't choose for ourselves.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare | Scene Dock Theatre | February 8–March 7

Romance, lust, nature, mysticism and the blurred lines between dreams and reality are explored in an enchanted moonlit forest on a warm summer night. Join us for William Shakespeare's most beloved tale of mischief and merriment, comic misadventures, mistaken identities and unrequited love.

Guarded

By Boni B. Alvarez | Scene Dock Theatre | February 15–March 8

A sweltering summer in Los Angeles. On location for a big Hollywood feature. So many dreams in the balance. L.A. playwright Boni B. Alvarez has created a new piece that sneaks a peek into the lives of a wide swath of Angelenos who are all just trying to make it.

Othello

By William Shakespeare | Bing Theatre | February 27–March 1

In William Shakespeare's tragic masterpiece, newly married and promoted Othello finds himself the pawn in the manipulative games of his right-hand man, Iago. With powerful themes of love, jealousy, race and toxic masculinity, this thunderous drama examines who we trust and the price we pay for choosing wrong.

Camino Real

By Tennessee Williams | McClintock Theatre | March 5–March 8

The Camino Real is a dead end—the end of the road in a police state in a vaguely Latin American country, and an inescapable condition. Characters from history and literature—Don Quixote, Casanova, Camille and Lord Byron inhabit a place where corruption and indifference have nearly destroyed the human spirit. When a young man with a fighting spirit enters this purgatorial arena, will he succumb to the allure of the Camino Real, or will he break out, tearing down its walls with him?

——— March 9: SDA Performance Response #1 Due ———

Fuente Ovejuna: A Disloyal Adaptation

By Cusi Cram | Scene Dock Theatre | April 2–5

Embracing the "art" of adaptation, Cusi Cram has written a joyful homage to the masterpiece by Lope de Vega, which tells the story of a town that rebels against brutal suppression. This adaptation brings to life La Barraca, a real troupe led by Federico Garcia Lorca that toured their version of Fuente Ovejuna all over Spain in the 1930s, bringing the play's message of love overcoming tyranny.

The Secret Garden

By Marsha Norman & Lucy Simon | Bing Theatre | April 2–April 12

Based on the beloved children's novel, this magical tale follows lonely orphan Mary Lennox, who returns to Yorkshire to live with her embittered uncle and his invalid son. As Mary begins to explore her new home, she discovers a hidden and neglected garden. As she brings the garden back to life, she unleashes a spirit of rebirth in this musical tale of forgiveness and renewal.

Three Sisters

By Anton Chekhov, A New Version by Sarah Ruhl | Massman Theatre | April 23–26

Transplanted from their beloved Moscow to a provincial Russian town, the three Prozorov sisters—school teacher Olga, unhappily married Masha and idealistic Irina—pine for the life of excitement in the city of their childhood. With touches of humor and tenderness, of awkwardness and passion, Three Sisters is the portrait of a family grappling with the bittersweet distance between reality and dreams.

——— April 27: SDA Performance Response #2 Due ———