

THTR 252b – Intermediate Acting 1 - 62789R

Units: 2

Term: Spring 2020

Day/Time: Tuesday/Thursday, 4pm – 5:50pm

Location: PED 208

Instructor: Christopher Shaw

Office: JEF – 211 , 2nd floor

Office Hours: By Appointment : email Shawchri@usc.edu

Contact Info: Shawchri@usc.edu

(323) 632-4894 (Cell – Text OK)

Course Description

Polishing the actor's skills through analysis and class performances of scenes from plays. Continuation of 252a (from the course catalogue). Focusing on specific acting exercises and approaches, and the work of American playwrights of 1920-1940, we will expand and refine the actor's skills. The mission of this class is to deepen the approach and method by which the actor moves towards artistry and excellence in performance through dedicated process, specific application and practice. Through analysis of the text from the actor's point of view (*What do I want? What do I want the other person to do? Etc.*) coupled with a focus of attention on the other actor(s), the aim will be to deepen the method by which one can *"live believably in the imaginary circumstances, with complete spontaneity and precise repeatability"*. The course will require the rigorous, precise and practical application of the approach to acting that was initially developed for this period in theatre and continues to be the foundation of the contemporary actor's craft. The class will engage in the practice of specific and disciplined rehearsal methods and techniques, as well as the details of the actor's personal scene analysis and preparation "homework" and learn how to effectively apply that work in rehearsal and performance. Students will work on and present acting exercises and scenes and begin to practice a specific, repeatable, structured approach to effectively applying the actor's craft.

"It is my belief that acting is action, that action leads emotion and that character is the sum of the actions played" – Jack Rowe, USC SDA, emeritus professor

"Remember that you are learning a craft, that you are presenting work for constructive criticism, not looking for approval or disapproval. Therefore, I ask you not to sit in judgment of your fellow actors. In order to benefit from their work, identify with their problems. When they make technical errors, ask yourself how often you make the same ones, and, when you hear the teachers' corrective answers, apply them to yourself. When something is convincing and involves (engages) you as a spectator, ask yourself how it was achieved and how you could accomplish the same reality. Then you will be learning during the entire session rather than just waiting for your turn to perform." – Uta Hagen, *A Challenge for the Actor* © 1991, by Uta Hagen

Learning Objectives

The deepening of the actor's craft through disciplined practice , active engagement, the experiential application of techniques explored in class, and the development of professional work habits. By the end of this course students should understand and be able to demonstrate facility with the following:

Learning Objectives (continued)

- . Analysis of the text from the actor's point of view (*What do I want? What do I want the other person to do? Etc.*) coupled with a focus of attention on the other actor(s) and the clear demonstration of executing these concepts actively in prepared scene work
- . Definition and execution of strong intentions (objectives, actions) on stage.
- . Utilization of the rehearsal techniques practiced from " Rehearsing in the Zone" reflected in the in-class rehearsals and scene work presentations
- . Creation and completion of the actor's prompt book "score" and "actor's homework" and clear demonstration of utilizing this tool through incorporation and active application of that work in the in-class rehearsals and scene work
- . Creation and utilization of a strong, detailed environment for the character.
- . Employment of a variety of tactics / actions, while executing with clear objectives/ wants/intentions in prepared scene work.
- . Living believably in the imaginary circumstances as dictated by the playwright of the scene you are working on (coupled with the willingness to let go of "previous habits of performing and acting" and committing to the new methods of working proposed by the instructor and presented in the assigned reading for this course)

Prerequisite(s): THTR 252a

Course Notes

- . In- Class Participation is 15% of grade. (See definition of participation in "Grading" on this syllabus)
- . Outside rehearsals are mandatory
- . If a scene scheduled to work in class for an in - class rehearsal or presentation is clearly under rehearsed or underprepared, you will be asked to sit down and will loose points for that assignment.
- . Scenes should be 100% off book, lines memorized by second " pass" of scene in class, or you will be asked to sit down and loose points for that assignment.
- . Journal/Prompt Book : Maintain a clean organized readable "prompt book/journal" throughout the course handed in at end of course for grading, adhering specifically to guidelines provided
- . Homework: You must complete all homework assignments on time.
- . Rehearsal: You Must Rehearse Outside Class.
- . In Class Presentations: This is a "studio" class structure: there will be in-class rehearsals and scene presentations and research. You will spend more time watching others at times than working yourself on the floor in the class – there is much you can learn from observing the work of others. However if you need a class where you are working on the floor , center of attection , presenting scene work every class: Don't take this class.
- . Use of cell phones in class will result in 10-point overall grade reduction for each incident – I will call you out in front of the entire class, so you have fair warning now. I use my phone to time working scenes, so you will see me utilizing my phone.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

