



# USC University of Southern California

## **THTR 152: INTRODUCTION TO ACTING**

**Section # 62676R – 2 units**

**Spring 2021**

**Tuesdays & Thursdays—10:00-11:50 am**

**Location: Online**

**Dr. Sharon Marie Carnicke**

Professor of Theatre and Slavic Languages and Literatures

**Office Hours:** Office hours by appointment on zoom or by phone

**Contact Info:** [carnicke@usc.edu](mailto:carnicke@usc.edu)

### **Course Description and Overview**

In this studio course, students will forge an artistic ensemble that applies fundamental skills in acting to contemporary plays. Students will develop characters through personalized etudes and solo performance texts; engage in text analysis from the actor's point of view; and work together to rehearse and perform a full play by semester's end. All rehearsals will emphasize the interactive dynamics that are the hallmark of effective acting. This pragmatic work will be enriched by learning about the multiple ways in which Stanislavsky's System and the American Method differ in their assumptions about acting and in their handling of the power dynamics between actors and directors/acting teachers.

### **Course Objectives**

- Consolidate the fundamentals of acting (i.e. relaxation, concentration, observation, imagination, and interaction).
- Build an ensemble of actors through collaborative and interactive work on contemporary scenes, devised characters, and plays.
- Sharpen the actor's analytical skills with reference to contemporary performance texts.
- Develop characters and character arcs in contemporary and devised plays.
- Build knowledge about the ways that the Stanislavsky System and the American Method have impacted actor training within the diverse culture of the United States.

### **Learner Outcomes**

- Demonstrate acting skills in the first ten minutes of every class through the low-stakes practice of exercises on the fundamental elements of acting.
- Analyze written scenes and plays by breaking the texts down into the actions, counteractions, and events which tell the story.
- Embody characters and character arcs through graded performances of devised solo performances and in contemporary monologues and plays.
- Read and assess readings on actor training in the United States in a seminar setting.

### **Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

- The platforms for this course are Blackboard, Zoom, and USC email.

- A device that has a webcam and microphone and internet access is necessary.
- Written work can be submitted as Word docs or as a PDF.

### Course Notes

- PARTICIPATION: You are expected to participate fully in all classes--asynchronous sessions on Blackboard and synchronous classes on zoom. Participation in asynchronous, synchronous classes and low-stakes assignments (as detailed in the syllabus) is mandatory to achieve full credit for the course.
- NETIQUETTE:
  1. Dress (at least from the waist up) and act as if this were a professional commitment—because it is. Many job interviews and professional work now happens online, so think of this as practice.
  2. Keep your camera on (so all can see you), mute your microphone (to avoid feedback) unless you are speaking, and log on as individuals. (Keep social distance by not sharing the same space.) If you have bandwidth or connectivity problems that make it best to keep your camera off, please speak with me about it.
  3. All times for my links are LA time, so adjust accordingly if you are in another time zone.
  4. If for any reason my internet goes down during a class session, I will reconnect as soon as I am able. If your internet connection goes down, communicate with me as soon as possible.
  5. Courtesy dictates that you turn off your cell phone and do not surf the web on your laptop during class sessions on zoom.
  6. If at any time you are unable to make a synchronous class or meet a Blackboard or zoom assignment deadline, email me immediately.

### Course Norms

Please respect all members of the class; bring a collaborative attitude to our classes; and show a disciplined commitment to the course assignments. A lack in any of these areas will impact the final grade.

### Required Materials

1. *Digital THTR 152 Course Reader*.
  - Available for purchase only at <https://shop.universitycustompublishing.com/my-account/>
  - Information on the purchase and usage of the digital reader will be posted on Blackboard.
  - The reader includes articles on the history/practice of acting for our Discussion Days and short plays. Please familiarize yourselves with the content before the course begins.
2. Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares* (Routledge). An excellent source on the American Method.
  - Available for purchase as a paperback or e-book at <https://www.amazon.com/Actress-Prepares-Women-Method/dp/041568157X>
3. Itziar Pascual, *Gone Astray: Three Plays* (Estreno).
  - This slim paperback has been ordered for you at the USC Bookstore (USCTEXT.com). It includes material for scenes and monologues.
  - Pascual is a contemporary playwright in Spain and her works are widely produced in Spanish.
4. Based upon enrollment, I reserve the right to add another contemporary play to our course as needed.

### Description of Assignments

1. FOR EACH OF THREE DISCUSSION DAYS (20% of the final grade):
  - Select one passage from the readings assigned that you consider important.
  - Read your selection to the class and explain why you chose it.
2. THE PERFORMANCE OF A DEVISED MONOLOGUE (20% of the final grade).
  - Choose a person from a recent newspaper or magazine story.
  - Present the story to the class.
  - Investigate the “seed” of the person through research and imagination.

