

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 101  
INTRODUCTION TO ACTING  
Units: 4  
Semester: Spring 2020  
Days: Monday & Wednesday, 1pm-3pm  
Location: PED 202

Instructor: RODNEY TO  
Office: MCC Adjunct Office  
Office Hours: (Per request)  
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## Course Description and Overview

This course is an introduction to the study, discipline, and appreciation of Acting. It is intended to be the outset of the acting student's discovery of various techniques, skillsets, and emotional levels that will comprise their unique contribution to the characters they will portray in their work and hopefully, expand their curiosity, appreciation, understanding, and compassion of the world at large. Through readings, games, voice/speech/movement exercises, constructive discourse, & attending productions, students will gain the essential foundational acting tools necessary to continue on their journey to becoming professional actors.

## Learning Objectives

Throughout this course with me, students will:

- Be introduced to experts of the craft (Hagen, Meisner, Stanislavski, etc.) who have laid the foundation for many standard acting techniques employed today.
- Be introduced to a myriad of theater games which are intended to foster technique, pinpoint one's physicality, access emotion, and/or encourage ensemble work essential to the theatre.
- Gain basic knowledge of the fundamental language (terminology, references, etc.) involved in Theatre, TV, & Film acting.
- Keep a personal *handwritten* journal which will log the student's personal daily discoveries throughout the semester.
- Gain understanding of the true discipline that is essential to the life of an actor. We will focus on the *process* which is paramount, the *result* being inconsequential.
- Explore, explore, explore.
- Have a blast!

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

***Respect for Acting*** (\*abbreviated as R4A here)

by Uta Hagen

with Haskel Frankel

**Note:** I am requiring the student to obtain a hard copy(either hard or soft cover) of the book rather than a digital copy. I'll be encouraging students to highlight and write in their book, which will continue to be an invaluable resource for years to come. It is available in the campus bookstore, but also (cheaper) online via Amazon.

### **Journal**

As aforementioned, students are required to keep a *handwritten* journal in this class. Entries will be made at the end of class - time will be set aside for this. Journals are often extremely personal and sensitive - I am well aware. While I will be reading journals, if there is something particularly private and personal, I ask that the actor fold the page and trust that I will respect their wishes and not read it. I will keep all journals confidential. In addition, random entries will be made(prompted by me) throughout the semester and *may* be subsequently read in class and incorporated into class exercises. Again, nothing personal will be read without your permission. *You will be graded on the consistency of your journaling in this course.*

### **GRADING: Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments**

#### **Grading Criteria**

- \* You will *not* be graded based on your “talent”. This class is *not* a competition. Instead, through my guidance, you will be graded on your efforts in uncovering and fostering it.
- \* The quality of work for all components(see *Grading Breakdown*) is determined by the willingness & thoroughness of the effort, class contributions, comprehension, process, follow-through, rehearsal, and the imagination displayed.

#### **Grading Scale:**

A work of excellent quality / **A = 100-95, A- = 94-90**

B work of good quality / **B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82-80**

C work of average quality / **C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70**

D work of below average quality / **D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60**

F work of poor, inadequate quality / **F = 59 and below**

#### **Further Grading Notes**

- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with EXCELLENT in-class participation. Grades will be weighted towards the negative end of the scale for those with POOR in-class participation.
- I am available to discuss work and progress at anytime.

#### **Participation**

I can't stress enough how much you will also learn from each other - from sitting and watching, to contributing to discussions. Being available to your fellow actors/classmates is not only respectful, but necessary. Therefore *no absences or late arrivals will be allowed*. Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.

### Grading Breakdown

Written Assignments	20pts
Scenes/Scene work	25pts
Mid Semester Analysis ( <i>attend production w/ written analysis</i> )	15pts
Final Analysis, Scene Work, & Scene	25pts
Journal	5pts
Weekly participation (discussions, contributions, etc.)*	10pts

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**Total Points**

**100pts**

### Assignment Submission Policy

Games, rehearsal, scene work, class scenes, and presentations will be presented in class. Written assignments will be either emailed or a hardcopy will be provided to me per my instruction. If a video assignment is requested, files will be uploaded and submitted through a file-sharing program.

**LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:** Assignments are expected to be completed **by the due date & time**. Late assignments will **NOT BE ACCEPTED**. I am going to treat you like mature professionals-in-training. I expect a lot from you, as you should expect from yourselves. (Timeliness in regards to both attendance and assignment deadlines is certainly required, but it sure does score “bonus points” with me. Keep that in mind.)

