

Thtr_120A_62628: Acting I

Fall 2020—Fridays 3:00 - 4:50

Location: Online

Instructor: Jeff Crockett

Office Hours: By appointment

Contact Info: email: jc90456@usc.edu

I will reply within 24 hours

“As actors, we must rejoice in the possession of our physical faculties. We must experience joy in the use of our hands, arms, body etc. Without this appreciation and realization of the body and its many possibilities, we cannot perform as artists. You should feel a flow of joy because you are alive. Your body will feel full of life. That is what you must give from the stage. Your life. No less. That is art: to give all you have. And what have you? Your life-nothing more. And to give life means to feel life throughout your whole being.”

—Michael Chekhov

Learning Objectives

To develop a breath and movement practice that supports: flexibility/stability, presence, appropriate effort, physical organization, awareness of authentic impulses, transparency and openness in acting

To investigate your artistic and personal relationship to the body

To identify basic structures of anatomy in order to enhance the experience of movement

To demonstrate and make use of the three basic relationships to gravity: dropping to gravity, pulling up from gravity, being carried

To develop an appreciation and somatic understanding of the three breath spaces

To play authentically and spontaneously in movement exercises and improvisations with an emphasis on transparency and intimacy in connection

To work honestly and generously with the ensemble

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

Warm up and practice efficiently with attention to your own specific needs in the moment, and with a sense organization and practicality

Identify anatomical structures which will enhance the specificity of your experience of the breath and movement exercises

Demonstrate a way of working that supports transparent, authentic connection with the self, a scene partner, and the group

My Teaching Philosophy

My belief is that experiential learning is the most effective learning when studying the craft of acting. By experiential, I mean what we actually learn through doing, sensing and feeling. Intellectual concepts can be useful, and at times are important in understanding what we are experiencing and what we aim to do. Ultimately, however, intellectualizing the work is meaningless without the integration with the body and soul.

I believe that people learn in a more robust way when they feel safe. Safety for me is not about always being comfortable. I'm actually talking about safety from the point of view of the nervous system, our pre-cognitive physical means where we suss out cues of safety and danger. If we are hyper-vigilant, or on guard, or shut down as a result of not feeling safe, then risk-taking and developing our talent fully cannot happen.

No one can tell you the space is safe. That is up to you to consider for yourself. What I can do as your teacher is to let you know that it is my intention to create a safe space and that your participation in creating safety is important. I believe that people tend to feel safe when they feel welcome, valued and seen. I also find that safety is supported when there is transparency, consistency, choice, and respect for each member of the group.

I also believe that theater is the most collaborative art form, and that how we work together is primary. Coming together as an ensemble, how we show up for ourselves and our classmates, will greatly increase the quality of everyone's work. I encourage you to take responsibility for what you are offering to the group as well as what you are receiving personally.

I also believe we can go deeper in the work when there is a spirit of play. I will do my best to cultivate this spirit and I ask that you do the same.

Finally, I am interested in your ongoing feedback. If you have any issues you would like for me to know, please don't hesitate to make an appointment with me, or to send me an email.

My Bio

Jeff Crockett was the Head of Voice at The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco for over 20 years. He worked as a movement and embodiment teacher in Italy at the Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica "Silvio D'Amico", Rome, Prima del Teatro, San Miniato, and Teatro Due, Parma. He has also taught at the Chautauqua Theater Conservatory, Classic Stage Company, DePaul University, California State University, Fullerton, Stanford University, The University of Maryland, and the Esalen Institute. He was resident Voice Coach at the Children's Theatre in Minneapolis (1990–92) and has also coached at Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Mixed Blood, Theatre Manoeuvres (London), Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Word for Word, and Shotgun Players. He has an Advanced Diploma in Voice Studies, with distinction, from The Central School of Speech and Drama (London) and is a certified Alexander Technique teacher and practitioner of Middendorf Breathwork. He is currently teaching at the Access Acting Academy, a training program for blind and low-vision actors.

Online Etiquette and Class Norms

The physical space

As we are working together online, consider and prepare your space as though it were your studio. Create for yourself a clean, private and quiet space to work in. Some of the exercises will be done while seated, so you will need a chair or stool with a relatively flat seat. For lying down work, you will need a yoga mat if your floor is not carpeted.

Attire

Please wear the type of clothing you would wear to the gym or to a yoga class. It is important that you are comfortable to move and that you aren't preoccupied by your clothing.

