

**THTR 105 Zoom**  
**Introduction To Screen Acting: “Acting Close-Up”**  
**Instructor: Joseph Hacker**  
**Location: Shrine 105**

**Spring 2021**  
**F: 11:00 to 1:50pm**

**Office Hours: Best after class or**  
**TBA by appointment**  
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This on-camera, workshop-style class introduces students to the fundamentals of screen acting through exploration of the distinctions between the media of stage and screen. Class work identifies the technical implications of these differences. Controlled exposure to on-camera performance dynamics prompts students to define and master techniques for dealing with the parameters unique to acting for the camera and to incorporate them into the fundamental process of actualizing effective on-camera performances.

### **Objectives and Methods**

The philosophy of SDA correctly maintains that the art and craft of acting is best learned on the stage. However, in today’s increasingly digital world, the study of acting cannot be considered complete without a detailed exposure to the technical adjustments an actor must make to achieve effectiveness when acting for the camera.

The object of this class is to compliment students’ initial explorations of the nature of stage acting, with an introduction to the contrasting technical dynamics of screen acting. It is, further, to demystify the craft of screen acting by exploring the similarities between the two while identifying technical solutions to their differences. Among the numerous technical challenges---many of which are a result of the “close up” proximity of the audience---are the camera’s ability to perceive a character’s thoughts; the emphasis on circumstance rather than dialogue to inform the essence of a given scene; vocal projection; gauging the “size” of the actor’s movements and gestures. Further, the contrasting mechanics of production also demand different approaches to rehearsal, and scene preparation.

Classes consist of discussions, video examples; on-camera exercises; and scene work with video playback. Class work is supplemented by a required reading list. Timely submission of a special midterm paper is required. Students are required to keep a weekly journal, reflecting in specific detail one or more designated aspects of that day’s class experience.

**NOTE: THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE DEPENDING ON THE SIZE OF THE CLASS AND THE ACCOMPLISHMENT LEVEL OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

**Students Are Required:** to purchase one new 32GB or 64GB digital “SD Card” Class 10 with a speed of 94/95 (approximately \$40). (It does not have to be made by Sony. ) We will use it every week including the first. Students will bring this SD card to each class meeting, including the first.



[http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/917685-REG/sony\\_sf32ux\\_tgn\\_32gb\\_sdhc\\_uhs\\_1\\_memory\\_card.html](http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/917685-REG/sony_sf32ux_tgn_32gb_sdhc_uhs_1_memory_card.html)

**Required Reading:** TBA

**Recommended Reading:** DIRECTING ACTORS, JUDITH WESTON, M. WIESE PRODUCTIONS  
ACTIONS; THE ACTORS' THESAURUS, DRAMA PUBLISHERS

**Course Work and Final Exam:** Students will work on camera every week. During and following each class students will make entries in a personal performance journal. Each entry will record in specific detail one or more designated aspects of that day's on-camera or preparation experience. These journals will serve as learning cues in conjunction with video replay analysis. They are intended to encourage disciplined, accurate, and beneficial self-appraisal skills. They will be reviewed for comment and discussion by the instructor periodically, at midterm and at term's end. No e-mailed papers will be accepted. Typed entries preferred. Format of the Final Exam to be announced.

**Grading Policy:**

Grades are not dictated by the success of acting presentations or the instructor's subjective opinion of talent or artistic preference. Grades are dictated by:

- Focus /concentration in class
- Performance of On-camera exercises
- Communication of selected acting skills
- Active in-class student analysis
- Constructive feedback of classmate's presentations
- Meeting all assignment deadlines: reading, writing, acting
- Memorization of lines
- Availability to fellow classmates for collaboration

Grading scale for SDA: A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality; D of below average quality; F indicates inadequate work.

Grade Categories

1. In-Class Feedback And Participation 15%
2. Written assignments and Personal Journal 25%
3. On-camera exercises and Self Evaluations 25%
4. Final Exam 25%
5. Growth And Effort 10%

No late assignments, projects, exams, papers or exercises will be accepted.

No e-mailed papers will be accepted

**Participation:** Attendance is required and will be taken. No tardiness or absences are allowed. There is a high emphasis on class participation. Viewing and critiquing of other students' work is a critical component of the class. Absences will result in point reductions as noted on grading system schedule.

**NOTE FROM THE DISABILITY SERVICES OFFICE:** "Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday thru Friday, 8:30 to 5:00. The office is in the Student Union 301 and the phone number is 213 740 0776.

**Course final grades will be determined using the following scale**

A	90-100	C.	40- 49
A-	80-89	C-	30-39
B+	70-79	D+	25-29
B	60-69	D	20-24
B-	55-59	D-	10-19
C+	50- 55	F.	9- 0

## Course Schedule: Weekly Breakdown

### Class #1 thru #6

#### Class Sequence #1

##### Discussion:

4 quotes

Stage/screen: fundamentals of acting: unifying dynamics.

Doing: "Behaving truthfully in imaginary circumstances.

Thought: the essence of the change

Ultimate issue: virtual auditioning / film work

Anthony Hopkins / 300 times

Your time is now

Video: "Sicario": A story told in pictures...Moving pictures

"The Crown"

"I Robot"

Exercise: Personalizing the camera

Personalize the camera

Identify your nerves

Tell us about yourself

Acting is doing / acting is thinking

(backwards from 100 by sevens)

Asleep and not dreaming

Assign: Daily Journal

Monologues:

One minute. A person in a specific place, talking to another person for a reason

Put a camera in your life

#### Class Sequence #2

##### Discussion:

The fundamentals of acting (continued)

A director's medium

4 quotes

Video "Fracture"

"On the Waterfront"

Killer entries: Jonathan Langley et al

On-camera Exercises #1: Acting is doing

Non-verbal circumstances / situations

Body language and gesture

Non-verbal behavior determined by a given place

metaphor of the place

the stage / the menu

#### Class Sequence #3

On-camera exercises #2: One Minute Monologues

A person in a place talking to another person for a reason.

Place / Relationship / Intent / Obstacle / Stakes

Creating the place Stella style  
Significance / metaphor of the place

What communicates, facial gesture, body language  
Vocal projection: Addressing the perceived distance  
The measure of the mic

The issue of “Size” / “Smaller” vs. “Closer”  
long shot / medium shot/ close-up.  
“you are enough”

The Looking: middle distance

Hypnotizing your counter-part

Changes that affect change: The place / change the physical action /  
change the relationship / change the overall sensation / speaking  
through an object (sitting on the brink)

**Class #7 thru #10** Assigned Scenes #1 / TBA / on –camera /working in pairs

Mid-term: To be announced

Scenes... listening  
Hear/listen/ form opinion/want to speak / speak  
The “button”  
Let the blows land

Visible thinking : Defining “active” thoughts  
Movement is thinking / pausing is thinking  
shifting with an active mind  
movement towards / Movement away

Thinking on camera (silent monologue doing a task)  
 (“McKinley Linder”)

The impact of looking...when and at what  
Subtext

Verbal action Vs. Non-verbal re-action  
Silent monologues

Doing nothing...harder than it sounds

**Class #11 thru #15** Concepts applied  
Assigned Scenes#2 / working in pairs

Camera set-ups

Scenes: master/two shot/ over the shoulder/close-ups:

Multiple camera, re-takes, etc

Shooting out of order

Entering / short scenes MOS / The Entry  
Video examples

MOS scenes / Repeat the action

Hitting marks / cheating for the camera  
Shooting out of order.

The close-up / unique dynamic  
Close-ups cont'd / a communication with the audience

### **Final Exam**

To be announced

Submitted according to University Schedule

## **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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)