

THTR 101 Introduction to Acting
Section 62607R
Units: 4
Fall 2021
Mondays/Wednesdays, 8-950am
Location: MCC 107

Instructor: Zachary Steel
Office: JEF 208
Office Hours: by appointment
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Course Description

This is a foundational course on acting. We will follow a practical approach to the work, through exercises and performance, exploring what it means to be present, emotionally available, and deeply committed to imaginary circumstances. We begin with an examination of our physical and emotional expressiveness and how to bring our full selves to performance. Various acting techniques and theories will be implemented to get to the heart of what it is to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances. Text analysis is introduced and we explore how words and language serve us as actors. We will learn how to be active listeners and empathetic scene partners, both as performers and as collaborators, to accept not only ourselves, but the thoughts and minds of others. Acting is a collaborative art form and requires an open mind, open to the uniquenesses of others and the spirit of experimentation. There is no one way to crack this nut. We will come at it from different angles to discover what works for each individual. This work will always benefit from a beginner's mind, from a focus on process over result, experience over product.

Learning Objectives

- To utilize acting techniques in exercises and performance assignments
- To analyze dramatic text using techniques learned in class
- To develop successful work habits in collaboration with classmates
- To analyze performance through the lens of the work done in class

Prerequisite(s): N/A

Co-Requisite(s): N/A

Concurrent Enrollment: N/A

Recommended Preparation: N/A

Course Notes

- You are required to come to every class. Due to the collaborative and experiential nature of this work, the quality of your educational experience depends on your physical presence.
- Please be prepared to take notes.
- You are required to meet up in groups/pairs outside of class for rehearsals. Please make yourself available for your scene partners.
- The student ensemble will create a group text/chat to facilitate inter-student communication throughout the semester.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

- Letters to a Young Artist by Anna Deavere Smith
- PDFs of other selected readings will be posted to Blackboard, which students are expected to read and retain for discussion.

Required Viewings

- You are required to attend a School of Dramatic Arts performance, write a reflection on it and how it relates to our class work.

Suggested Readings

- *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* by Marina Calderone & Maggie Lloyd Williams (HIGHLY recommend book or smartphone app for this course)
- *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods, Vol. 1 & 2* by Richard Brestoff
- *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches* by Sharrell D. Lockett with Tia Shaffer *The Art of Acting* by Stella Adler
- *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen
- *A Korean Approach to Actor Training* by Jeungsook Yoo

Description and Assessment of Assignments

- **In-Class Activities** – You are expected to participate in all class activities. You will not be graded on the end result or your level of “talent,” but on your collaborative spirit and your level of commitment.
- **Discussion** – Throughout the semester, we will hold discussions on homework, readings, and in-class activities. You will be graded on your level of participation in these discussions
- **Choral Project** – In small groups assigned by the professor, we will create original pieces of theatre from assigned text. You will be graded on your participation in outside rehearsals and in the class showings.
- **Performance Response** - You are required to attend a School of Dramatic Arts performance, write a reflection on it and how it relates to our class work.
- **Open Scene** - Work will be in pairs assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of each open scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory. Written Component of the Open Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.
- **Contemporary Scene** - Work will be in pairs or groups as assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. A final presentation of each contemporary scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory. Written Component of the Contemporary Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
In-Class Activities	100	20
Discussion	100	5
Choral Project	100	15
Performance Response	100	10
Open Scene	100	15
Open Scene Written Component	100	10
Contemporary Scene	100	15
Contemporary Scene Written Component	100	10

Grading Scale (Example)

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

Assignment Submission Policy

Written Assignments should be posted on Blackboard as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time. You will be penalized for lateness.

Grading Timeline

Grades will generally be posted within a week of submission.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment

USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course evaluation

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. You should expect to receive an email update once the system has launched to

provide your feedback on this course. In addition, you are always welcome to connect with with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

Additional Policies

- Learning in class depends on the presence and participation of each individual student at a high commitment level. Points may be deducted for missed in-class work, in the event of absence or tardiness. In the event of an absence, you are responsible for the content of any missed class time. You must be ready to work at the start of each class.
- Please wear clothing in which you can move freely and comfortably. Your clothing and shoes should not inhibit you in any way. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged. Acting can get messy, plan accordingly.
- Please reserve break-time activities for before and after class. Depending on the day's flow, we may or may not take an official break in the hour and fifty minutes of class — you should be prepared to stay active in the class, both as performer and audience.
- Please don't eat in class unless absolutely necessary and please never chew gum.
- If you are required to quarantine, we will come up with a solution so your educational experience will continue until you return to class.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

This schedule is subject to change based on the flow and needs of the class.

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.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 8/23, 8/25	Monday: Introductions Syllabus Review Wednesday: Personal Readings	Due Wednesday: Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and you have an emotional connection to. This may be a poem, a passage from a book or script, song lyrics, a letter, etc. It should not be something you wrote. Reading from a hard copy, NOT a screen, is preferred.	
Week 2 8/30, 9/1	Monday: Personal Readings Cont'd Wednesday: Introductory Theatre Exercises Reading Discussion	Due Wednesday: Read "Basics" and "Relationships" from Letters to a Young Artist and be ready to discuss.	
Week 3 9/8	No Class Monday: Labor Day Wednesday: Introductory Theatre Exercises Reading Discussion	Due Wednesday: Read "Work," "Matters of the Mind," and "Matters of the Heart" from Letters to a Young Artist and be ready to discuss.	

Week 4 9/13	Monday: Introduce Choral Work, Ensemble Work No Class Wednesday: Professional Dev.		
Week 5 9/20, 9/22	Monday: Choral Work Wednesday: Choral Work Reading Discussion	Due Wednesday: "Keeping the Faith," "Art and Society," and "The Death of Cool" from Letters to a Young Artist.	
Week 6 9/27, 9/29	Monday: Choral Work Wednesday: Choral Work		
Week 7 10/4, 10/6	Monday: CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION Introduction to Open Scenes Wednesday: Listening and Reacting		
Week 8 10/11, 10/13	Monday & Wednesday: Open Scene Work	By Monday: Open Scene Rehearsal	Due Friday 10/15 @ 4pm: Open Scene Work Written Component
Week 9 10/18, 10/20	Monday & Wednesday: Open Scene Work	By Monday: Open Scene Rehearsal	
Week 10 10/25, 10/27	Monday & Wednesday: Open Scene Work	By Monday: Open Scene Rehearsal	
Week 11 11/1, 11/3	Monday: OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION Wednesday: Introduce Contemporary Scene Work	By Monday: Open Scene Rehearsal	
Week 12 11/8, 11/10	Monday & Wednesday: Contemporary Scene Work	By Monday: Contemporary Scene Rehearsal	DUE Friday 11/12 @ 4pm: Contemporary Scene Work Written Component
Week 13 11/15, 11/17	Monday & Wednesday: Contemporary Scene Work	By Monday: Contemporary Scene Rehearsal	
Week 14 11/22	Monday: Contemporary Scene Work No Class Wednesday: Thanksgiving	By Monday: Contemporary Scene Rehearsal	Due 11/21 @ 11:59pm: Performance Report
Week 15 11/29, 12/1	Monday: Contemporary Scene Work Wednesday: Contemporary Scene Work	By Monday: Contemporary Scene Rehearsal	
FINAL 12/8: 8-10am	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION		FINAL: 12/8 – 8-10AM

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 GFS 120 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) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (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.

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.