Class Atmosphere

I would like to create an atmosphere that resembles in-person class as much as possible. Please, no eating or drinking during class, except for water when needed. Mute yourself if there is background noise, but keep in mind that class discussions and the free sharing of your experiences in the work are an important aspect of this course. I strongly encourage you to keep your camera on so that I can see you work and also to support our connection as a group. The chat feature will be disabled for most classes so that we can all focus on the work at hand as a group. If you have specific questions for me during class, raise your hand or call on me. And, please silence your cellphones.

Observation and Discussions

Theater is a collaborative art form and discussion is a huge aspect of working well together. Your full participation in the ensemble is expected, which includes your generosity in sharing your thoughts, feelings and experiences in our work. Also, the way in which you witness and respond to classmates' work is a huge element in collaborating together and creating a healthy and dynamic ensemble. Every voice and point of view is welcome. Please be mindful of your typical way of engaging in group conversations. If you tend to speak often, try stepping back a bit in order to giving space for those who tend to be quiet. If you tend to hold back in group discussions, take the risk to step forward and contribute more often in discussions. The short

hand I will use is "Step up/Step back". When offering feedback to classmates, focus on the work and not the person. Your job is to let them know how you experienced the work, rather than telling them how they should have done it. Respect for self and others is essential in creating a healthy and creative learning environment.

Required Readings and Supplementary Videos

From time to time I will post on blackboard various videos, podcasts and readings which will support the experiential work we are doing synchronously.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

You are encouraged, to keep a journal throughout the term as a record of the work as well as your experiences in class. It will be a useful resource for your written final paper, which will be a two page paper on your experience of the work.

You will also be required to write short reflections in response to prompts that I will provide to you.

There will be short written assignments based on outside reading and video presentations, and the terms used in class. There will also be a creative art piece you will make as a way of integrating and understanding the work.

There will be a few short quizzes during the semester to assess your understanding of the material and memory of the exercises.

At the end of the semester, you will lead yourself in a warm up. You will be assessed on the quality of your presence and focus, the overall organization, the timing, and the effectiveness.

Grading Breakdown

Participation in class 30%

This work is experiential. You can only learn it by doing it. Also, the quality of your learning, understanding and integrating depends on the quality and consistency of your participation. This includes the quality of your presence in exercises, your generosity in group discussions and your willingness to take risks in the work.

Written Assignments and Creative Reflections 15%

You will be graded on your specificity, detail and thoughtful reflection

Quizzes 15%

Quizzes will be given on terms used in class, identifying basic anatomy and various exercises

Self-led Warm Up 15%

At the end of the term, you will lead yourself in a 15 minute warm-up. You will be graded on the quality of your focus and presence, the organization and timing of the exercises and the overall effectiveness

Final Paper 25%

You will write a reflection paper on your experience of the course using specific examples, and ways in which you are able to integrate the work. The length should be approximately two pages and no less than 500 words

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

A rubric will be included when I post assignments on blackboard.

Additional Policies

After 2 unexcused absences, your grade will drop by 5 Final Grade points. If you have technical issues logging into our class, you will be able to watch the recording and fulfill a small written assignment to make up for the absence. Excused absences include: sickness with a doctor's note, family emergency, or a personal issue that is communicated with me.

Class begins on time. Please make every effort to be ready to work at the top of class. I also understand that these are unusual times and technical issues might come up. I will consider technical issues excused, however after 4 unexcused tardies, your grade will drop by 5 points.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown of Themes (these dates are subject to change)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable
Week 1	Coming together, creating the ensemble		Written assignment
Week 2	The role of safety and courage in working fully	Watch the posted videos on blackboard	Quiz
Week 3	What is my relationship with my body?		Creative personal reflection
Week 4	Sensation/Presence/Breath that comes and goes on its own		
Week 5	Anatomy and the use of awareness in movement	Review posted anatomy charts and readings	
Week 6	Stability/Flexibility and the coming into stillness. The three ways of relating to gravity		
Week 7	The joints, and the freedom of exhalation. What		Midterm quiz on class principles, terms and simple anatomy

	is somatic organization?		
Week 8	Dimensionality, internal space, taking up space externally		
Week 9	Appropriate effort, what is it to allow?		
Week 10	Somatic listening, presence and the courage to be seen		
Week 11	Spontaneity and responding authentically. What is it to play?		
Week 12	Follow through and response. What is it to not interrupt or sensor your impulses?		
Week 13	Sense Making vs. Making Sense. Following an authentic impulse		Final quiz
Week 14	Review, summarize and look forward	Write final paper	
			Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at classes.usc.edu .

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>.

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