



**THTR 105 (Section 62603)**  
**INTRODUCTION TO SCREEN ACTING**  
**2 Units**  
**Spring 2020**  
**Location: Shrine 105**  
**Wednesdays: 8:00 am - 10:50 am**  
**Instructor: Paul Lazarus**

**Office Hours: by appointment on Wednesday after class**  
**Contact Info: [assistant@whitedwarfprods.com](mailto:assistant@whitedwarfprods.com) / 323-227-9691**

### **Course Description**

This is a workshop-style class introducing students to the fundamentals of screen acting. We will discuss and explore the distinctions between acting for the stage and acting on-camera in any form of digital media whether it be Television, Film or the Internet. Through exercises, reading and viewing assignments and on-camera work we will identify the technical differences between live and recorded performance. Exposure to on-camera performance dynamics in neutral, comedic and dramatic scenes including all major TV forms (sit-coms, half-hour comedies, one-hour drama/dramedies) will help students with techniques for dealing with the unique challenges of acting for the camera.

### **Objectives and Methods**

The philosophy of SDA maintains that the art and craft of acting is best learned on the stage. However, in today's increasingly digital world, with distribution outlets like Netflix, Hulu, plus countless television channels and web series, it is important for the young actor to have exposure to the technical adjustments that need to be made in order to be effective when a camera is involved.

The object of this class is to compliment students' initial explorations of stage acting, with an introduction to the contrasting technical dynamics of screen acting. We will explore the similarities between stage and screen acting while identifying their differences. Among the numerous challenges - many of which are a result of the camera's ability to bring the audience very close to the performer (to put the audience in the "best seat in the house") - are the camera's ability to perceive a character's thoughts and desires; the emphasis on circumstance and subtext rather than dialogue to inform any given scene; vocal projection; the adjustment of the "size" of the actor's movements and gestures to the size of the shot; etc. Technical aspects of on-camera work such as eyelines, marks, continuity and off-camera skills will be reviewed. Another important objective is the development of professional work habits and attitudes.

Classes consist of discussions, video examples, on-camera exercises, and scene work with video playback. Class work is supplemented by reading and viewing lists and inspirational assignments (songs, poems, novels, etc.) Required reading will be sent via email. Students are also required to keep a weekly journal, incorporating detailed insights derived from each class experience. A Mid-Term and Final Acting Project will involve assigned scenes from a comedy and drama /dramedy TV series. NOTE: There will be a pop quiz administered at some point during the semester.

**THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE CLASS AND THE PRIOR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

**Prerequisites:** One class from THTR 252A or THTR 120A.

**Supplies, Equipment and Supplementary Materials**

**Students Are Required:** to purchase one new 32GB or 64GB digital “SD Card” Class 10 with a speed of 94/95 (approximately \$25 - \$30). No substitutes. Please do not purchase a micro-SD card that requires an adaptor. This card does not have to be made by Sony. Card can be readily purchased at Amazon or any camera store. See link below. Students must bring this SD card to each class meeting, starting with the second class. Please mark your card with your initials so that it can be identified. On-Camera exercises and scene work will be recorded on these cards for in-class playback discussions, and as a composite record of student’s progress through the term.



[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00X1404T4/ref=dp\\_cerb\\_2](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B00X1404T4/ref=dp_cerb_2)

**INTERNET ACCESS IS REQUIRED. BASIC EDITING SOFTWARE (I.E. IMOVIE, FINAL CUT PRO OR ADOBE PREMIER) MAY BE USEFUL BUT IS NOT REQUIRED. THERE WILL BE EXTRA CREDIT FOR THOSE WHO ARE ABLE TO EDIT THEIR SCENES TOGETHER.**

**Required Reading:** No initial textbook is required. Reading assignments will be sent out via email or given as handouts in class.

**Recommended Reading:** Patrick Tucker – Secrets of Screen Acting – Third Edition (2015)  
Tony Barr – Acting for the Camera  
Constantin Stanislavski – An Actor Prepares  
Stella Adler – Respect for Acting  
Sanford Meisner – On Acting  
Michael Howard – The Actor Uncovered

**Required Viewing:** To Be Announced (TBA)

## Course Work and Journal

Students will work on camera most weeks.

**Journal:** During and following each class students will keep a handwritten journal. Each entry will highlight lessons garnered from that day's exercises, reading and viewing assignments or discussion/lecture experiences, inspirations: quotes, songs, poems, art works, books, etc.

**Entries must be legible, titled, dated and each entry must be a minimum of 50 words.** These journals will serve as learning guides in conjunction with in-class acting work. They are intended to encourage beneficial self-appraisal skills. These journals will be reviewed by the instructor at midterm and at term's end. You will be graded on the consistency of your journaling in this course. Please make an entry for all classes and assignments. Please bring your journals to every class including the first.

