

University of Southern California
Course Syllabus
SOT #252a

Course Name: Intermediate Acting
Course #: 252a
Units: 2
Session: Fall 2018
Instructor: Stephanie Shroyer
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Office Phone: (213) 740-8904
Office Hours: Tues./Thurs. 1-2 p.m. in MCC and/or by appointment please.

Class Meets: Time: 11a.m. until 12:50 p.m.
Days: Tuesday and Thursday
Location: MCC 106
Final: **Tues., Dec. 11th, 8a.m.-10a.m.**

Course Description

This semester in 252a we will explore polishing the actor's skills through analysis and class performances of scenes from plays categorized as American Drama Mid-20th Century. Emphasis of this course is on diligent adherence to intent of the playwright, specific creation of world of play and sound research bringing authenticity to exactly that. The use of internal and external musculature (internal being the musculature of thought, external being that of the body) and the use of space and objects as valuable expressive components of the actor's craft are of prime consideration. Through the investigation of texts requiring sound knowledge of, and physical acuity in, differing period and styles, we look at the body language and kinesthetic response appropriate to different time/different place storytelling. Explorations introduce and emphasize the territory of composition and picturization as physical tools intensifying storytelling in the theatre of "Different Time/Different Place".

Goals and Objectives

- 1) To examine and explore interfacing between the following three components as they apply to storytelling:
 - The needs of the human organism.
 - The claims of the activity of the moment.
 - The demands of the environment.

- 2) To extend our capacity to "listen to our bodies" then "modify impulse" to a response appropriate for the "World of Play" as identified thru research including, but not limited to, playwright's intent, historical, sociological and cultural elements. Using texts of American Realism as source material, concentration is

strongly focused in the arena of modifying contemporary impulse to period text so that storytelling resonates effectively with today's audiences.

3) Deepen strength in sensitivity to demands for heightened conflict in any dramatic situation and to structure an appropriate movement pattern revealing that conflict. To hone skill in arranging movement patterns so they incite change in "the other" sharing the stage. Explore use of exacting movement patterning as an effective storytelling tool for the audience.

Course Content Synopsis

Weeks one thru three Use of non-verbal communication thru body language and spatial connotation introduced as useful tools for the actor. Neutral Scenes.

Weeks four and five are the introduction of the Mirror Process and Iconic transformation from self to a character...research and its application of appropriate historical, sociological and cultural influences to the text. American Realism texts.

Weeks six thru nine are aimed to develop the physical world of different time, different place storytelling. Thru application of appropriate historical, sociological and cultural influences, we will explore storytelling "Movement patterning" and spatially relevant "modification of impulse" in support of world of play. The circumstances and influence of "reality of doing" within period is of paramount importance. Think: "What do I need around me to tell this story?"

Week ten is focused on solidification of objective leading to action

Weeks eleven thru fourteen Scene Study "lab" days: Putting it all together.

Week fifteen scene share with notes to incorporate for final...Semester wrap-up

Process and Progression (subject to change according to the needs and progress of the group)

Week 1	8/21	Introduction. Course outline. Begin American Realism research.
	8/23	Baseline Monologues. Encounter Observation Assigned.
Week 2	8/28	Encounter Observations.
	8/30	Neutral Scenes
Week 3	9/4 & 6	Share neutral scenes. Meaning thru relationship, place and circumstance. Introduction of Mirror Process. Characters and scenes assigned. Bring character iconic image to next class.
Week 4	9/11 & 13	Read plays in class. Period Research Sharing & begin Mirror Process (bring character iconic image to class).
Week 5	9/18 & 20	Structurals, Behaviorals from The Mirror Process (character iconic image to class).
Week 6	9/25 & 9/27	The Do Re Mi Spatial Grid (the <i>environment</i> —a springboard for imagination). Introduction of Movement patterning.
Week 7	10/2 & 4	Scene work Continued Movement Patterning. Operative words (as instigation for movement patterning).

Week 8	10/9 & 11	Scene work Operative words continued
Week 9	10/16 & 18	Scene work Physical lines. Separation of movement and text.
Week 10	10/23 & 25	Scene work Objectives-The Crow Bars of Success: "I want to get..." and "I want to make..."
Week 11	10/30 & 11/1	Scene work "Putting it all together...the toolbox!"
Week 12	11/6 & 8	Scene work "Putting it all together...the toolbox!"
Week 13	11/13 & 15	Scene work "Putting it all together...the toolbox!"
Week 14	11/20	Scene work "Putting it all together...the toolbox!"
	11/22	Thanksgiving
Week 15	11/27 & 11/29	Scene share with notes to incorporate for final...Semester wrap-up.

