

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Theatre 352a (62951) – Intermediate Acting II
Fall 2020 - Tuesday, Thursday 1:00 – 2:50 PM
Location: <https://zoom.us/j/92561930255>
Instructor: John De Mita
Associate Professor of Theater Practice in Acting
Office: <https://zoom.us/j/94361099528>
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9 – 11 AM
(ALL OFFICE APPOINTMENTS MUST BE SCHEDULED).
Contact Info: demita@usc.edu / 213-716-1485 (Call or Text)
For video uploads: <https://flipgrid.com/demita1234>

Course Description and Overview

“In real life people don’t spend every minute shooting at each other, hanging themselves and making confessions of love. They don’t spend all the time saying clever things. They’re more occupied with eating, drinking, flirting and talking stupidities—and these are the things which ought to be shown on the stage.”

- Anton Chekhov

1. Using the writing of 19th – early 20th century authors, we will delve deeply into the theatrical styles of naturalism and realism as they pertain to acting and the creation of character.
2. We will give particular emphasis to the areas of personalization and emotional commitment, while never losing sight of our responsibility to be clear and compelling storytellers for our audiences.
3. While striving to find our own authentic voices in the text, we will also utilize historical and dramaturgical research so that our mission remains to serve our shared understanding of the author’s intention and the world of the play.

Learning Objectives

Through exercises, improvisations, and scenes, students will:

- Examine the characters, short stories, poetry, and plays of 19th – early 20th century authors, concentrating on subtext, heightened speech, period style and building and sustaining character.
- Construct a strong physical and vocal presentation.
- Define and execute strong intentions on stage.
- Practice and test concentration on stage.
- Utilize sense / emotion memory in connection with the creation of character.
- Create and utilize a strong, detailed environment for the character.
- Employ a variety of tactics, while executing with intention.

Prerequisite:

Theatre 252b.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

ALL STUDENTS MUST READ THE ENTIRE TEXT OF EVERY PLAY WORKED ON IN CLASS.

ALL TEXTS AND PLAYSRIPTS MUST BE BROUGHT TO CLASS IN HARD COPIES ONLY

PLAYS UNDER CONSIDERATION (AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD ON BLACKBOARD OR AMAZON.COM)

- *The Three Sisters*, by Anton Chekhov (translated by Sharon Carnicke)
- *Uncle Vanya*, by Anton Chekhov (translated by Sharon Carnicke)
- *The Seagull*, by Anton Chekhov (translated by Sharon Carnicke)
- *Stupid Fucking Bird*, by Aaron Posner

Recommended Texts

- *An Actor Prepares*, by Konstantin Sergeievich Stanislavski
- *Daily Life in Russian Under the Last Tsar*, by Herni Troyat

Course Notes / Communication

- **Students are required to have a paper notebook and pen/pencil at all class meetings.**
- All class sessions will be recorded in Zoom. Please review the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). Students are not permitted to create their own class recordings without the instructor's permission. Violations of these policies will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.
- Students are required to participate fully in all classes; to work collaboratively with their peers; and to show disciplined commitment to acting.
- Students are required to sign up for in-class exercises on a shared Google Document, and are responsible for performance of all exercises on the assigned time and day.
- If you have a religious conflict with any class or class assignment, email Professor DeMita within the first two weeks of the semester.
- Class assignments will be completed either synchronously or asynchronously. Student should check in on the shared Flipgrid to share recorded video content: <https://flipgrid.com/demita1234>

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

USC technology rental program

Attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology. If you need resources to successfully participate in this class, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please submit an application. The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

ALL STUDENTS MUST READ THE ENTIRE TEXT OF EVERY PLAY WORKED ON IN CLASS.

ALL TEXTS AND PLAYSRIPTS MUST BE BROUGHT TO CLASS IN HARD COPIES ONLY.

- The professor will offer a variety of plays for scene work, with an expectation that EVERY PLAY WILL BE READ AND DISCUSSED IN CLASS BY ALL STUDENTS, REGARDLESS OF CASTING. In addition, exercises and written assignments will be available for download on the Blackboard website for the course.
- Articles and essays will be assigned for journal prompts and in-class discussions.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Performances, exercises and written assignments will be assessed using the following guidelines:

- Written assignments must be turned in on or before the scheduled due date. **Late work will not be accepted.**
- Written assignments **MUST be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard.**
- Credit will be given for any in-class exercise performed or uploaded 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.

Assessment of “Participation”

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

- Students should plan to attend every synchronous session for the classes in which they are enrolled, irrespective of when it occurs in their time zone. Please discuss any conflicts with the professor at the start of the semester.
- 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. All feedback will be given in the format of detailed and rigorous **“Appreciations and Recommendations.”**
- 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.