A Challenge for the Actor, Uta Hagen, (in USC Bookstore and Amazon)

**Rehearsing in the Zone (second edition)*, Maria Cominis Glaudini (in USC Bookstore, or Kendall Hunt) * e-book also available at <https://he.kendallhunt.com/rehearsinginthezone>)

Mead style old school composition notebook for actors' prompt book and notes

Other Reading and supplementary materials:

Plays listed below are possible options , and various rubrics and guidelines/worksheets on Blackboard and provided as PDF.

Machinal, by Sophie Treadwell

The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee Williams

The Women, by Clare Boothe Luce

Born Yesterday, by Garson Kanin

Stage Door, by George Kaufman & Edna Ferber

Note: Additional plays may be suggested and assigned other than the ones listed below. Begin reading these plays NOW,

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- . Hagen Object Exercise and in-class rehearsals and presentations of scenes are expected to be specifically examined and fully rehearsed & prepared , with written homework component reflected in prompt book and incorporated into the work in the presentation. Clear demonstration of your own in-class observation of others working on the same exercises and approaches / techniques must be reflected in your in-class work and presentations . A clear demonstration of your understanding and application of what was learned in the experience of observing the class work of others is expected to be reflected in your own class work and presentations – this is a large factor in all grading assessments. You will learn by watching others work and being mentally present in class as much as you will learn by “doing” and presenting.
- . In class participation is 15% of overall grade, (See definition of participation in “Grading” on this syllabus)
- . Points for assignments: you will receive 50% of the allotted points per assignment if you present average work. Average work is defined as “ class material has generally been understood , but gaps in understanding and performance remain”.
- . Credit will be given for any in-class exercise 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.
- . If a student is concerned about their grade or progress in class, they should make an appointment to discuss this with the professor. Midterm grades will reflect only a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” score.

Grading Breakdown

Absences/Tardiness:

Learning in class depends on the layering of intellectual and emotional discovery resulting from the consistent active exploration of **100%** of the Ensemble **No absences or tardies are allowed.** **Cumulative active class participation points will be lost.** *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines*

Grading Policy:

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

Grading Breakdown (continued..)

Grades are dictated by

- Participation, preparation, attendance
- Constructive feedback of classmates' acting presentations
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and students on one's own scenes, presentations, and exercises
- Meeting all assignment deadlines: reading, writing, acting
- Maintaining a clean organized readable "prompt book/journal" throughout the course handed in at end of course for grading, adhering specifically to guidelines provided
- Application and understanding of methods being explored in class and in reading, to scene work and exercises
- Scene and acting exercise preparation and presentation and memorization of lines
- Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse scenes

Note: *If a deadline is missed because of a classmate/ project partner's unavailability, the available partner/s will not be penalized. If problems arise, a discussion with the professor with all involved must be arranged before the day of the scheduled scene or everyone will be held equally accountable. BEFORE ANY SCENE MAY BE REHEARSED ON ITS FEET IN CLASS, THERE MUST BE A MINIMUM OF 2 HOURS OF OUTSIDE REHEARSAL. LINES MUST BE ACCURATELY MEMORIZED BY SECOND "ON FEET" IN-CLASS REHEARSAL (the first read in chairs not included here as an in-class rehearsal)*

Assessment of "Participation" *15% of the final grade is earned through class participation. This will be defined as:*