**NOTE: DUE TO THE CONSTANT USE OF LIGHTING, CAMERA, SOUND AND MONITOR EQUIPMENT, ALL STUDENTS WILL HELP WITH SET UP AND STRIKE OF ELECTRONIC GEAR EMPLOYED IN CLASS. ON A ROTATING BASIS, ALL STUDENTS WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE OPERATION OF THIS EQUIPMENT.**

## Grading Policy

Grades are not dictated by the success of acting presentations or the instructor's subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference. Grades are dictated by:

- Attentiveness / Focus / Concentration in class
- Participation in in-class exercises
- Performance of on-camera exercises
- Active in-class student analysis
- Constructive feedback of classmate's presentations
- Meeting all assignment deadlines: reading, viewing, writing, acting
- Memorization of lines and preparation of scene work
- Availability to fellow classmates for collaboration

Grading scale for SDA: A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality; D of below average quality; F indicates inadequate work.

### Grade Categories (Total = 100%)

- |                                                                   |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Scene Work, On-camera exercises, In-Class Discussion, Pop Quiz | 40% |
| 2. Journal                                                        | 15% |
| 3. Mid-Term Scene: Rehearsal, Work & Scene                        | 15% |
| 4. Final Scene: Rehearsal, Work & Scene                           | 20% |
| 5. Growth, Effort and Weekly Participation                        | 10% |

**NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS, PROJECTS, PAPERS OR EXERCISES WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

### Grading Scale:

**Excellent: A = 100-96; A- = 95-90** (clear understanding of class material coupled with original and creative insight)

**Good:** B+ = 89-86; B = 85-84; B- = 83-80 (class material has been understood clearly)  
**Average:** C+ = 79-76; C = 75-74; C- = 73-70 (class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain)  
**Poor:** D = 60's (identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material)  
**Fail:** F = 59 and below (gaps in completion of work and poor understanding of class material.)

#### **Further Grading Notes:**

- *If the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with excellent/good attendance & class participation and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average/poor attendance & participation.*
- *If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W. I will be happy to discuss your work at any time.*

**Participation:** Attendance is required and will be taken. **NO ABSENCES OR LATE ARRIVALS ARE ALLOWED. TWO TARDYS WILL COUNT AS A FULL ABSENCE.** Large emphasis on class participation. Viewing and critiquing of other students' work is a critical component of the class. Absences and tardiness will result in point reductions as noted on the grading system. Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.

#### **Assignment Submission Policy**

Scene work and video exercises will be presented in class. Written assignments will be either emailed or a hardcopy will be handed out in class. Video examples (scenes) will often be screened in class. When video viewing is requested, files will be uploaded and submitted through Vimeo or another file-sharing program.

**LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:** Assignments are to be completed **BY THE DUE DATE & TIME.** Late assignments will **NOT BE ACCEPTED.** You will be treated as professionals-in-training. Timeliness in regard to attendance and deadlines is expected. PL's professional guide: "early and prepared is on time, on time is late, late is fired."

#### **Additional Policies**

- **Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation in class is mandatory because acting is primarily an experiential process. According to School of Dramatic Arts guidelines, **no unexcused absences are allowed.** An excused absence is due to serious illness, grave emergency or religious holiday. You must inform the instructor of your absence in advance of the class meeting. You are responsible for all work missed. An extended absence, even if excused, could seriously affect your work and grade in class. Please consult with your instructor immediately if such a situation arises.
- **Tardies:** Two tardies of any duration will count as a full absence
- **No phones during class.** Phones must be on silent and put away. Phones may only be used during break. Phones are not to be used as scripts in scenework.
- **NO** food or drinks are allowed in class – except for bottled water.

- All students must help with set up and strike of every class.
- Always wear closed-toe shoes that are flexible and good with movement (i.e. sneakers, dance shoes, etc.). No flip flops or boots - for both safety and comfort.
- Always wear proper rehearsal clothes - loose fitting, comfortable clothing, good for moving around in. Wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Safety is paramount. Physical and emotional safety is the first rule of performance.
- Be constructive in all criticism. No shaming language. Help each other be better actors.
- Avoid easy and general expressions like "hate" and "like." Find specifics that are useful.

NOTE: Depending on size of class NOT every student will work on camera each class. It is very likely that only a portion of the class will work on camera each class. The students on camera will be rotated so that everyone gets an opportunity.

### Course Schedule

**Note: Subject to change – All changes will be announced in class.**

Class #1 Jan 15	<p>Discussion:</p> <p>Quote of the Day – instructor Intro and Description of Course Fundamentals of Acting on Camera: Stage vs. Screen: How are they the different? Same? "Taking risks – Getting out of your comfort zone"</p> <p>Video:</p> <p>PL Reel TBA: Scene from play and same scene from movie version</p> <p>On-Camera Exercise:</p> <p>Being on camera - Intro - Tell us about yourself Talking to the camera/Talking to someone off-camera</p> <p>Assign:</p> <p>Class Journal Explained, Daily Quote Explained Email and Blackboard Explained Reading &amp; Viewing Assignment TBA</p>
Class #2 Jan 22	<p>Discussion:</p> <p>Quote of the day – Student Fundamentals of Acting on Camera: Adjusting for the size of the Shot: Master vs. Medium vs. Close-up vs. ECU Editing – montage, Retakes</p> <p>Video:</p> <p>TBA: Keaton Scene or Scene Without Dialogue</p> <p>On-Camera Exercise</p> <p>Non-Verbal acting on camera: Drinking from a glass with different adjustments Wide and Tite Shots – the difference</p> <p>Assign:</p> <p>Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA</p>