### Additional Policies

- No technology during class. Phones must be on silent and put away. Unless I invite you to do so, phones may only be taken out during breaks.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- All students must help with the set up and strike of every class. I will ensure time is allotted to do so.
- Barefoot or socks is sufficient for movement classes. Otherwise, please always wear closed-toe shoes that are flexible and good with movement (ie sneakers, dance shoes, etc.). No flip flops or boots please - this is for your safety and comfort.
- Students must wear proper rehearsal clothes - loose fitting, comfortable clothing that you are ok moving around in and (possibly) getting a little dirty. Again, lets be professional, mature, and respectful - wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Bring a towel and or something to wipe your body and feet. You'll probably break a sweat occasionally.
- Safety is important. Physical and emotional safety is the first rule of performance. We will be working hard to establish trust with myself and your fellow classmates. Please respect each other at all times in and out of class. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently. However, please do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class.

*Acting is a craft, not unlike cobbling. A cobbler uses various techniques she/he has learned over the years to make or repair a pair of shoes. Since each pair is unique, some techniques will work and others will not. The same can be said about each acting experience. I will present to you an array of methods, techniques, and anecdotes that I have found useful in my own experience. My hope is that by the end of the course, you will have a solid understanding of what methods and tools work for you as an actor. This class is not about one's talent. Instead, it is about your willingness and commitment to learning and growing as an artist.*

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

**\*\*\*THIS WILL CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES\*\*\***

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1			
1/13	Intro to course	Read assigned chapter from R4A	
1/15	Warm up, discussion, game	Continue reading R4A	Written Analysis #1 (Emailed to RODNEY)
Week 2			
1/20	<i>MARTIN LUTHER KING</i>	<i>HOLIDAY</i>	<i>NO CLASS</i>
1/22	Warm up, discussion, game	Read assigned chapters from R4A	Written Analysis #2 ( <u>Due IN CLASS, due TBA</u> )
Week 3			
1/27	Warm up, discussion, game	Read assigned chapters from R4A	
1/29	Warm up, discussion, game	Read assigned chapter from R4A	Written Analysis #3 ( <u>Due TBA</u> )

Week 4			
2/3	Begin Neutral scenes	Choose scene	Rehearse 1st Neutral Scene
2/5	Present 1st Neutral Scene	Continue reading <i>R4A</i>	
Week 5			
2/10	Neutral Scenes	Choose scene	Rehearse 2nd Neutral Scene
2/12	Present 2nd Neutral Scene	(Neutral Scenes cont'd)	Rehearse 3rd Neutral Scene/ Read <i>OUR TOWN</i>
Week 6			
2/17	PRESIDENTS DAY	HOLIDAY	NO CLASSES
2/19	Present 3rd Neutral Scene	Assigned play discussion - play #1 ( <i>OUR TOWN</i> )	Written analysis ( <i>TBA</i> )
Week 7			
2/24	Begin scene study/lecture	Continue w/ <i>OUR TOWN</i>	
2/26	Discussion	Receive assigned scenes	Rehearse on your own
Week 8			
3/2	Work on scenes in class		Continue rehearsal
3/4	Present scene #1		Read play #2 ( <i>TBA</i> )
Week 9			
3/9	Discussion	Receive assigned scenes	Rehearse scene #2
3/11	Present scene #2		

Week 10  3/15 to 3/22	SPRING	BREAK	NO CLASSES
Week 11  3/23  3/25	Read play #3  Discuss play #3		TBA  Written Analysis of play #3 (Due TBA)
Week 12  3/30  4/1	Final Project Discussion  Begin table work for final scene	Choose Final Scenes	Read plays  Rehearse
Week 13  4/6  4/8	Continue Table Work for final play  Check-ins w/ Rodney & continue Table Work		Rehearse  <i>R4A FINAL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (DUE BEFORE CLASS TBA!!!)</i>
Week 14  4/13  4/15	(GUEST LECTURER #2 TBA)  CONTINUE WORK ON FINAL		REHEARSE

Week 15			
4/20	CONTINUE WORK ON FINAL w/ Rodney		REHEARSE
4/22	CONTINUE FINAL RUN-THRUS (times will be assigned)		REHEARSE
Week 16			
4/27	Wrap up week / Lecture		Continue to rehearse FINAL scenes!
4/29	Cont'd wrap up week/ Lecture		

**Final Examination Date: WEDNESDAY, MAY 6. 2pm to 4pm.**  
**Location TBA**

### 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)