

THTR 101 – Introduction to Acting - 62605D
Units: 4
Term: Fall 2021
Day/Time: Monday/Wednesday 8am – 9:50am
Location: MCC 109
Instructor: Christopher Shaw
Office: JEF- 211
Office Hours: By Appointment : email Shawchri@usc.edu
Contact Info: Shawchri@usc.edu
(323) 632-4894 (Cell – Text OK)

Course Description

The mission of this class is to awaken the imagination, emotion, intellect and creative spirit of the student as they apply to the dramatic arts, and more specifically to the demands, rigor and discipline required of the actor. It will serve as the beginning of the actor's journey in developing specific techniques to uncover the meaning and vision of the playwright, to discover the "who, why, where, when and how" of the characters in a play, and begin to apply a specific and disciplined approach to the required work of the actor. The class will also engage in the process of disciplined rehearsal techniques, the specifics of the actor's personal preparation "homework", and how to actively apply it in rehearsal and performance. The class will emphasize the necessity of learning the craft of acting, which requires a dedicated commitment to the training of concentration, imagination, voice, speech, and movement, as well as an intellectual rigor in dissecting text and uncovering subtext. Students will work on and present acting exercises and scenes and begin to practice a specific, repeatable, structured approach to applying the actor's craft. Theatre is a collaborative art form and we foster an inclusive learning environment that addresses integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Methods Used to Fulfill this Mission:

- Acting exercises and theatre games aimed at developing the actors instrument; imagination, concentration, spirit, intellect, body, breath & voice.
- Exploration of text work, rehearsal technique, and active application of the actor's preparation "homework".
- Maintaining a clean organized readable "prompt book/journal" throughout the course
- Examination of ten-minute plays and short one act plays applying the techniques examined in class
- In-class rehearsals and scene presentations

"Remember that you are learning a craft, that you are presenting work for constructive criticism, not looking for approval or disapproval. Therefore, I ask you not to sit in judgment of your fellow actors. In order to benefit from their work, identify with their problems. When they make technical errors, ask yourself how often you make the same ones, and, when you hear the teachers' corrective answers, apply them to yourself. When something is convincing and involves (engages) you as a spectator, ask yourself how it was achieved and how you could accomplish the same reality. Then you will be learning during the entire session rather than just waiting for your turn to perform." – Uta Hagen, A Challenge for the Actor © 1991, by Uta Hagen

Learning Objectives

An understanding of the core, fundamental techniques of the actor as artist through active engagement and the experiential application of techniques explored in class, and the development of professional work habits.

By the end of this course students should understand and be able to demonstrate facility with the following:

- . Analyze the text from the actor/character point of view (*What do I want? What do I want the other person to do? Etc.*) coupled with a focus of attention on the other actor(s) and the ability to incorporate this work actively into performance.
- . Execute strong intentions (objectives, actions) in scenes.
- . Utilize the rehearsal techniques practiced from “ Reahearsing in the Zone” of deliberate practice to support incorporation of independent actor homework choices
- . Creation and completion of the actor’s prompt book “score” and “actor’s homework” and clear demonstration of utilizing this tool through incorporation and active application of that work in the in-class rehearsals and scene work
- . Creation and utilization of a strong, detailed environment for the character.

Course Notes

- . In- Class Participation is 15% of grade. (See definition of participation in “Grading” on this syllabus)
- . Outside rehearsals are mandatory
- . If a scene is scheduled to work for an in – class rehearsal or presentation and is clearly under-rehearsed or under-prepared, you will be asked to sit down (pass on class work time slot) you will loose points for that assignment.
- . Scenes should be 100% off book, lines memorized by second “ pass” of scene in class , or you will be asked to sit down down (pass on class work time slot) you loose points for that assignment.
- . Use of cell phones in class will result in 5-point overall grade reduction for each incident – I will call you out in front of the entire class, so you have fair warning now. I use my phone timer to time working scenes, so you will see me utilizing my phone.

USC technology rental program

If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university’s equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester.

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

IT Services 213 -740 – 5555 or email consult@usc.edu

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

A Challenge for the Actor, Uta Hagen, (in USC Bookstore and Amazon)

THTR 101 Course Reader, Shaw (in USC Bookstore and Digital Version)

Mead style old school composition notebook for actors' prompt book and notes

Other Reading and supplementary materials:

Plays , Scenes , and various rubrics and guidelines/worksheets on Blackboard and provided as PDF.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- Acting exercises and in-class rehearsals and presentations of scenes are expected to be specifically examined and fully rehearsed & prepared , with written homework component reflected in prompt book and incorporated into the work in the presentation. A clear demonstration of your understanding and application of what was learned in the experience of observing the class work of others is expected to be reflected in your own class work and presentations – this is a large factor in all grading assessments. You will learn by watching others work and being mentally present in class and then applying what you learn to your own work and reflect that in class presentations. You will learn as much by observing and sharing your understanding of other's class work as you will learn by "doing" and presenting.
- In class participation is 15% of overall grade, (See definition of participation in "Grading" on this syllabus)
- Credit will be given for any in-class exercise performed on or before the scheduled deadline, and in a manner that reflects thoroughness of preparation. This includes the utilization of props, costumes, and confident memorization of text.
- If a student is concerned about their grade or progress in class, they should make an appointment to discuss this with the professor. Midterm grades will reflect only a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" score.

Grading Breakdown

Absences/Tardiness:

Learning in class depends on the layering of intellectual and emotional discovery resulting from the consistent active exploration of **100%** of the Ensemble **No absences or tardies are allowed. Cumulative active class participation points will be lost.** *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guideline*

Grading Policy:

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

Grading Policy: (continued)

Grades are dictated by

- Participation, preparation, attendance
- Constructive feedback of classmates' acting presentations
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor and students on one's own scenes, presentations, and exercises
- Meeting all assignment deadlines: reading, writing, acting, scene and exercise presentations
- Maintaining a clean organized readable "prompt book" throughout the course handed in at end of course for grading, adhering specifically to guidelines provided
- Application and understanding of methods being explored in class and in reading, to scene work and exercises
- Clear demonstration of the proposed method taught in class of "deliberate practice" in preparation and presentation of scenes and acting exercise and precise memorization of lines
- Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse scenes

Note: *If a deadline is missed because of a classmate/ project partner's unavailability, the available partner/s will not be penalized. If problems arise, a discussion with the professor with all involved must be arranged before the day of the scheduled scene or everyone will be held equally accountable. BEFORE ANY SCENE MAY BE REHEARSED ON ITS FEET IN CLASS, THERE MUST BE A MINIMUM OF 2 HOURS OF OUTSIDE REHEARSAL. LINES MUST BE ACCURATELY MEMORIZED BY SECOND "ON FEET" IN-CLASS REHEARSAL (the first read in chairs not included here as an in-class rehearsal)*

Assessment of "Participation" *15% of the final grade is earned through class participation. This will be defined as:*

- *Students are required to be present and on time for all classes and scheduled sessions unless they are genuinely too ill to attend or affected by unavoidable personal or external circumstances. If the student has more than 2 absences or late arrivals during the course they will not be able to fulfill their ability to fully participate in class. Additionally, students must keep the teacher informed of any absence or late arrival IN ADVANCE. Failure to do so also constitutes a lack of participation and points will be deducted.*
- *Appropriate rehearsal clothing and props for ALL EXERCISES AND IN CLASS REHEARSALS.*
- *Openness to new methods of working and eagerness to attempt them.*
- *Constructive feedback on classmates' acting presentations.*
- *Energized support of all classmates' work.*
- *Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of professor and fellow students on one's own work.*
- *Meeting all assignment deadlines.*
- *Memorization of assigned material.*
- *Availability to fellow classmates to rehearse outside class.*

Grades

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Family Member Monologue / Stranger Monologue (@ 5 points each)	10	10
Destination Exercise	10	10
In - Class Rehearsal Scene #1 (applying "Zone" rehearsal technique)	10	10
MID- TERM Scene Presentation (Final presentation of Scene #1)	15	15
In - Class Rehearsal Scene #2 (applying "Zone" rehearsal technique)	10	10
Final (Final presentation of Scene #2)	20	20
Completed prompt book / actor homework	10	10
Cumulative Active Class Participation / Contribution	15	15
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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

For all assignments points will be determined as follows:

100% - Excellent: clear understanding of the class material is coupled with original and creative insight and confident preparation

85% - Good: class material has been understood clearly and performed competently

75% - Average: class material has been generally understood, but gaps in understanding and performance remain

50% - Poor: there are identifiable gaps in the understanding of class material, as well as deficiencies in basic requirements such as memorization, blocking, etc.

0% - Unacceptable: work was not completed on time, with no communication with professor or student partners

Assignment Rubrics

Available on blackboard where applicable

Grading Timeline

Per class schedule / at time of presentation of various graded assignments. If a student is concerned about their grade or progress in class, they should make an appointment to discuss this with the professor. Midterm grades will reflect only a "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" score.

Additional Policies

- No food or eating is allowed in class at any time.
- Please use restroom before class and during break, **do not interrupt the flow of class with leaving the studio** unless for an emergency
- If you are outside of studio while class is in session for any reason **wait** until the work is finished to re-enter the studio.
- There is absolutely no technology allowed during class except the device you are using to attend class. No cellphones, no computers. no texting , no social media – TURN THEM OFF AND PUT THEM AWAY
- Use of cell phones in class will result in 5-point overall grade reduction for each incident – I will call you out in front of the entire class - so you have fair warning now.
- Students must be in proper rehearsal clothes at the start of class if presenting a scene.
- Please refrain from distracting unfocused unprofessional behavior during class – you are expected to practice the focused respectful behavior displayed in the professional world and in keeping with the mature professional culture of SDA. Behave as an observing participant the way you would want the class to behave when you are on the screen working.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown. NOTE: Since this is a live studio style class where we work on the craft live during class time this schedule is always subject to change

ALL SCHOOL EVENT :

EDI @SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training
Wednesday, September 15, 2021

As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, some workshops will be offered to faculty and staff and to students. Competencies that will be included: Anti-Racism (Faculty/Staff) and Equity Mindedness (Faculty/Staff), and then Theater Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent (Students, Faculty/Staff). More details will follow. **NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.**

Week 1: 8/23 - 8/25

- Discuss student expectations , Review Syllabus
- Discuss course goals, requirements, deadlines, required texts
- Open Gesture, warm up, cross threshold, Name Game
- Physical Work in space " connectivity , listening"
- Short Film "*The Origins of Acting and The Method*"
- **Weekend Homework:** Reading: "A Challenge for the Actor" Uta Hagen, Prologue pg. xii through "Part One: The Actor " pg. 3 - 50
- **Weekend Homework:** Family Member Character Portrait Monologue (See PDF on Blackboard)

Week 2: 8/30 - 9/1

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
 - Brief in class discussion of weekend reading
 - Physical Work in space “ connectivity , llistening” / Body Centers
 - **In Class Workshop:** Family Member Character Portrait Monologue (See PDF on Blackboard)
 - **PRESENT :** Family Member Monologue Presentation
 - **Weekend Homework:** Create and Rehearse Stranger Monologue (See PDF on Blackboard)
- Weekend Reading:** Reading: “A Challenge for the Actor” Uta Hagen, “Part Two: The Human Techniques ” Pages 53 -128

Week 3: 9/8 (**No Class Monday 9/6 : Labor Day**)

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Discuss weekend reading
- **In Class Workshop:** Stranger Monologue Character Portrait (See PDF on Blackboard)
- **PRESENT:** Stranger Monologue Presentation
- **Weekend Homework:** Reading: Course Reader, *Uta Hagen’s Exercise #1 : Physical Destination , Through / Including “ Uta Hagen’s 9 Questions Worksheet”*

Week 4: 9/13 – (**No Class on Wednesday 9/15**)

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- **PRESENT:** Stranger Monologue Presentation
- Discuss weekend reading (course reader: Destination Exercise)
- Assign Destination exercise (*Answer Hagen’s 9 Questions as prep for Destination Exercise*)
- **Weekend Homework:** Course Reader : “Rehearsing in The Zone” , Prepare “Destination” exercise
- **Weekend Homework:** Prepare Destination Exercise

Week 5: 9/20 - 9/22

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- **PRESENT:** Destination exercise
- Discuss weekend reading
- In- Class workshop applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- Assign Neutral Scene
- Class work rehearsals on neutral scenes applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Homework:** Rehearse Neutral Scene using “Zone” method of rehearsal, answer Hagen’s 9 Questions

Week 6: 9/27 - 9/29

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Weekend Homework:** TBD

Week 7: 10/4 - 10/6

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Weekend Homework:** TBD

Week 8: 10/11 - 10/13

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Presentation of Neutral Scenes (**MID-TERM**)
- Class feedback and constructive criticism of mid-term presentation
- Assign Short Plays
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

---- Fall Break ----

Week 9: 10/18 - 10/20

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals short plays / read “in chairs”
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

Week 10: 10/25 - 10/27

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals on short play applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

Week 11: 11/1 - 11/3

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals on short play applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

Week 12: 11/8 - 11/10

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals on short play applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

Week 13: 11/15 - 11/17

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals on short play applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

Week 14: 11/22 - 11/24

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals on short play applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Homework:** Work on Actor Prompt Book PDF / Rehearse short play

Week 15: 11/29 - 12/1

- Warm-up, theatre games, acting exercises
- Class work rehearsals applying *Rehearsing in the Zone* methods.
- **Presentation of Short Plays (FINAL)**

FINAL DAY OF CLASS: Wednesday Dec 1

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday Dec 8 , 8 – 10 am

The Final is dictated by the creative process of the class so specifics will be discussed later in the semester.

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

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.

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Health and Participation in Class

You are expected to complete your Trojan Check screener daily and, as your instructor, I may ask you to show your daily screening in class. Your health and safety, and the health and safety of your peers, are my top priorities. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you discover that you have been in close contact with others who have symptoms or who have tested positive, you must follow the instructions on Trojan Check. My hope is that if you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you will stay home to protect others. I will ensure that you can continue to participate in class remotely so that your education is not disrupted.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, USC requires that face coverings (masks) be worn indoors including in classrooms. Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth and be worn throughout the class session. A mask with a valve is not considered an adequate face covering and should not be used, as it can expel exhaled air, increasing the risk to others. Eating or drinking during class is prohibited because of the risk posed by removing your mask for these activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in your being asked to leave the classroom immediately. Requests for accommodations related to the face covering and eating/drinking policies should be directed to the Office for Student Accessibility Services (<https://osas.usc.edu/>).

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form:

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

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 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.

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 Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776

<https://osas.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

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.