

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 101: Introduction to Acting
4 Units
Fall 2021— Tuesdays & Thursdays — 8-10am
Location: MCC 112

Instructor: Kirstin Q. Eggers (she/her)
Email: kqeggers@usc.edu
Office Hours: By appointment — schedule via email
Zoom Office: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/kirstin.sda>

Course Description

*"Imagination is more important than knowledge.
For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces
the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." — Albert Einstein*

This course lays the foundation for studying the discipline and art of acting, and will explore and apply these concepts through classroom exercises and performances. Students will begin to examine the actor's role in storytelling, including connecting the specifics of text analysis to the emotional and physical portrayal of a role, study concepts of acting theory, as put forth by prominent acting teachers and actors, strive to be present and mindful, consider both their own and others' uniqueness, explore their own innate ability to imagine deeply and fully engage in play, respect their body as an instrument and build its physical and vocal abilities, including mind-body connection, adhere to the required discipline — being on time, rehearsing outside of class, and staying strong and healthy, live in a Process over Result mindset, and think of every exercise as an experiment, with the intent of exploration and discovery, think analytically and respectfully in response to others' work, and reinforce a spirit of generosity, curiosity, compassion, and courage as we work to build an ensemble.

Learning Objectives

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

1. Practice basic acting skills such as focus, concentration, relaxation, imagination, play, vocal/physical/mental presence
2. Apply successful ensemble/partnership techniques
3. Relate observed acting techniques to their own work
4. Research and interpret text as it relates to acting and storytelling choices
5. Deconstruct a script to make active, specific, physical choices
6. Integrate established acting theory and rehearsal techniques into their own work

Course Notes

Classes must be attended live and in-person (medical status withstanding), due to the collaborative, experiential, and performative nature of acting.

You are also expected to rehearse with your fellow actors outside of class, as part of the collaborative nature of theatre. We will discuss your outside rehearsals in class. Both in-class and outside scenework/rehearsal usually require notes to be taken — please be prepared.

Communication

Please email me at kqeggers@usc.edu any time with questions or concerns. Emails will generally be returned within 48 hours on weekdays. I can also meet with you via my Zoom personal meeting room, or at an on-campus location as schedules allow.

I also ask that the class as a whole have a communication group, platform of your choice, so you can easily get in touch with each other.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Blackboard will be updated regularly with announcements, readings, etc. Please check often. Blackboard help for students is at studentblackboardhelp.usc.edu.

You will occasionally need to print scripts — please be prepared with printing capability.

Required Reading

Books are available through the USC Bookstore (www.uscbookstore.com/textbooks) or wherever you like to buy books.

- *Letters to a Young Artist* by Anna Deavere Smith
- *Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus* by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd Williams (book OR smartphone app is acceptable)
- PDFs of other selected readings will be posted to Blackboard, which students are expected to read and retain for discussion.

Required Viewing

You are required to attend a School of Dramatic Arts performance OR watch a full-length play (curated list to come) on Digital Theatre+, and write a response.

Supplemental Reading

- *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods, Vol. 1 & 2* by Richard Brestoff
- *Acting: The First Six Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky
- *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

Supplemental Viewing/Watching/Listening

- Additional School of Dramatic Arts performances
- Live theatre, both in person and online — what is happening in the world of theatre right now?
- High quality recorded theatre — Digital Theatre+ and Broadway HD are both excellent resources

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Below is a general overview of the assignments. A detailed assignment description will be posted on Blackboard with ample time for each assignment.

In-Class Activities — *"Art resides in the quality of doing; process is not magic."* — Charles Eames
"Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment." — Mahatma Gandhi

This is an experience-based course, and you are expected to participate and commit with a generous heart, an open mind and a devoted work ethic. You are not graded on 'talent' in this class, you are graded on your Quality of Doing — there is no progress without the effort.

Discussion — You are expected to participate thoughtfully, respectfully and fully in discussions about readings, viewings, rehearsals, and other topics as they arise. Taking notes on and/or highlighting readings is strongly suggested so you can refer back easily. I do not require a written journal in this class, but I will ask you to relay your outside work orally, so a written journal is encouraged, for your own growth.

Personal Reading — Refer to Week One of Course Schedule.

Devised Choral Work — Work will be in small groups as 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 choral work will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory.

