

USC School of Dramatic Arts

201a Intermediate Acting

Units: 2 units

M/W 2pm - 3:50

Location: zoom (link will be in blackboard and emailed to you)

Instructor: Laura Flanagan

Office: lgoldsch@usc.edu / 646-342-5314

Office Hours: by appointment

Contact Info: lgoldsch@usc.edu - see above

Course Description: (From the Catalogue): Analysis and investigation of role interpretation and character development by working on two or more scenes from the same play. Introduction of techniques to unlock objectives based on the text.

Course Description

Acting is the art of Doing Something (while other people are watching you). This, your second year of acting class is all about how to put what you are doing, (your action), into what you are saying, so that when you speak it DOES SOMETHING - generally to someone else. We are focusing on the works of William Shakespeare for this simple reason: he has the best words. The language he gives you is incredibly active, imaginative, generous and allows you to do all kinds of things.

Of course, there are other writers who have great words too, Suzanne Lori Parks for one. And asked recently what three things she would bring with her to a desert island she named these:

I would take my banjo, my guitar and a book. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare. One with pictures. The Riverside edition has pictures. I'd need a pencil to take notes.... I'll just write in the sand." (Interview January 2014, American Theatre Magazine).

So, Shakespeare is central to drama. He pretty much invented what we know of character. In fact another famous Shakespeare reader, Harold Bloom, (who was also my professor when I was in college) wrote a book called "Shakespeare: the Invention of the Human" in which he goes through all the plays and talks about the main characters and how complicated and deeply human their personalities are. According to Bloom, Shakespeare was the first playwright that created so many distinctly different characters with different personalities, so many different ways of thinking and expressing themselves, characters who thought about themselves and the world, and characters who were changed, not just by events around them, but how they actively perceived and digested and understood those events. According to Bloom, Shakespeare invented how we think of ourselves as humans. It's a bold claim but one I stand behind.

In his brief essay on Shakespeare "How I learned to stop hating Shakespeare" James Baldwin talks about the moment when he began to love and appreciate Shakespeare's genius. How he suddenly saw that Shakespeare spoke a language that could really be his and understood how hard it was to be a person, no matter who you are, or where and when you were born.

So in this moment of 2020 Pandemic America, as inequality rages and we are sequestered, or not, depending on our political affiliations, or our relative privilege(s), Shakespeare is even more important.

What does it mean to be a human? Because, in a bigger sense, as actors, that is your job. To bring the human struggle to life. We want to believe you. We need to believe you. Your responsibility as artists is greater than ever.

We will begin work on *The Bard* with one of his sonnets. We will work on making the language active. We will continue with scene work from many of the different plays, and then we will finish off with a soliloquy from the character you worked on in your scene. As the course description states: you will spend the semester really getting into the language and actions of one of Shakespeare's indelible characters. I'm so excited to get to know you and to start this journey with you.

Learning Objectives

- Master the concepts of Objective, Action, Obstacle and Event.
- Apply these concepts consistently to your understanding of the text.
- Activate the language of the text in order to achieve your goal - as the character.
- Physicalize your actions within the zoom space.
- Work for and with your partner(s) real or imagined, in each moment of every scene.
- Build your through-line for the scene and the role.

Prerequisite(s): 252a,b

Course Notes

This course will take place on zoom, with occasional enhancements from blackboard. The majority of the class will be synchronous learning during a zoom session. Lots of rehearsal will be required. This will take place on FaceTime or Zoom.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

This course requires a good internet connection, and appropriate operating systems for zoom.

Required Readings (IN ORDER OF HOW THEY APPEAR IN THE SYLLABUS)

- Baldwin, James: "Why I stopped Hating Shakespeare". audio version: <https://fermatstheater.org/2019/10/10/james-baldwins-why-i-stopped-hating-shakespeare/> text version: https://www.folger.edu/sites/default/files/Why%20I%20Stopped%20Hating%20Shakespeare_JamesBaldwin.pdf

- Shakespeare, William: *The Complete Works*. Whichever edition you get. Of course all the plays are online too, but you're in college and you should have a real copy of the plays. Find the cheapest one you can - unless you like to spend money and have some to spare.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- *Journal* - you will keep a journal of your classwork/zoom sessions. After each zoom class you will take a moment to reflect on what you learned, or didn't, during the zoom. This can be hand written if you like (I encourage all time spent OFF SCREEN these days) but you must upload photos of it to your blackboard journal. You can also just type in your blackboard journal. Ideas for questions you might like to think of when you are doing

your journal: what I found inspiring today - What lesson was reinforced today - What was I confused by today - what connection did I make to my own work or process today - what do I wish we'd done today instead of what we did. You need not answer all these questions, or any of these questions if you have your own. Use this as a guide. Your journal is an honest reflection on your experience on zoom. It's a chance for you to reflect deeply for yourself and build the connection with yourself that you need for your creative work.

- *Rehearsal Reports* - You must rehearse three times a week with your scene partner(s). This will require that you fill out a rehearsal report on blackboard for each rehearsal. Each group will submit one rehearsal report for the week. If you fail to turn in your rehearsal reports you will not be able to show your work that week on zoom. The rehearsal report will contain: a. who rehearsed, b. what you worked on, c. for how long, d. what was the focus of the rehearsal, e. what challenges and/or achievements you had.
- *Active Analysis/ Script Book* - This will be due at Midterm and at the Final. The Midterm will contain your active analysis for your Etude. Etude is your improvised version of your scene(s). The final will contain the active analysis for your final performance. The Active Analysis will be taught in week three of class: We will learn to breakdown your script into useable, workable active terms that will help us chart ourselves as actor/ characters through the through line of the play. Write your active analysis in pencil as you will probably be continuously updating and changing it as we work through the play.

Grading Breakdown

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|---------------------|-------|-------|
| Journal | 25 | 25% |
| Rehearsal Reports | 25 | 25% |
| Active Analysis | 12.5 | 12.5% |
| Midterm Performance | 12.5% | 12.5% |
| Final | 25 | 25% |

Grading Scale (Example)

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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|----|--------------|
| 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 Submission Policy

Assignments will be submitted through blackboard and USC email.

Grading Timeline

Journals will be graded weekly.

Midterm and Final grades will be available four days after the test.

Additional Policies

Students are expected to attend all synchronous zoom meetings. Students are expected to arrive on time in the zoom classroom, ready to work. Journals will be checked weekly to make sure that students are keeping up with their work. I will be available for office hours as much as possible for any individual concerns, challenges and needs that come during the course of the class.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

(Please refer to the [Contact Hours Reference](#) guide.)

| | Topics/Daily Activities | Readings and Homework | Deliverable/ Due Dates. * |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Week 1 August 17 | M. Introduction to each other, games, welcome back to class. Introduction to Shakespeare, brief talk about Baldwin essay. Introduction to the sonnets. W: more games and begin work on the sonnets. | Baldwin, James: "Why I stopped hating Shakespeare"... - read sonnet 29, and sonnet 147 | Monday : Have read Baldwin, prepare for discussion. Wednesday: Learn whichever sonnet you want, 29 or 147. They will be posted on Blackboard. Learn them so we can work and play with them in class. |
| Week 2 August 24 | T: Work on sonnets | LEARN YOUR SONNET - if you haven't already - do it, but you've already done it so you're good. | Sonnets. |
| Week 3 August 31 | Perform your sonnet | Scenes assigned. Read the play, read the scene. | Monday: Perform your sonnet on zoom. Wednesday: Begin work on SCENES (!!) with Group 1, |
| Week 4 September 7 | M/W: M - group 2, 3. M - Group 4, 5 Work on Scenes - starting with EVENT -clarifying what is happening in the scene, and who, where and what - GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES. | Learn Your Scene and Rehearse | First Rehearsal Report Due Monday: Group 2,3 will work Wednesday: Group 4, 5 will work |

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|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Week 5 Sept. 14 | M: Group 6. Finish up work on Clarifying Event, Given Circumstances: W. Group 1,2 scenes - look at Language, handling the verse, using the antithesis, etc.. | Learn Your Scene and Rehearse | Second Rehearsal Report Due Monday: Group 6 will work on event. Then we will talk about and play with issues of language. Wednesday: Group 1, 2 will work on language |
| Week 6 Sept. 21 | M/ W: Continue work on Language. | Read | Third Rehearsal Report is due Monday: Group 3, 4 will work on language . Wednesday: Group 5, 6 will finish up with language |
| Week 7 Sept. 28 | M: Work on Scenes Focus on Physical Action | " | Fourth Rehearsal Report is Due Due. M: Group 1, 2 - physical action, W: Group 3, 4 - physical Action |
| Week 8 Oct. 5 | M: Finish work on Scenes: W: MIDTERM PERFORMANCE | " | Fifth Rehearsal Report Due M: Group 5, 6 - physical action. W: MIDTERM PERFORMANCES OF SCENES (!!) Due; Active Analysis of Scene. |
| Week 9 Oct. 12 | M; Begin work on Soliloquy W: continue work on Soliloquy. | | Sixth rehearsal report due: M: 1, 2, 3, 4, Soliloquies: Given Circumstance. W: 5, 6, 7, 8 |
| Week 10 Oct. 19 | M/ W Continue Work on Soliloquy | " | Seventh Rehearsal Report Due M: 9,10, 11, 12 - Given Circumstances: W - 1, 2, 3, 4 - Language. |
| Week 11 Oct. 26 | M/ W Continue Work on Soliloquy | | Eighth Rehearsal Report M: 5,6,7, 8. W: 9,10,11, 12 - Language |
| Week 12 Nov. 2 | M/ W Continue Work on Soliloquy | | Ninth Rehearsal Report Due M: 1,2, 3, 4 - Physical Action W: 5,6,7,8 |
| Week 13 Nov. 9 | M/W Continue Work on Soliloquy | | M: 9, 10,11, 12. W; Last DAY OF CLASS - review and talk about the final, work on anything that wants to be worked on. |
| Week 14 | FINAL EXAM Final Performance of SCENES AND SOLILOQUY!! | FRIDAY NOVEMBER 20th 2-4pm | Due: Final Tenth Rehearsal Report/. Active analysis of Script revised. Final Performance of Scenes and Soliloquies. Hurrah. |
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***JOURNAL ENTRIES ARE DUE AT THE END OF EVERY WEEK. I WILL READ THEM OVER THE WEEKEND.**

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