

THTR 480a: Performance for Camera

Units: 2

Spring 2021 – Fri – 2:30-5:20pm

Location: ONLINE

Instructor: Matthew Montgomery

Office Hours By Appointment: Appointments held via Zoom.

Contact Info: mramire1@usc.edu

Timeline for replying to emails/calls within 24 hours.

IT Help: Customer Support Center

Contact Info: consult@usc.edu

Course Description

This course is structured to address the dynamics of acting in relation to film/television. Focus will be on refining the students' understanding of the similarities/differences between acting on stage/film. By exploring performance techniques used in film/television, the student will gain a greater understanding of inhabiting a character on screen. By the end of the course, students should feel confident approaching their craft and applying it to the development of a character onscreen.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Distinguish and analyze the fundamental differences between stage and screen acting.
- Develop a three-dimensional character for the screen by applying skills from the stage.
- Evaluate and constructively dissect on-camera performances, including their own.
- Analyze screenplay text for cold reading.

Prerequisite(s): THTR 252a or THTR 105

Course Notes

This course will be solely online. Class meetings will be held via Zoom. Please check Blackboard often for any class announcements or updates on assignments. Lecture slides may occasionally be used and will always be posted on Blackboard following class. Some multimedia including videos may be provided throughout semester and will also be posted on Blackboard or Google Drive.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Desktop or laptop with up-to-date version of Zoom required for all students.

Netiquette Guidelines

- As this is a solely online course, please use your computer or laptop to sign in to Zoom (rather than a phone). This will usually help with most technical difficulties with connectivity.
- If you do run into any technical issues, please contact: USC ITS <http://itservices.usc.edu>
- Students are required to have their cameras on at all times. If there is any reason that a student is unable to have their camera on, please consult with your instructor before the start of classes.
- Please stay muted until you are speaking unless otherwise instructed. This helps with alleviating any overlapping issues.
- It is important to stay engaged. Please refrain from getting up and moving around during class. We will take regular breaks to assist with this.
- Use the chat box regularly during class to communicate with your instructor and your peers. Remember to be respectful at all times.

- Eating and drinking during class is permitted. Please do not abuse this privilege.
- All class sessions will be recorded.
- Slack will be used as a collaborative space for students in the class. If you'd like to contact your instructor, please do so by email.

Required Reading

Secrets of Screen Acting, by Patrick Tucker
 Published by Routledge
 ISBN 978-1138793408

Suggested Reading:

For further reading, consider the following texts to enhance your on-camera technique.

Auditioning On Camera: An Actor's Guide, by Joseph Hacker
 Published by Routledge
 ISBN 978-0415619028

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- **PARTICIPATION (10%):** Your engagement is essential to the learning process. Attendance is requisite to understanding the material, but contribution to class discussions and feedback will broaden the course experience.
- **CLASS EXERCISES (15%):** Individual and group exercises will be given throughout the semester. For each unit(s), you will be told which exercises will contribute to this element of your grade.
- **MONOLOGUE SELF-TAPE (10%):** Students will self-tape a monologue from a play or screenplay at the beginning of the semester.
- **WEEKLY SELF-TAPE AUDITIONS (20%):** Students will be given weekly auditions with specific guidelines to self-tape and deliver before the next class. No late self-tapes accepted.
- **MIDTERM (15%):** Cold reading and in-class written exam on topics covered thus far.
- **AUDITION JOURNAL (15%):** Students will record their thoughts, experiences, and evaluations on their weekly self-tape auditions. Due at the end of the semester.
- **CHARACTER PORTFOLIO (15%):** Details on this assignment will be given within the first two weeks of the semester. Due at the end of the semester.
- **FINAL (20%):** Cold reading and assigned self-tape audition. Sides for self-tape audition will be given the week prior. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Final Examination will take place according to the USC Final Examination Schedule.

Grading Breakdown

Final course grade is determined by the average of all four assignments/examinations, as well as in-class exercises and participation. See grading scale below for more info.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
Participation	10%
Class Exercises	10%
Monologue Self-Tape	10%
Weekly Self-Tape Auditions	15%
Midterm	15%
Audition Journal	10%
Character Portfolio	15%
Final	15%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale

“Excellent” indicates that the student couples clear understanding of the class material with original and creative insight. “Good” means that the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the material. “Average” indicates that the student demonstrates a general understanding of the material but with some gaps. “Poor” indicates that there are identifiable gaps in the student’s understanding of the material. “Failure” is the result of the student not having completed his or her assignments coupled with poor understanding of the material. Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Excellent: A (4) = 100-94; A- (3.7) = 93-90

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 (.7-1.7) = 60s; F (0) = 59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

No late work will be accepted. If illness or emergency interferes with the completion of assignments, contact Mr. Montgomery at least 24 hours before the due date.

Grading Timeline

Grading and feedback to be given within 48-72 hours after hand-in date.

Additional Grading Criteria

When the average 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 good but will be weighted toward the negative end of the scale for those with poor attendance and participation.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 1	Introduction to Course Brief History of Acting Stage vs. Screen Evolution of Screen Acting	Review Syllabus Exercise: Research Screenplay & Sides Assignment: Acting Scene Clip & Reflection Assignment: Self-Tape Monologue Assignment: Read Selected Chapters
Week 2	A Screen Actor’s Vocabulary Utilizing Stage Craft Developing a Toolbox Different screens The frame	Exercise: Share Scene Clips & Reflections Exercise: Review Selected Monologues Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book
Week 3	Journey of the Character Following the Arc The camera	Exercise: Vocabulary Quiz Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Exercise: Review & Close Study of Film Scene Assignment: Begin Character Portfolios Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 4	Rehearsal Techniques Physicality of Character Action & Behavior Use of Mise-En-Scene Reactions & Business	Exercise: Establishing Strong Rehearsal Habits Exercise: Behavior Study Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Assignment: Self-Tape Behavior Exercise Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book
Week 5	Exploring Dialogue Finding the Hints In the Words Fact vs. Choice Sound and Vocal Levels	Exercise: Playing With Dialogue Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Assignment: Character Study Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book
Week 6	MIDTERM OPEN BOOK & WRITTEN EXAM ON TOPICS COVERED THUS FAR IN CLASS & COLD READING AUDITION (REHEARSAL TIME ALLOWED)	Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book
Week 7	Auditioning for the Camera Cold Reading Making Bold Choices Typecasting	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Exercise: In-Class Cold Reading Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book
Week 8	Commercial Auditioning Finding the Character in the Product Selling Your Personality Auditions	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Exercise: In-Class Commercial Audition Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Read Selected Chapters Selected exercises from book Pair Up Scene Partners
Week 9	Performance Study Dissecting an Actor's Choices Subtleties in Performance Rehearsal & Technicals	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Exercise: Work With Scene Partner Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition Assignment: Research & Share Selected exercises from book
Week 10	Review Research & Share Assignment In-Class Rehearsal	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Exercise: Work With Scene Partner Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition
Week 11	Guest Lecturer TBA In-Class Rehearsal	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition

Week	Topic	In-class work & Assignments
Week 12	Taped Scenes Due Review Taped Scenes	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes Assignment: Weekly Self-Tape Audition
Week 13	Wrapping Up The Industry & Self Promotion	Exercise: Review Selected Self-Tapes
FINAL EXAM	ASSIGNED SELF-TAPE AUDITION & COLD READING	AUDITION JOURNALS & CHARACTER PORTFOLIOS DUE

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, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

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

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 and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call

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, 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. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

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

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

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 Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscса.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

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, 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

Non-emergency assistance or information.