Performance Response — You will write a response to an SDA production OR a Digital Theatre+ production (from a curated list). A list of the Fall season of shows is at the end of this syllabus. Digital Theatre+ is available at libraries.usc.edu/databases/digital-theatre-plus. Consider seeing multiple productions before deciding the focus of your response. Detailed instructions and prompts for response will be posted on Blackboard with ample time.

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	% of Grade
In-class activities (presence, focus, attitude, willingness, ensemble support)	26
Discussion of Readings, Plays, Rehearsals	5
Personal Reading	5
Choral Work and Presentation	14
Performance Response	5
Open Scene Classwork	10
Open Scene Presentation	15
Open Scene Written Component	5
Contemporary Scene Presentation (Final)	10
Contemporary Scene Written Component (inc. Final Reflection)	5
TOTAL	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A = 95-100 pts B+ = 87-89 pts C+ = 77-79 pts D+ = 67-69 pts F = 59 or below
 A- = 90-94 pts B = 83-86 pts C = 73-76 pts D = 63-66 pts
 B- = 80-82 pts C- = 70-72 pts D- = 60-62 pts

Assignment Submission Policy

Written assignments should be posted on Blackboard as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time, and should be formatted for clarity and readability. Late assignments will not be awarded full points. Do not send links to Google Docs.

Rehearsal and Performance Assignments are presented in class. Associated notes do not need to be submitted, although you will refer to your work and must be prepared.

Grades will generally be posted to Blackboard within a week. If you fail to turn in an assignment, it will show on Blackboard Grade Center – I cannot follow up with you to ask about missing assignments.

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).

What happens in class, stays in class!

Learning Experience Evaluation

Learning Experience 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.

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>

SDA Productions, ISPs, and Extra-Curricular Commitments

SDA productions, ISPs and extracurricular activities* do 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.*

Attendance

Class attendance and enthusiastic participation is the most important part of your success in this class. Your attendance and punctuality is crucial for building an ensemble, understanding the material, and respecting your fellow actor and the work itself. 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.

Do not be late. You must be present and ready to work at the start of each class. Give yourself extra time to complete TrojanCheck to ensure an early arrival.

However, your health and the health of our community eclipses all! If your Covid-19 status precludes you from attending class in-person, I will attempt to conduct class as hybrid, and request you attend class LIVE (via Zoom) instead of watching a recording.

Please take to heart:

"We have been sitting here waiting, our nerves on edge, angry and 'it seems I am a little late.' We all came here full of enthusiasm for the work waiting to be done, and now, thanks to you, that mood has been destroyed. To arouse a desire to create is difficult; to kill a desire is extremely easy. If I interfere with my own work, it is my own affair, but what right have I to hold up the work of the whole group? The actor, no less than the soldier, must be subject to iron discipline." — Constantine Stanislavski in *An Actor Prepares*

There is no better place to learn discipline, and its rewards, than in acting class, where others depend on you to make their art.

Classroom Norms

Devices — Cell phones and other electronic devices should be left on silent in your backpack/bag, away from your work in class. This is to encourage your focus, mindfulness, and respect to your peers.

Attire — Acting is physical and can get sweaty — dress accordingly. Your clothing and shoes should allow you to move freely and comfortably. Shoes should be closed-toed and stay on your feet — no flip-flops. We may at times work barefoot. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged.

Eating — Food and drink is not permitted during any class. Absolutely no gum.

Break — We may take a "mask break" outside at the halfway point of class, depending on the day's flow. Other than that, please be prepared to stay in the room and active as both performer and audience member. In the event of an emergency for which you must leave the room, observe theatre rules of being discrete and respectful to your fellow actors.

Strike — You are expected to restore the classroom to neutral at the end of each class.

Health and Participation in Class

Students must complete the Trojan Check screener daily and you may be asked to show your daily screening in class. The health and safety of everyone in class is the top priority. 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. If you are feeling ill or if you have been exposed to someone with the virus, you must 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. 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/>).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Please note: due to the fluid and creative nature of this course, weekly structure will change to accommodate the needs of individuals and the ensemble. You are asked to remain flexible, and you will be informed of any changes as much as possible.