Class #3  
Jan 29

Discussion:  
Quote of the day – Student  
Fundamentals of Acting on Camera:  
Listening, Subtext, Analyzing Scenes & Roles  
Answering Four Questions: Who, Where, Relationship, Want  
Video:  
TBA  
On Camera Exercise:  
Host Interview – “Lying on Camera”  
Neutral Scene Work  
Assign:  
Journal & Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA

Class #4  
Feb 5

Discussion  
Quote of the day – Student  
Intro to Hagen  
More on Listening, Subtext, Analyzing Scenes & Roles  
Video:  
TBA  
On Camera Exercise:  
More Neutral Scene Work  
Listening Exercise – “How to get here from my 10-year-old bedroom”  
Hagen Exercises: Substitution, Emotional Memory, Entering, etc.  
Assign:  
Journal & Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA

**Class #5 – #7**  
Feb 12, 19, 26

Comedy – Sit-Com  
Discussion:  
Quote of the Day - Student  
Typical schedules for Sit-Coms  
Approaching comedic scenes: Surprise, Attitude, Raising stakes, Vocal energy, Cheating out, Avoiding anticipation, Balloon/Anvil image  
Shot Language: Master, RM, 50/50, Over, Single  
Physicality in Comedy  
Video:  
TBA scenes from Sit-Com and Half-Hour Comedies  
On-Camera Exercise:  
2-character scenes to be assigned from situation comedy - rehearsed, shot and critiqued  
Working with Director on-camera  
Assign:  
Journal & Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA

**Class #8, #9.**  
Mar 4, 11

Comedy – Single Cam

Discussion:

Quote of the Day - student  
Typical Actor's schedule for Half-Hour Single Cam Series  
4-wall sets vs. locations, Lighting, Turnarounds  
Working with Director & Writer  
Shot Language, Stage sets, On-Location work

On-Camera Exercise:

2-character scenes to be assigned from Half-Hour Single Cam  
Comedy Series  
Working with Director & Writer on-camera

Video:

TBA – select scenes from half-hour single cam series

Assign:

Journal & Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA

**NOTE: JOURNALS ARE DUE FOR MID-TERM GRADING AT THE END OF CLASS 9 ON MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>.**

**NOTE: MID-TERM SCENES WILL BE EVALUATED DURING CLASS 9 ON MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>.**

***MARCH 18<sup>TH</sup> – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS***

**Class #10**  
Mar 25

**GUEST LECTURER – TBA**  
General Concepts – If time allows

**Class #11, #12**  
Apr 1, 8

General Concepts

Discussion:

Camera set-ups – Coverage  
Working on set vs. working on location  
Cold Readings, Auditioning  
More on analyzing scenes and roles  
Technical work on camera

Video:

TBA - scenes from films

On-Camera Exercise:

Marks, Eyelines, Continuity, Acting Off-Camera  
Crossing the line, Set Etiquette, etc.  
Working with Director on-camera

Assign:

Journal & Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA

**Class #13, #14, #15** Drama/Dramedy  
Apr 15, 22, 29

Discussion:

Quote of the Day - student  
Typical Actor's schedule for One-Hour Series  
How to approach dramatic scenes:  
Circumstances, Wants, Obstacles, Verbs  
"Honest AND Interesting," Lack of rehearsal time  
Working with Director & Writer  
Shot Language, Stage sets, On-Location work

On-Camera Exercise:

2-character scenes to be assigned from one-hour  
drama/dramedy, rehearsed, shot and critiqued  
Working with Director and Writer on-camera

Video:

TBA – select scenes from one-hour dramas/dramedies

Assign:

Journal & Reading and Viewing Assignment TBA

**NOTE: JOURNALS ARE DUE AT THE END OF CLASS ON APRIL 29<sup>TH</sup>**

**NOTE: FINAL SCENES WILL BE PRESENTED, SHOT AND EVALUATED ON APRIL 29<sup>TH</sup>**

***MAY 6<sup>TH</sup> – NO CLASS – FINALS BEGIN***

***MONDAY, MAY 11<sup>TH</sup> – 11AM to 1PM – FINAL – TO BE DISCUSSED***

**Key Dates:**

Monday, Jan 13: Spring semester 2020 classes begin

Wednesday, Jan 15: First day of Class at 8am. Please arrive early. Do not be late.

Friday, Jan 31: Last day to add/drop class without a "W" grade, or to select "P/NP" option

Friday, Apr 3: Last day to withdraw with a grade of "W"

Wednesday, March 4: Journals turned in to Instructor at end of class

Wednesday, March 11: Mid-Term Scenes will be appraised

March 16 – 22, 2020: Spring Break Week, No Class

Friday, May 1, 2020: Final Day of Classes

May 2 – 5, 2020 Study Days

Monday, May 11, 2020 – Final Exam – To Be discussed

**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.

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### 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](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: [sarc.usc.edu](http://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](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. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://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](http://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](http://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](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)