

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 120b **Spring 2021**

TUESDAY/THURSDAY 2:00-3:50 pm

Location: DRC 120 and on line

INSTRUCTOR: Kenneth Noel Mitchell
TITLE: Professor of Theatre Practice
Head of Music Theatre
Co-Head of Undergraduate Acting
OFFICE: DRC Building/ZOOM

ZOOM LINK TO CLASS:

[https://usc.zoom.us/j/95579669225?](https://usc.zoom.us/j/95579669225?pwd=cWlOZGo3dSsvbk9HmVkwGxKa0lrZz09)

pwd=cWlOZGo3dSsvbk9HmVkwGxKa0lrZz09

Meeting ID: 955 7966 9225

PERSONAL ZOOM LINK FOR ONE ON ONE MEETINGS:

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://usc.zoom.us/j/8838395647>
Meeting ID: 883 839 5647

Technical Difficulties: If you are experiencing difficulties with Zoom or Blackboard please go to: <https://keep-teaching.usc.edu/get-help/>

Required Text:

Handouts

FREE PLAY

IMPROVISATION IN LIFE AND ART By STEPHEN NACHMANOVITCH

Course Description: Basic principles and techniques of acting through scene study and text analysis. Introduction to contemporary texts, basic characterization. the BFA MT program is sequential in design and this class will build upon and expand on the skills introduced in THTR 120a/THTR 120a lab THTR 125 (text analysis)

Course Objective: To apply the fundamental skills acquired in THTR 120a, THTRa 120 lab and THTR 125

To live truthfully in the moment while identifying and pursuing an objective.

Course Outcome:

Skills acquired

- I. You will become proficient at skills needed to play within an ensemble**
15 pts
 - Measurement: Participation in class and outside of class
 - Measurement: Developing skills to work respectfully and collaboratively
 - Measurement: Giving constructive input by actively witnessing the work of others
 - Measurement tool: Paper on the best practice of collaboration
 - Measurement tool: Faculty evaluation, Self-evaluation/Peer evaluation

- II. You become proficient at the ability to put the focus on the other with text**
15 pts
 - Measurement: Ability to listen specifically
 - Measurement: Ability react to behavior

- Measurement: Ability to receive and respond to what is being given to you
- Measurement: Acknowledge and act on impulse
- Measurement: Allowing yourself to become emotionally available to the other
- Measurement tool: Self evaluation
- Measurement tool: scene presentation a rehearsal logs

III. You will practice the skill of living privately in public 15 pts

- Measurement: identifying Imaginary circumstances
- Measurement: Investment in a physical activity
- Measurement: Building Imaginary environment
- Measurement: Constructing an imaginary relationship
- Measurement: Your ability to live truthfully under these circumstances
- Measurement tool: Repetition and open scenes
- Measurement tool: Ability to implement **adjustments** to deepen the investment into circumstance, objective, environment/atmosphere, relationship, moment before (preparation)
- Measurement tool: Discussion and growth thru the observation of others

IV. To practice the basic principles of Professional Behavior 15 pts

- Preparation
- Classroom Etiquette
- Respect for feedback
- Reflection
- Measurement: Enter the space prepared to work (dress, props, etc.)
- Measurement: Focus
- Measurement: Generosity of spirit/
- Measurement: Receiving feedback
- Measurement: Class contract and your ability to live up to commitment

Skills developed:

V. Committing to the “Reality of Doing by:

- Identifying the difference between playing quality and pursuing action

- Investing emotionally to physical action
- Defining your physiological action physically
- Working specifically and playing moment to moment
- Measurement: Scene work

VI. Refine Text Analysis:

- Reading the text
- Understanding who the playwright is
- Researching the period the play was written in
- Identifying the facts
- Time, Place, Physical Environment
- Identifying the character previous circumstances
- Measurement: Scene work
- Measurement: Scored Script

VI. Preparing to go on Stage by:

- Developing your physical preparation
- Vocal preparation
- Emotional preparation
- Using the moment before
- Measurement: Scene work
- Three Entrance Exercise
- Measurement: Scene work

VII. Investigating the Environment by:

- Identifying your physical environment through the senses: Sight, Smell, Sound, Taste, Touch, Temperature, Weather, Space
- Identifying your physiological environment :Your History in the space, Who's space Public/Private
- Creating the environment physically and imaginatively
- Endowing the space and objects
- Putting a scene on its feet
- Making physical choices to support your physiological actions
- Forming a relationship with the space

- Measurement: Scene work with environment
- Environment Exercise

VIII. Exploring Relationship by:

- Using and shifting status
- Defining beats by point of view on the relationship
- Measurement: Scoring the scene

IX. Committing to and building a rehearsal process by:

- Define and document your rehearsals
- Develop skills needed to do “table work”
- Understand how to put a scene on its feet
- Ability to diagnose obstacles and prescribe skills to take the work deeper
- Measurement: Rehearsal log

X. Character Analysis

- Completing the character analysis work sheet
- Overall objectives
- Scene Objective
- Beats
- Actions
- Obstacles
- Conflict
- Seeing the world from your character point of view
- Measurement: Scene work

V. Overall Growth **20 pts**
 ○ Measurement: Self and faculty evaluation written and oral

VI. Midterm **10 pts**
 ○ Measurement: Scene work

VII. Final exam **15 pts**

- Measurement: Scene work

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

A – 95 to 100 points - Each time the student works in class they exceed expectations.

A- 90 to 94 points - The work is usually exceptional.

B- B+ 85 to 89 points - The student work is very good on a consistent basis. The student has been able to demonstrate the ability to meet all the expectations with sufficient consistency. They are able to identify the skills being taught in class and the techniques being employed in the process in this class with little support. Student shows promise of great achievement over time.

B 80 to 84 - The student work is solidly within expectations. The student demonstrates the ability to utilize the skills being taught with regular support.

B-75 to 79 points - The student work is above average. The student requires regular support but their work remains within the required parameter. The student demonstrates the ability to use the skills being taught but with less confidence and frequency.

C+ 70 to 74 points- The student work has been above average on occasion but with less consistency average. The student requires regular and repeated support.

C 65-69 points- The student's work is average. They are demonstrating a limited understanding/engagement of the skills being taught. The student requires regular and repeated support. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress. The student demonstrates a lack of consistency.

C- 60 to 64 points - The student work is below average and is not meeting the expectations or criteria of the class. The student is not working with rigor and is not engaging the skills being taught with any consistency. Regular and repeated support may not be effectively advancing the student's progress. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D+ 55 to 59 points - The student work is poor. The student is not engaging in the process with any rigor or discipline. The work is far below the parameters of acceptable application. The student demonstrates little appetite the skills being taught. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D 50 to 54 points - The work is barely acceptable. The student has shown little to no progress during the course in any visible manner. The most of the homework assigned has not been turned in in a timely manner. The student is not engaged with the work, his classmates and/or the craft of acting.

F below 50 - A majority of the work is unacceptable.

Grading Timeline

Feed-back will be given in class.

Policies

Netiquette

- Please enter Acting class dressed in loose fitting black clothing. No jewelry, no hats, as neutral as possible.
- Please contact me if you have technical issues during the class. 727 403 8316
- Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- When possible please enable your webcam, so they are visible in the course.
- There is no eating in class.
- Please discuss with me the technology/computers during the sessions
- If possible, please find a space in your home that is private due to the personal nature of our work .
- Please use the raise your hand option when you wish to speak.

RESPECT

- Always use a respectful tone.
 - Avoid inflammatory language.
 - Avoid put-downs (even humorous ones).
 - No name-calling or other character attacks.
 - No interrupting or yelling.
 - Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
 - Be aware of the fact that tone of voice and body language are powerful communicators. Some postures or facial expressions (e.g., crossed arms, eye rolls, loud sighs) can silence, provoke, intimidate, or hurt others. Others (e.g., facing and looking at the speaker, staying quiet, nodding) can show you are listening respectfully
 - Refrain from responding to others' statements by applause, groans, or other noise.
 - Signal agreement with another student's statement by silent applause.
 - Make eye contact with other students and refer to classmates by name.
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- Make no assumptions about others
 - Trust that people are always doing the best they can.
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- Be courteous. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
 - Don't be incredulous.
 - Don't roll your eyes, make faces, laugh at a participant, etc., especially to others on the side.
 - Don't start side conversations parallel to the main discussion.
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- Only make statements about an issue, person, or group if you are prepared to make the statement directly and respectfully to a person to whom the issue is important.
 - Don't present objections as flat dismissals (leave open the possibility that there's a response).
 - Only say what you truly believe.

Constructiveness

- Criticize ideas, not individuals or groups.
 - Focus on ideas, not personalities.
 - Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own.
 - If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.
- Commit to learning, not debating.
 - Build on one another's comments; work toward shared understanding.
 - Objections are fine, but it's also always OK to be constructive, building on a speaker's statement or strengthening their position. Even objections can often be cast in a constructive way.
 - Think before you speak.
- Link claims and assertions to appropriate evidence whenever possible.
 - Either support statements with evidence, or speak from personal experience.
 - Do not offer opinions without supporting evidence.
 - Refer to the text to support your ideas.
 - Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
- Ask questions when you do not understand; do not assume you know what others are thinking.
 - Ask for clarification if you are confused.
 - Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand a point raised.
 - Ask a question to explore areas of uncertainty or discomfort.
- Try to see the issue from the other person's perspective before stating your opinion.
 - Consider the difference between responding to express yourself and responding to get an idea across to people who have different preconceptions than yours.
 - Always have your book/readings in front of you.
 - Build on your classmates' comments. Acknowledge them, even if you disagree with them.
- Speak from your own experience, without generalizing.
 - Use "I" statements to state your views. For example, "I notice that when I'm with my friends we pay attention differently" is more constructive than "When you're with friends you pay attention differently."
 - Listen and also share. Share briefly from your own experiences when appropriate, rather than simply your positions.

Constructiveness

- Be careful not to generalize about people.
- Avoid blame and speculation.
- Respond to what is said in class, without attributing motivation to the speaker (this can be very challenging).

Inclusivity

- Let other people speak. Once you are done speaking, let at least two other people talk before you speak again.
 - Don't dominate the discussion.
 - Try not to let your question (or your answer) run on.
 - Do not monopolize discussion.
- Know that it is okay to be emotional about issues and to name those emotions.
 - It's OK to ask a question that you think may be unsophisticated or uninformed.
 - Don't worry about impressing people.
 - Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.
- Don't use unnecessarily offensive examples.
 - If you are offended by anything said during discussion, acknowledge it immediately.
 - If you are offended by something or think someone else might be, speak up and don't leave it for someone else to have to respond to it.
- Consider anything that is said in class strictly confidential. We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.
 - Maintain confidentiality (what is said in the classroom stays in the classroom.)
 - Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in class.
- Do not remain silent. Make sure to contribute to the discussion.
 - Step Up, Step Back. Be mindful of taking up much more time than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.
 - Everyone in the group should participate in the conversation.
 - Allow everyone the chance to talk. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion.
 - If you think something is missing from the conversation, don't wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself.
 - Acknowledge points made by previous questioners.
 - Support good ideas that other people have, even if they are different from your own.
 - Take responsibility for the quality of the discussion.

Inclusivity

- We will not demean, devalue, or “put down” people for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.
- Recognize and/or remember that we have different backgrounds.
- Consider who gets left out, who is marginalized, under-represented, or erased by particular claims. So, for example, we could say, “That’s an image of an ideal family,” or we could say, “That may be an image of an ideal family for many middle-class white heterosexuals.”
- Be careful about putting other students on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that you perceive them to represent.
- Be aware of different communication styles--the ways we communicate differently based on our backgrounds and current contexts--and look for ways to expand your communication tool kits.
- Our primary commitment is to learn from each other. We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.

Procedure

- Wait to be recognized by the instructor or discussion leader before speaking.
- Stand and face the majority of the class before speaking.
- State your name before making your statement, so other students can reference your statement properly.
- If responding or reacting to a statement by another student, indicate by name the student whom you are referencing.
- Make a single point each time you speak, rather than making a series of statements at once.
- Start your statement with a short one-sentence summary of the point you are making.

Electronic Devices

1. All cell phones must be on vibrate mode at the beginning of class

Respect and Feedback

- The classroom is a place to warm up in not socialize
- When in the acting studio warm up and prepare for the acting class and not doing homework from other classes
- Avoid personal activities that interfere concentration and energy
- Do not direct or coach other actors if you have suggestions go through the instructor when rehearsing or in class
- In discussion think like an investigator not like a critic
- Accept feedback without defensiveness
- Do not beat yourself up if the work did not go as expected
- Do not make excuses for the work

- Apply observations of others to your own work
- Avoid talking or whispering, texting or chatting while others are working
- Stay present physically and emotionally when others are working
- Do not engage in side conversation, chatting or texting when the instructor is working is with another actor

Anything personal revealed in the studio stays in the studio.

Discard Attitude and Judgment

In some cases, you may have naïve expectations about the behavior of other people and find yourself being critical of your colleagues. Try not to be sidetracked by your negative judgments or adversarial relationships with other actors. If a situation arises, handle it with all the maturity you can muster.

Set your own boundaries for the behavior you will tolerate: depending upon the circumstances, you will probably discover that you can tolerate much more than you ever imagined. But when someone's behavior holds you back or crosses an extremely personal line, you must deal with the individual. Deal directly or seek channels through which you can handle the situation effectively and discreetly.

Work with Integrity

Unprofessional behavior is not okay and you do not have to tolerate it. Although you will most often be able to get out of an uncomfortable situation in an acting class by dropping the scene, it is unlikely that you will quit a paid acting job even if you are working in a miserable environment with people who are unprofessional. As with any job, this can happen, and you will eventually develop the skills to determine how to navigate the situation and get on with the work.

***REHEARSALS OUTSIDE CLASSROOM HOURS:** All classroom/studio standards, including punctuality and respectful professional behavior, must be observed in rehearsals outside of the classroom. We encourage each of you to make bold, playful and imaginative acting choices in your process and throughout your training. However, we must all be clear that our acting choices should guide and dictate only our performances and cannot impinge on our fellow actor's right to pursue his/her individual acting choices, even if they seem at odds with our own. There can be healthy differences and these are best played out in full in the classroom where the faculty may assist and guide your work to its most fruitful end. Further housekeeping note: in the event that you are rehearsing in a studio/classroom on evenings or weekends, please stow any and all prop furniture back where it belongs before you leave.

IMPORTANT:

In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing, and other academic activities. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester. Be aware that this is the minimum requirement for “homework”. **If you are training to be an actor or are exploring the acting profession as a possibility for post university life, you will soon realize that this minimum requirement is woefully inadequate. BE ADVISED!**

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

Note: *If a deadline is missed because of a classmate’s unavailability, the available partner/s will not be penalized if a discussion with me and all involved occurs before the deadline.*

Schedule: *There may be additions and or subtractions to the schedule. These adjustments will be prescriptive to the specific needs of the ensemble.

Week 1 1/18

Tues.

Objective: Play Analysis Skills

“Bringing The Character to Life” discussed/Assigned
Free Play assigned
Suitcase Exercise

Thurs.

Open Scenes
“Bringing The Character to Life” discussed/Assigned

Week 2 1/25

Tues.

Objective: Open Scenes

TOWN HALL FREE PLAY exercise

Thurs.

Open Scenes

Week 3 2/1

Tues.

Objective: Table Work/Circumstance

Table work
Assigned 20 lines memorized-rehearsed

Thurs.

Table Work 5 scenes

Week 4 2/8

Tues.

Objective: Investigate Circumstance/Environment continued

Scenes

Thurs.

Scenes

Week 5 2/15

Objective: Investigating Environment

Tues.

Work Scenes

Thurs.

Work Scenes

Week 6 2/22

Objective: Investigate Relationship

Tues.

Whole Scene Due w/Environment -Relationship

Work Scenes

Thurs.

Work Scenes

Assign new play READ 3-5 TIMES

Assign Character Analysis Parts 1, 2 due after spring break

Week 7 3/1

Objective: Review

Tues.

Scenes

Thurs.

Scenes

Week 8 3/8

Objective: New Scenes/Table Work

Tues.

Scenes

Thurs

Scenes

Week 9 3/15

Objective: New Scenes/Table Work/Objectives

Tues.

Scenes

Handout dealing with objective/obstacles

Thurs.

Scenes

***Note the scenes will begin evening and weekend rehearsal from now until the end of class.

Week 10 3/22

Tues.

Wellness Day

*Bringing the Character to Life Parts 1&2 due

Assign Parts 3&4, Due week 12

Thurs

Scenes

Week 11 3/29

Objective: Objective/Beats

Tues.

Scenes

*Bringing the Character to Life Parts 1&2 due

Assign Parts 3&4, Due week 12

Thurs

Scenes

Week 12 4/5 Objective: Continue Beats/Objectives

Tues. Scenes

Thurs. Scenes

Week 13 4/12 Objective: Character Point of View

Tues. Scenes

Thurs. Scenes

Week 14 4/19 Objective: Character/AutoDrama

Tues. Scenes

Thurs. Wellness Day

Week 15 3/26 Objective: Character

Tues. Scenes

Thurs. Scenes (last Class)

Final Exam

Thursday, May 6

2-4 p.m.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS AND ISPS

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, home work that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

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