- *Students are required to be present and on time for all classes and scheduled sessions unless they are genuinely too ill to attend or affected by unavoidable personal or external circumstances. If the student has more than 2 absences or late arrivals during the course they will not be able to fulfill their ability to fully participate in class. Additionally, students must keep the teacher informed of any absence or late arrival IN ADVANCE. Failure to do so also constitutes a lack of participation and points will be deducted.*
- *Printed copies of all scenes, monologues and play scripts must be brought to every class meeting. No electronic copies (laptops, tablets, phones) may be used in class. NO EXCEPTIONS.*
- *Appropriate rehearsal clothing and props for ALL EXERCISES AND IN CLASS REHEARSALS.*
- *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 professor and fellow students on one's own work.*
- *Meeting all assignment deadlines.*
- *Memorization of assigned material.*
- *Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse outside class.*

Grades

For all assignments points will be determined as follows:

100% - Excellent: clear understanding of the class material , and incorporation of classroom methods being explored is coupled with original and creative insight and confident preparation

75% - Good: class material has been understood clearly and performed competently

50% - Average: class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding and performance remain

25% - Poor: there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material, as well as deficiencies in basic requirements such as memorization, blocking, etc.

0% - Unacceptable: work was not completed on time, with no communication with professor or student partners

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Hagen Object Exercise	10	10
In - Class Rehearsal Scene #1 (applying "Zone" rehearsal technique)	10	10
MID- TERM Scene Presentation (Final presentation of Scene #1)	20	20
Completed prompt book / actor homework	15	15
In - Class Rehearsal Scene #2 (applying "Zone" rehearsal technique)	10	10
Final (Final presentation of Scene #2)	20	20
Cumulative Active Class Participation / Contribution	15	15
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Rubrics

Available on blackboard

Assignment Submission Policy

Written work due per schedule below

Grading Timeline

Per class schedule / at time of presentation of various graded assignments. If a student is concerned about their grade or progress in class, they should make an appointment to discuss this with the professor.

Midterm grades will reflect only a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” score.

Additional Policies

- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class at any time.
- Please use restroom before class and during break, **do not interrupt the flow of class with leaving studio** unless for an emergency at which point you must inform instructor by raising hand and entire class will take the one 2-minute break at that time
- If you are outside the studio while class is in session for any reason **USE the window of the classroom to determine if work is happening on the floor and WAIT** until the work is finished to re-enter
- There is absolutely no technology allowed in the classroom. No cellphones, no computers, no texting, no social media – TURN THEM OFF AND PUT THEM AWAY
- Use of cell phones in class will result in 10-point overall grade reduction for each incident – I will call you out in front of the entire class - so you have fair warning now.
- All students must help with the set up and strike of every class
- Students must place all extraneous belongings, (backpacks, sweaters, jackets, skateboards, laptops, cell phones, etc.) in the designated corner of the classroom at the start of class
- Students must be in proper rehearsal clothes (whatever they may be and understand that they change throughout the semester) at the start of class. NO FLIP FLOPS unless the scene takes place at the beach. Wear appropriate footwear for the character and time period. Even **REHEARSING** a scene from an early American realism play in contemporary running sneakers or sandals is unacceptable.
- Please refrain from side comments and conversations with your classmates or distracting unfocused unprofessional behavior during class – you are expected to practice the focused respectful behavior displayed in the professional world and in keeping with the mature professional culture of SDA. Behave as an observing participant the way you would want the class to behave when you are on the floor working.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

PROPOSED SCHEDULE (THIS WILL CHANGE - IT IS A ROUGH PLAN) :

(The timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace and unpredictability of the creative process of any given class – the schedule will change and you will be informed accordingly "We have much to do so we are going to go very slowly".)

Week 1 – 3: Introductions/Exercises

Reading Assignments

Studio Exercises

Prepared Hagen Exercise

Week 4 – 8: Play-reading, Research and Scene 1 – Including in Class Rehearsals

Possible Playwrights: Treadwell, Williams, Luce, Miller

Week 9: Midterm scene presentation

Week 10 Spring Break

Week 11-16 - Scene 2 - work in class - – Including in Class Rehearsals

Possible Playwrights: Barry, Kaufman, Ferber, Kanin

FINAL DAY OF CLASS

Thursday, April 30, 2020

FINAL EXAM

Thursday, May 7th 2020 , 4:30pm -6:30pm. PED 208

The Final is dictated by the creative process of the class so specifics will be discussed later in the semester.

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