Every class will begin with group work, exploring foundations of voice, physicality, relaxation, concentration, imagination, focus, storytelling, playfulness, and ensemble-building.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
1	Tue Aug 24	Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review. Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.		DUE THURSDAY: Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way. This may be a poem, a passage from a book or script, song lyrics, etc. It should not be something you wrote. Please read from a hard copy , NOT a screen. AND Read "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen. Posted on Blackboard.
	Thu Aug 26	Present personal readings. Ensemble, focus, storytelling work.	Personal readings. Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way. Discuss "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen.	FOR TUESDAY: Read "Basics" and "Relationships" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.
2	Tue Aug 31	Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.	Discuss "Basics" and "Relationships" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .	
	Thu Sep 2	Group movement and voice work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.		FOR TUESDAY: Read "Work," "Matters of the Mind," and "Matters of the Heart" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.
3	Tue Sep 7	Imagination work. Personal readings, continued.	Discuss "Work," "Matters of the Mind," and "Matters of the Heart" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .	
	Thu Sep 9	Ensemble work. Book discussion. Personal readings, continued.		FOR TUESDAY: Read "Keeping the Faith," "Art and Society," and "The Death of Cool" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
4	Tue Sep 14	Ensemble work. Personal readings, continued.	Discuss "Keeping the Faith," "Art and Society," and "The Death of Cool" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .	
	Wed Sept 15	EDI @ SDA: Professional Development/Mandatory EDI Training Wednesday, September 15, 2021 As part of our EDI initiatives and call to action, workshops will be offered to faculty, staff, and students. More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort.		
	Thu Sep 16	Introduce choral work.		Choral work rehearsal. FOR TUESDAY: Read Thespis section from <i>The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods</i> PDF for discussion. Posted on Blackboard.
5	Tue Sep 21	Choral work.	Discuss Thespis section from <i>The Great Acting Teachers & Their Methods</i> .	Choral work rehearsal.
	Thu Sep 23	Choral Work.		Choral work rehearsal.
6	Tue Sep 28	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
	Thu Sep 30	Choral work.		DUE NOVEMBER 23: Performance Response, posted to Blackboard before class. Season of Plays begins this weekend. Choral work rehearsal.
7	Tue Oct 5	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal/prep.
	Thu Oct 7	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION. Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Begin open scene work.	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION.	DUE TUESDAY: Read Rehearsal/Actions compilation PDF, posted on Blackboard. Open scene work/rehearsal/prep. Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
8	Tue Oct 12	Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.	Discuss Rehearsal/Actions compilation PDF.	Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
	Thu Oct 14	FALL RECESS — NO CLASS		
9	Tue Oct 19 & Thu Oct 21	Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
10	Tue Oct 26 & Thu Oct 28	Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
11	Tue Nov 2 & Thu Nov 4	Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
12	Tue Nov 9	Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Thu Nov 11	Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
13	Tue Nov 16	Open scene work.		Open scene final rehearsal.
	Thu Nov 18	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION Introduce contemporary scene work.	OPEN SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due with presentation.	Last chance to see an SDA Play or Digital Theatre+ production. Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
14	Tue Nov 23	Contemporary scene work. Discuss plays.	Performance Response, posted to Blackboard before class.	Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Thu Nov 25	THANKSGIVING BREAK — NO CLASS		
15	Tue Nov 30	Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Thu Dec 2	Learning Experience Evaluations. Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
Final	TUESDAY DECEMBER 14 — 4:30- 6:30pm	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION.	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due — specifics given in class. Final self-reflection format TBD.	Happy Winter Break!

Statement on 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 Needing Accessibility Services

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX), osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Statement on Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency or 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, emergency.usc.edu.

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 & 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 equity.usc.edu

Title IX – 213-821-8298 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.

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 / Dept. of Public Safety

Emergency: 213-740-4321 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency: 213-740-6000 – 24/7 on-call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime.

USC SDA Season of Plays Fall 2021

More information at <http://dramaticarts.usc.edu/on-stage/>

Sept 30-Oct 3 in McClintock Theatre

The Wolves by Sarah DeLappe

Oct 7-10 in Scenedock Theatre

The Normal Heart by Larry Kramer

Oct 7-10 in Bing Theatre

Body of Faith by Luis Alfaro

Oct 28-Nov 1 in PED 207

The Seagull by Anton Chekhov, translated by Sharon Carnicke

Oct 28-Nov 1 in McClintock Theatre

Spring Awakening book and lyrics by Steven Sater, music by Duncan Sheik, based on the book by Frank Wedekind

Nov 11-14 in Bing Theatre

Miss Julie: Freedom Summer by Stephen Sachs, from the play by August Strindberg

Nov 11-21 in Scenedock Theatre

Stupid Fucking Bird by Aaron Posner

Nov 18-21 in McClintock Theatre

Everybody by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins