

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## THTR 101: Introduction to Acting

4 Units

Fall 2020 — Tuesdays & Thursdays — 8-9:50am

Location: Zoom Room (access via Blackboard)

Instructor: Kirstin Q. Eggers

Zoom Office: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/kirstin.sda>

Office Hours: By appointment — schedule via email

Email: [kqeggers@usc.edu](mailto:kqeggers@usc.edu)

USC Slack: @Kirstin Eggers

### 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, 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.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Practice basic acting skills such as focus, concentration, relaxation, imagination, play, vocal/physical/mental presence
2. Apply successful ensemble/partnership techniques
3. Relate observed acting techniques to their own work
4. Research and interpret text as it relates to acting and storytelling choices
5. Deconstruct a script to make active, specific, physical choices
6. Integrate established acting theory and rehearsal techniques into their own work

### Course Notes

Classes must be attended live, due to the collaborative, experiential, and performative nature of acting.

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.

### Communication

Please email me at [kqeggers@usc.edu](mailto:kqeggers@usc.edu) any time with questions or concerns. Emails will generally be returned within 48 hours on weekdays. I can also meet with you via my Zoom personal meeting room. After the University incorporates Slack, that may be an acceptable way to get in touch with me as well.

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.

### Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Students will use Zoom with Audio and Video. To fully engage with all in-class activities, Video On and Unmuted are necessary settings. However, students may use virtual backgrounds, and earphones or headsets to improve audio quality.

You will occasionally need to print scripts — please be prepared with printing capability.

### USC Technology Rental Program

If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To

apply, please submit an application at [studentbasicneeds.usc.edu](http://studentbasicneeds.usc.edu).

### USC Technology Support Links

Zoom information for students:  
[keep Teaching.usc.edu/tools/zoom/](http://keep Teaching.usc.edu/tools/zoom/)

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### Required Readings

Books are available through the USC Bookstore ([www.uscbookstore.com/textbooks](http://www.uscbookstore.com/textbooks)) or wherever you like to buy books.

- *Letters to a Young Artist* by Anna Deavere Smith
- PDFs of other selected readings will be posted to Blackboard, which students are expected to read and retain for discussion.

### Required Viewing

You are required to attend a School of Dramatic Arts performance ("Zoom share") OR watch a full-length play of your choice on Digital Theatre+, and write a response.

### Supplemental Readings

- *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd Williams (HIGHLY recommend book or smartphone app for this course)
- *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods, Vol. 1 & 2* by Richard Brestoff
- *Acting: The First Six Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky
- *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches* by Sharrell D. Luckett with Tia Shaffer
- *The Art of Acting* by Stella Adler
- *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen
- *A Korean Approach to Actor Training* by Jeungsook Yoo

### Supplemental Viewing/Watching/Listening

- Additional School of Dramatic Arts performances ("Zoom shares")
- Live online theatre — how are theatre artists making their art right now?
- High quality recorded theatre — Digital Theatre+ and Broadway HD are both excellent resources

### Description and Assessment of Assignments

Below is a general overview of the assignments. A detailed assignment description will be posted on Blackboard with ample time for each assignment.

#### In-Class Activities —

*"Art resides in the quality of doing; process is not magic."* — Charles Eames  
*"Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment."* — Mahatma Gandhi

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 the effort.

#### Discussion —

You are expected to participate thoughtfully, respectfully and fully in discussions about readings, viewings, rehearsals, and other topics as they arise. Taking notes on and/or highlighting readings is strongly suggested so you can refer back easily. I do not require a written journal in this class, but I will ask you to relay your outside work orally, so a written journal is encouraged, for your own growth.

#### Personal Reading —

Refer to Week One of Course Schedule.

#### Devised 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.

#### Performance Response —

You will write a response to an SDA production OR a Digital Theatre+ production. A list of the Fall season shows is at the end of this syllabus. Digital Theatre+ is available at [libraries.usc.edu/databases/digital-theatre-plus](http://libraries.usc.edu/databases/digital-theatre-plus). Consider seeing multiple productions before deciding the focus of your response. Detailed instructions and prompts for response will be posted on Blackboard with ample time.

#### Open Scene —

Work will be in pairs 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. Written Component of the Open Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

Contemporary Scene — 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. A final presentation of each contemporary scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory. Written Component of the Contemporary Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

#### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade
In-class activities (presence, focus, attitude, willingness, ensemble support)	26
Discussion of Readings, Plays, Rehearsals	5
Personal Reading	5
Choral Work and Presentation	14
Performance Response	5
Open Scene Classwork	10
Open Scene Presentation	15
Open Scene Written Component	5
Contemporary Scene Presentation (Final)	10
Contemporary Scene Written Component (inc. Final Reflection)	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 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

#### Assignment Submission Policy

Written Assignments should be posted on Blackboard as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time. Written assignments should follow loose MLA guidelines, unless otherwise specified. Late assignments will not be awarded full points. Do not send links to Google Docs.

Rehearsal and Performance Assignments are presented in class. Associated notes do not need to be submitted, although you will refer to your work and must be prepared.

Grades will generally be posted to Blackboard within a week.

#### 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, homework that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

#### 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. Points may be deducted for missed in-class work, in the event of absence or tardiness. 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:

*"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."* —  
 Constantine Stanislavski in *An Actor Prepares*

There is no better place to learn discipline, and its rewards, than in acting class, where others depend on you to make their art.

#### Classroom Norms

- Please keep attention on the class, not on phones, other internet, other beings in your house, etc. This is to encourage your focus, mindfulness, and respect to the ensemble.
- Please wear clothing in which you can move freely and comfortably. Your clothing and shoes should not inhibit you in any way. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged. Acting can get messy, plan accordingly.

- Please reserve break-time activities for before and after class. Depending on the day's flow, we may or may not take an official break in the hour and fifty minutes of class — you should be prepared to stay active in the class, both as performer and audience.
- Please don't eat or chew gum during class.
- Please stay upright unless the scene/activity calls for otherwise.
- Be honest with yourself about how and where you will do your best learning, and commit to it.

#### Zoom Etiquette

- You must have Video on, unless the scene/activity calls for otherwise.
- Choose a setting that is not backlit — we need to see you.
- Please keep the Zoom chat quiet during scenes/activities.
- You will often be asked to stay UNmuted during class, unless you have ambient noise you can't control.
- Having a quiet, private place in which to have class is the most important Zoom setting there is! Preferably with a little space to move around. Acting is often intimate, or even wild, so set yourself up for success by not having distractions or an audience.

#### Synchronous session recording notice

All synchronous class sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously.

#### Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

*SCampus Section 11.12(B): Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).*

What happens in class, stays in class!

#### Course Evaluation

Learning Experience Evaluations will be completed before or during the last class session, via the link USC provides.

#### 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
<b>1</b>	Tue Aug 17	Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review. Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.		<p>DUE THURSDAY: 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. Reading from a hard copy, NOT a screen, is preferred.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Read "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen. Posted on Blackboard.</p>

Week	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Thu Aug 20	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.  Discuss "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen.	FOR THURSDAY: Read "Basics" and "Relationships" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.
<b>2</b>	Tue Aug 25	Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Thu Aug 27	Group movement and voice work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	Discuss "Basics" and "Relationships" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .	FOR THURSDAY: Read "Work," "Matters of the Mind," and "Matters of the Heart" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.
<b>3</b>	Tue Sep 1	Imagination work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Thu Sep 3	Ensemble work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.	Discuss "Work," "Matters of the Mind," and "Matters of the Heart" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .	FOR THURSDAY: Read "Keeping the Faith," "Art and Society," and "The Death of Cool" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.
<b>4</b>	Tue Sep 8	Ensemble work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Thu Sep 10	Introduce choral work.	Discuss "Keeping the Faith," "Art and Society," and "The Death of Cool" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .	FOR THURSDAY: Read Thespis section from <i>The Great Acting Teachers &amp; Their Methods</i> PDF for discussion. Posted on Blackboard.  Choral work rehearsal.
<b>5</b>	Tue Sep 15	Choral work		Choral work rehearsal.
	Thu Sep 17	Choral work.	Discuss Thespis section from <i>The Great Acting Teachers &amp; Their Methods</i> .	Choral work rehearsal.
<b>6</b>	Tue Sep 22	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
	Thu Sep 24	Choral work.		DUE OCTOBER 27: Performance Response, posted to Blackboard before 8am. Season of Plays begins this weekend.  Choral work rehearsal.
<b>7</b>	Tue Sep 29	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
	Thu Oct 1	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION.  Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Begin open scene work.	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION.	DUE TUESDAY: Read Rehearsal/ Actions compilation PDF, posted on Blackboard. Open scene work rehearsal/prep.  Open scene work rehearsal/prep.
<b>8</b>	Tue Oct 6	Play discussion. Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.	Discuss Rehearsal/ Actions compilation PDF.	Open scene work rehearsal/prep.
	Thu Oct 8	Open scene work.		Open scene work rehearsal/prep.
<b>9</b>	Tue Oct 13 & Thu Oct 15	Open scene work.		Open scene rehearsal.

Week	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
<b>10</b>	Tue Oct 20 & Thu Oct 22	Open scene work.		Open scene rehearsal.  Last chance to see an SDA "Zoom Share" or Digital Theatre+ production.
<b>11</b>	Tue Oct 27	Open scene work. Discuss plays.	Performance Response, posted to Blackboard before 8am.	Open scene rehearsal.
	Thu Oct 29	Open scene work.		Open scene rehearsal.
<b>12</b>	Tue Nov 3	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION  Introduce contemporary scene work.	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due with presentation.	Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Thu Nov 5	Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
<b>13</b>	Tue Nov 10	Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Thu Nov 12	Learning Experience Evaluations. Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
<b>FINAL</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY NOV 18 — 8-10am</b>	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION.	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due — specifics given in class. Final self-reflection format TBD.	Happy 2020-Is-Almost-Over!

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#### 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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

#### Support Systems

##### Counseling and Mental Health

213-740-9355 – 24/7 on call [studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.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 – 24/7 on call [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

##### Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)

213-740-9355 (WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call [studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

##### Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)

213-740-5086 [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

Title IX – 213-821-8298 [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

##### Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment

213-740-5086 or 213-821-8298

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

##### The Office of Disability Services and Programs

213-740-0776 [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

##### USC Campus Support and Intervention

213-821-4710 [campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

##### Diversity at USC

213-740-2101 [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

##### USC Emergency

UPC: 213-740-4321 – 24/7 on call [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime.

##### USC Department of Public Safety

UPC: 213-740-6000 – 24/7 on call [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

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## **USC SDA Season of Plays Fall 2020**

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

September 25 & 26

*Death and The Maiden* by Ariel Dorfman

Directed by Christopher Shaw

October 9 & 10

*The Distance Project* (devised)

Directed by Brent Blair

October 16 & 17

*Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* by Anna Deavere

Smith

Directed by Bayo Akinfemi

October 23 & 24

*Maker Project* (devised)

Directed by Julián Conde

—Performance Response due October 27—

November 6 & 7

(based on) *American Heartbeat* by Sandra

Fenichel Asher

Directed by Jonathan Muñoz-Proulx

November 20 & 21

*New Theatre for Right Now* by MFA Dramatic  
Writers

Directed by Edgar Landa & David Warshofsky