- Develop a character based upon this person’s story through etudes and perform the person to the class as a devised monologue.
3. THE PERFORMANCE OF A WRITTEN MONOLOGUE (20% of the final grade).
    - This monologue will be drawn from a written play.
    - Prepare a memorized performance through a close analysis of the text and rehearsals using etudes.
  4. THE PERFORMANCE OF AN ETUDE FROM A CONTEMPORARY PLAY (20% of the final grade).
    - Each student will be responsible for developing a character arch by working with the ensemble on a full play.
  5. A FINAL EXAMINATION (20% of the final grade).
    - The memorized performance of the full play.

### Assignment Submission Policy

- Required dates are detailed below. You will also receive weekly announcements through Blackboard.
- Performances will be live on zoom, unless alternate arrangements are made in advance due to bandwidth or internet issues.
- Any written work will be submitted through Blackboard.
- **No late work** will be accepted for graded assignments. If internet problems interfere with assignments on zoom, make-ups will be allowed.

### Grading Breakdown

The final course grade is determined by the assignments/examinations, weighted as above, and based on 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: the D range (.7-1.3) = 60’s; F (0) = 59 and below

“Excellent” means that clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight; “good” means that the class material has been understood clearly; “average” means that the class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding remain; “poor” means that there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material; “failure” means that there is poor understanding of the class content by term’s end; and/or gaps in the successful completion of work; and/or a lack of responsibility toward the class ensemble.

When the raw average of all assignments (weighted as given in the syllabus) falls between two grades, the final grade will reflect the positive end of the scale for students whose participation and responsibility to the work of the class have been good, but will reflect the negative end of the scale when participation and responsibility have been lacking. If poor attendance, participation and/or responsibility have impacted the class ensemble or your project partner’s ability to work, your grade will be lowered further.

### Additional Course Policies

1. If you are not a native speaker of English and/or you are an international student, make an appointment with me in the first two weeks of classes to determine whether language accommodations might be necessary.
2. If you have a religious holiday or any other conflict, inform me of the date during the first two weeks of classes.

3. Any work that does not fulfill the required assignment is an automatic F.
4. If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a grade of W.
5. I will be happy to discuss your work at any time during the semester, and I encourage each of you to meet with me at least once before the scheduled exam.
6. For USC Policies, see below.

### **Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

**NOTE:** Based upon enrollment and progress in class, the calendar below may be adjusted as needed. Weekly announcements through Blackboard will keep you on track and aware of any adjustments.

#### **Course Introduction (1 week)**

Week of Jan. 19

- Introduction to the course and each other.
- Developing a 10 minute actor's barre for the term.

#### **MODULE I: A Character from the Daily News (4 weeks)**

Weeks of Jan. 26 and Feb. 2

- Choice of a person for your devised monologue.
- Sharing your choice with the class.
- Devising.

**REGISTRATION NOTE:** Friday, Feb. 5, is the last day to add/drop without a "W" or to select the "P/NP" option.

#### **Tuesday, February 9: First Discussion Day**

- Read selections on Stanislavsky and the System in the *Course Reader* (to be assigned).
- Your passage of importance is **due**.

Thursday, Feb. 11

- Final rehearsal of the devised monologue.

Week of Feb. 16

- **Graded Performance of the devised monologue.**
- Debriefing.

#### **MODULE II: A Character Monologue from a Written Play (3 weeks)**

Week of Feb. 23

- READ the play by Pascual (to be assigned).
- Analyze for the facts, style, and actions inherent in the text.
- In-class rehearsals through etudes.

Tuesday, March 2

- Continue rehearsals of monologue through etudes.

#### **Thurs, March 4: Second Discussion Day**

- Read selections on acting in Hollywood in the Studio era in *Course Reader* (to be assigned).
- Your passage of importance is **due**.

**REGISTRATION NOTE:** Friday, March 5, is the last day to drop a course without a "W" or to change "P/NP" to a letter grade.

Week of March 16

- Final rehearsals of monologues.
- **Graded Performance of your monologue.**

**Tuesday March 23 is a WELLNESS Day. There is no class!**

**MODULE III: Developing a Character in a Play (5 weeks)**

Thursday, March 25

- Selection of a play for the class ensemble.
- Reading and analyzing the main themes of the play.

Week of March 30

- Breaking the play down into the chain of events that tell the story.
- Beginning etudes on the story of the play.

Weeks of April 6 and April 13

- Continuing Rehearsals
- **Graded performance of an etude on the play.**

**REGISTRATION NOTE:** Friday, April 9, is the last day to drop this course with a mark of "W."

**Tuesday, April 20: Third Discussion Day**

- Read selections on the American Method in *An Actress Prepares* (to be assigned).
- Your passage of importance is **due**.

**Thursday, April 22 is a WELLNESS DAY—there is no class!**

**Course Conclusions (1 week)**

Week of April 27

- Debriefing.
- Dress Rehearsal of the Play prior to the Final Examination.

**Final Examination: Tuesday, May 11, 10-11:50**

- Memorized and polished performance of the play.

**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](http://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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

**Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*

[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*

[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*

[equity.usc.edu](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*

[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*

[dsp.usc.edu](https://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](https://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](https://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.