Note: *If a student misses a deadline because of a partner’s unavailability, the available partner 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.*

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Performances, exercises and written assignments will be assessed using the following guidelines:

- Written assignments must be turned in on or before the scheduled due date. **Late work will not be accepted.**
- Written assignments **MUST be submitted via Turnitin on Blackboard** unless a special arrangement has been made between the student and the professor. Do not turn in hard copies in class unless requested!
- 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.
- **Grades are not dictated** by the success of acting presentations, the instructor’s subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference.
- **Grades are dictated by active engagement in the class at all times.**

FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS, POINTS WILL BE DETERMINED AS FOLLOWS:

There is a rubric for performance evaluations available for download on Blackboard. Student is responsible for familiarizing this rubric. Please address any questions about this prior to performing any scenes for a grade. In addition, exercises and activities assigned will be scored by the following criteria:

100% - Excellent: clear understanding of the class material 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

Grading Breakdown

Feedback, assessment, and grading of the course will be based on the successful completion of the following assignments by their assigned due dates:

Character Observation Written	5 Points (5% of grade)
Character Observation Performance	10 Points (10% of grade)
Private Moment Written	5 Points (5% of Grade)
Private Moment Performance	10 Points (10% of Grade)
Journal (4 Entries X 5 Points Each)	20 Points (20% of grade)
Midterm Performance.....	15 Points (15% of grade)
Final Performance	20 Points (20% of grade)
Cumulative Class Participation	15 Points (15% of grade)

Total 100 Points

Grading Scale

The final course grade is determined according to the following scale:

Excellent:	A (4) = 100-96	A- (3.7) = 95-90	
Good:	B+ (3.3) = 89-86	B (3) = 85-84	B- (2.7) = 83-80
Average:	C+ (2.3) = 79-76	C (2) = 75-74	C- (1.7) = 73-70
Poor:	D (.7-1.3) = 60's	F (0) = 59 and below	

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

When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students whose attendance and participation in class have been excellent or good and toward the negative end of the scale for those with average or poor attendance and participation.

Further Grading Notes

- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W.
- If you are confused or concerned about your performance or the work we are doing in class, please request a meeting to discuss this with me.

Attendance

- While attendance alone cannot be used to award course credit, per USC policy, students are required to be on time for all scheduled sessions unless they are genuinely too ill to attend or affected

by unavoidable personal or external circumstances.

- **If the student has more than 3 absences or late arrivals during the course they may not be able to fulfill their participate requirement.**
- **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.**
- Synchronous sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously.

CALENDAR (*This timeline is subject to change depending on the dynamics, pace and unpredictability of the creative process of the class.*)

Week 1	Introductions. Discuss student expectations and semester goals. DUE: Bring in a personal story to be told in 3 minutes. ASSIGN: Read Chekhov Introduction.
Week 2	ASSIGN: Read "A Calamity" and "The Kiss" and "The Lady with her Pet Dog." ASSIGN: Character Observation Exercise. DUE: Journal Entry #1 Uploaded to Turnitin.
Week 3	Discuss "A Calamity" and "The Kiss" and "The Lady with her Pet Dog." DUE: Perform Character Observation Exercise (Scheduled).
Week 4	ASSIGN: Private Moment Exercise. ASSIGN: READ "The Three Sisters" and "Uncle Vanya."
Week 5	Discuss "The Three Sisters" and "Uncle Vanya." DUE: Perform Private Moment Exercise (Uploaded or Scheduled). DUE: Journal Entry #2 Uploaded to Turnitin.
Week 6	Rehearse "The Three Sisters" and "Uncle Vanya."
Week 7	MIDTERM PERFORMANCES
Week 8	ASSIGN: Read "Stupid Fucking Bird" and "The Seagull." DUE: Journal Entry #3 Uploaded to Turnitin.
Week 9	Discuss "Stupid Fucking Bird."
Weeks 10 - 12	Rehearse "Stupid Fucking Bird."
Week 13	DUE: FINAL PERFORMANCES DUE: Journal Entry #4 Uploaded to Turnitin.
November 24 @ 11 AM	FINAL EXAM

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:

Campus Support & Intervention (CSI) – (213) 740-0411

Campus Support & Intervention is an office within Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention. We are a team of professionals here to assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues. Whether you are here seeking support for yourself or someone else, we are available to help you problem solve, understand options, and connect with resources. <https://uscса.usc.edu>

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: <https://titleix.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. <https://titleix.usc.edu/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

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