Grading Policy

- A: work of excellent quality 100 possible points.
- B: work of good quality.
- C: work of fair quality
- D: work of poor quality
- F: fail

Grading

100 possible points. Scores will be totaled and graded on a curve. All points are awarded based on prompt and effective completion of the stated requirements. Scenes are adjudicated based on completeness of command and knowledge of all the chosen plays and playwrights, active physical choices and ability of the student to develop consistent character, relationship and world of play as evidenced by the subtleties of subtext discovered throughout the course progression. The work is assessed as observed by the instructor on a continuum basis.

The best experience in 252a relies on the following:

- Active contribution to research and discussion during tablework.
- Constructive Feedback of classmates' acting scene shares.
- Willingness to experiment and apply instructor and/or peer feedback during scene shares and classroom exercises.
- Prompt completion of all assignments and meeting due dates for written and/or performance work.
- Memorization of text.
- Availability to rehearse outside of class.

Grading Point Breakdown

Class-work

- 40 pts Evaluation is based on the student's regular participation, completeness of preparation and concentration during exercises.

Scene Paperwork

- 10 pts Mirror Process Packet
- 10 pts Research Packet
- 15 pts Process Summary

Final Scene

- 25 pts Share in week 15 and then with adjustments evidenced at Final.

Written Assignments

A. Scene Paperwork

Paperwork to accompany scene work includes:

- ❖ A working copy of your script with operative and image words circled, beat changes and status changes noted.
- ❖ Physical choice commitments. This includes picture of your character, structural and behavioral choices, physical typing. (Mirror Process work)
- ❖ Environment / spatial decisions (your Do Re Mi's)
- ❖ Of *paramount importance* in 252a: All research pertaining to character and “world of play” period. Include influences of playwright’s intent, historical, sociological, and cultural givens in terms of their effect on the shaping of the physical world of your text. **Follow 252a research guidelines for scene work (class handout).**
- ❖ Process summary paper (Where are you in the work? What makes sense? What doesn't? Where go from here?).

Note of advice: Please assemble your scene paperwork into an organized format. Save your work...you are building your own library of research. We are working to establish order and documentation to your evolving acting process. What seems “finished” in the theatre has a way of coming around again and again! Maybe this is the start of a habit of making an “Actors Book” for each character you work on!!!

Attendance and Time Requirements

1. Attendance is *mandatory*.
2. Two episodes of tardiness equal 1 absence.
3. Absences, in the excess of 2 incidences, will affect your grade negatively.
4. Check your email regularly for scheduling changes and other timely information.

Textbook and Materials

- Reading:
 - 1) Hatful of Rain, by Michael Gazzo (Req.)
 - 2) Ludlow Fair and Home Free by Lanford Wilson(Req.)
 - 3) 27 Wagons Full of Cotton, by Tennessee Williams (Req.)
 - 4) Any research material targeting mid-20th century America(Req.)
 - 5) Steal Like An Artist by Austin Kleon (rec.)
 - 6) On The Technique of Acting, by Michael Chekhov(Rec.)
- Instructor may supply handouts and excerpts from suitable texts as needed.
- Period “Goody Bag”: The period nature of the class will require inventive use of available “found” garments and props to simulate the period needs of the texts we’re exploring.
- Notebook suitable for research, sketches, daily notations of curiosities, progress and thoughts.

- No food, coffee, tea, soda allowed in the studio. Bottled water is welcome and recommended.
- Character studies and scenes require attire and props to support movement choices and to define the physical world as specified by the text (see “Goody Bag” addendum to syllabus). There will be no miming of the physical elements of the work. The *reality of doing principle* is paramount in Intermediate Acting 252a.
- Cell phones are to be turned off and put away for the duration of class. Electronic capture of any portion of class is strictly prohibited without prior approval of the instructor.

Note from the Instructor

The principles introduced in 252a are processes that take time to absorb and understand. Do not become impatient. Remain positive and curious about the work. Remember the results are not instantaneous. Your commitment to a physically oriented process is of much greater importance than definitive result. Resist judgment and expectation of any particular outcome. Explore. Play. Be fearlessly inventive within the parameters given. Each student works and learns in a unique manner.

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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. 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/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

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 and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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.

This syllabus serves as your contract for course 252a Fall Semester 2018.