

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Course ID: THTR 120aL
Title: Introduction to Acting
Term: Fall 2021
Day Tues/Thur
Time 1:00-2:50
Location: ZOOM/MCC 106

INSTRUCTOR: Kenneth Noel Mitchell
TITLE: Professor of Theatre Practice
Director of Music Theatre
Co-Head of Undergraduate Acting
OFFICE: DRC Building/ZOOM

OFFICE HRS: By appointment

CONTACT: knm@usc.edu
(727) 403-8316 (c)

Technical Difficulties: If you are experiencing difficulties with Zoom or Blackboard please go to: <https://keep-teaching.usc.edu/get-help/>

Kenneth Mitchell is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://usc.zoom.us/j/94191945946?pwd=Sm1jNjI5bGIYTHJWanFYaVWVbFhrdz09>

Meeting ID: 941 9194 5946

Passcode: iln2Lsxt41

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,94191945946# US (San Jose)

+12532158782,,94191945946# US (Tacoma)

Kenneth Noel Mitchell is a professor of theatre practice in musical theatre and director of musical theatre and co-head of undergraduate Acting at the USC

School of Dramatic Arts. Before that, he was the founding head of acting for the New Studio on Broadway and the associate chair at New York University. He served as the coordinator of acting at the University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater BFA Professional Theatre Training Program. An artist with disabilities, Mitchell is passionate about creating inclusive and equitable opportunities for all students. As a director, his work was represented in New York at the Home for the Contemporary Theater and Art, the Joseph Papp Public Theatre, Soho Rep, The American Globe Theatre, Musical Theatre Works, and The Sanford Meisner Theatre. Regionally, he has directed productions for The American Stage, Stage Works, Bristol Valley Theatre, White River Junction Theatre Festival, The Asolo Conservatory Theatre, The Eckerd Theatre Company, The Fredonia Opera House, the Guthrie Experience and the Provincetown Theater. As an actor, he has appeared at The New York Shakespeare Festival, The Atlantic Theatre, The Performing Garage, The American Globe Theatre, The Dramatist Guild, Bristol Valley Theatre, American Stage, the Greenbrier Valley Theater and Stageworks. Mitchell has served as the Artistic Director for American Stage and Theater Outrageous, and he was affiliated with the New Shakespeare Festival, Circle Rep, and Manhattan Theatre Club. He is a member of Actors Equity, the Actor Center and on the board of the National Alliance of Acting Teachers.

Course Description

This course will introduce foundational skills and healthy practices to cultivate the uniquely expressive instrument. Basic principles and techniques of acting will be explored through structured improvisation and creative projects.

Learning Objectives

To developed your unique, creative, expressive artistic instrument.

To identify and apply the skills needed to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances.

Assessment Based on Overall Growth

Course Outcomes:

I. You will acquire skills needed to play within an ensemble 15 pts

1. Measurement: Participation in class and outside of class
2. Measurement: Developing skills to work respectfully and collaboratively
3. Measurement: Giving constructive input by actively witnessing the work of others
4. Measurement tool: Collaboration skill during the creative project
5. Measurement tool: Faculty evaluation, Self-evaluation/Peer evaluation

II. You will have the ability to put the focus on the other 15 pts

1. Measurement: Ability to listen specifically
2. Measurement: Ability to be specific when identifying behavior
3. Measurement: Ability to receive and respond to what is being given to you
4. Measurement: Acknowledge and act on impulse
5. Measurement: Focus on an imaginary activity
6. Measurement: Allowing yourself to become emotionally available to the other
7. Measurement tool: Self evaluation
8. Measurement tool: Repetition in class and Repetition logs

III. You will begin to develop the skill to live privately in public 15 pts

1. Measurement: Creating Imaginary circumstances
2. Measurement: Investment in the imaginary circumstances
3. Measurement: Investment in a physical activity
4. Measurement: Building Imaginary environment
5. Measurement: Constructing an imaginary relationship
6. Measurement: Your ability to live truthfully under these circumstances
7. Measurement tool: Repetition and open scenes
8. Measurement tool: Ability to implement **adjustments** to deepen the investment into circumstance, objective, environment/atmosphere, relationship, moment before (preparation)
9. Measurement tool: Discussion and growth thru the observation of others

IV. To learn, remember and practice the basic principles of Professional Behavior 10 pts

1. Preparation

2. Classroom Etiquette
3. Respect for feedback
4. Reflection
5. Measurement: Enter the space prepared to work (dress, props, etc.)
6. Measurement: Focus
7. Measurement: Generosity of spirit/
8. Measurement: Receiving feedback
9. Measurement tool: Class contract and your ability to live up to commitment

V. Overall Growth 20 pts

1. Self and faculty evaluation written and oral

VI. Midterm 10 pts

VII. Final exam (creative group project) 15 pts

Total 100 pts.

Description of Grading Criteria

A 95 to 100 points - Each time the student works in class they exceed expectations.

A- 90 to 94 points - The work is usually exceptional.

B+ 85 to 89 points - The student work is very good on a consistent basis. The student has been able to demonstrate the ability to meet all the expectations with sufficient consistency. They are able to identify the skills being taught in class and the techniques being employed in the process in this class with little support. Student shows promise of great achievement over time.

B 80 to 84 - The student work is solidly within expectations. The student demonstrates the ability to utilize the skills being taught with regular support.

B-75 to 79 points - The student work is above average. The student requires regular support but their work remains within the required parameter. The student demonstrates the ability to use the skills being taught but with less confidence and frequency.

C+ 70 to 74 points- The student work has been above average on occasion but with less consistency average. The student requires regular and repeated support.

C 65-69 points- The student's work is average. They are demonstrating a limited understanding/engagement of the skills being taught. The student requires regular and repeated support. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress. The student demonstrates a lack of consistency.

C- 60 to 64 points - The student work is below average and is not meeting the expectations or criteria of the class. The student is not working with rigor and is not engaging the skills being taught with any consistency. Regular and repeated support may not be effectively advancing the student's progress. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D+ 55 to 59 points - The student work is poor. The student is not engaging in the process with any rigor or discipline. The work is far below the parameters of acceptable application. The student demonstrates little appetite the skills being taught. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D 50 to 54 points - The work is barely acceptable. The student has shown little to no progress during the course in any visible manner. The most of the homework assigned has not been turned in in a timely manner. The student is not engaged with the work, his classmates and/or the craft of acting.

F below 50 - A majority of the work is unacceptable.

Concurrent Enrollment: THTR 125

Recommended Preparation: The Artist Way

Assignment Submission Policy

Repetition is to be submitted for the previous week when you repeat in class.

Grading Timeline

Feed-back will be given in class.

Behavior within the Classroom, Online, and Rehearsal:

1. Please enter the space with a clear mind ready to warm-up. Conversation and fellowship are an essential part of our community, but there is a time and place for everything. This kind of communication is better left before or after class. Ten minutes before class time is considered warm-up time, so if you wish to socialize, please do so outside of the space.
2. It is the student's responsibility to manage his/her time: the time to fill water bottles or use the restrooms is during the break between classes. Each teacher will discuss specific policies about how to be excused to deal with personal issues.
3. It is your responsibility to stay focused and attentive at all times during class. Whether you are working, another student is working, or the teacher has the focus of the studio. Staying present can be hard online. If you are having issues remaining focused, please ask the Instructor for guidance.

4. You should know how and when to listen, demonstrating courtesy and generosity, which supports everyone's class learning.
5. You must learn to receive and apply adjustments graciously.
6. You will develop your time management skills and create a rigorous and sustainable rehearsal schedule outside of the appointed class time to affect growth and progression in skills taught.
7. You should demonstrate a positive attitude towards the work, as well as all classmates and instructors.
8. We strongly recommend during your freshman year that you focus on your classroom work. We ask that you avoid participating in performance opportunities outside of the classroom/course requirements. If there is an opportunity that you are considering, we ask that you consult with the core faculty.
9. All classroom/studio standards, including punctuality and respectful professional behavior, must be observed in rehearsals outside of the classroom. We encourage each of you to make bold, playful, and imaginative acting choices in your process and throughout your training. Your acting choices should guide and dictate only your performances and cannot stifle the other actor's rights to pursue his/her individual acting choices, even if they seem to be at odds with your own. These can be healthy differences and are best played out in full in the classroom where the faculty may assist and guide the work to its most fruitful end.

Required Attire for Acting Classes first year:

Loose-fitting all BLACK attire is required for acting class, with no jewelry, minimal make-up, and no hats.

Any students with long hair must have hair off the face, pulled back or up, and secured. All jewelry, including large/dangle earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and ornate rings should be removed before beginning class.

Attendance Policy:

We take you, your education and the professional training of artists in the theatre very seriously. There are limited contact hours in the classroom and you are attempting to master not one discipline, but three: acting, singing and dancing in an academically rigorous environment. Because all the disciplines require your active PARTICIPATION, you must make every moment in every class count.

Each school and professor will have its guidelines for attendance and participation outlined in either a handbook or syllabus which you will be required to adhere to.

Use of Electronic Devices and Social Media:

All cell phones must be on vibrate mode before entering the classroom. Professors may use electronic devices in teaching.

It is our policy that instructors are not permitted to engage in social networking with students. Students shall not request to add, follow, nor subscribe to any instructor's social media account, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and Snapchat accounts.

Out of respect for the primacy and privacy of the work in the classroom, we ask that you not discuss specific details of classwork or your training on social media and networking sites. In addition, recording excerpts or entire classes and events, and posting said recordings online is strictly prohibited.

Without knowing it or intending to, we can do harm to others with social media, and we can never control what others may do with the information once it is posted. Like Las Vegas, "What happens in Zoom, stays in Zoom!"

Within SDA, there is respect for all beliefs and worldviews. Each individual's beliefs about religion - both the choice to belong to organized religion and the decision not to believe in any religion or faith - are respected.

Identity and Intersectionality:

In the hopes of respecting everyone and celebrating all aspects of our humanity in our work, we want to acknowledge your sense of identity. At the beginning of the term, we will ask each student to share with the Musical Theatre Program leadership the following: your chosen gender identity and preferred gender pronouns. For example, He, Him, His, She, Her, Hers, They, Them, Theirs. (Please note that we are only offering the opportunity to share this information. It is not a requirement, but rather an opportunity.)

At this time, you may also declare any other information regarding culture, race, ethnicity, sexual preference, gender, binary, ability, or any other details regarding your self identification that you feel will help us teach you, assign material, and train you as an artist more effectively. We do not want to make assumptions. There are no wrong answers to any of these questions around identity, and you may choose not to answer them or share this information at all. This is the choice of each student, and whatever your preferences are, we will engage, celebrate, and support fully throughout your training.

Health:

Part of our responsibility, while you are training with us, is not only your development but your well-being and overall health and wellness: emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. All of these areas are a part of your work and your artistry. You will discover that being an actor means using the total self as the fodder from which the character is created. This applies to scenes in acting classes and productions and extends to song and dance work.

Personal Hygiene:

Due to the demands of this type of rigorous training, accepted standards of personal hygiene must be respected. Standards include wearing clean, laundered studio attire, using soap and deodorant, and avoiding the use of strong fragrances. We would like to remind

students that we are in the spirit of ensemble and are preparing you for the professional world.

Nutrition:

A well-trained actor is a poet, scholar, and athlete. As an athlete, your nutritional choices directly affect your performance. Please make informed choices about what you eat and drink. There is a Nutritionist on campus.

Sleep:

Lack of sufficient rest will soon catch up with you and will affect all of your work. Part of your education is learning time management.

Breath:

Our work in performance centers on breath and smoking and/or vaping handicaps this effort. If you'd like help with quitting, we can refer you to effective programs. It's your choice, of course, but we strongly urge you not to smoke and/or vape.

Stress:

Your university years will be among the most exhilarating of your life. They will also be stressful and not without moments of difficulty, which is normal. Mental stress is as real as physical stress. If you need help, please ask your student advisor for guidance.

For students who may need additional support due to personal circumstances (e.g., visible/invisible disabilities, mental health, etc.), we encourage you to connect with faculty if you feel that it may impact your training.

We encourage you to speak with your Instructor about any of these aspects in your life, and to the degree that you are comfortable, to help you through the sometimes challenges of actor training. In your training, you will be asked to fully explore, physically and emotionally, in a variety of ways that, for some students living with the differences mentioned above, may be challenging.

Because we are not doctors nor therapists, we defer to and depend upon the expertise of the USC Health and Wellness resources: <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling/>.

A great deal of the actor's work is drawn from life experience. We use aspects of our own lives to create the imagined life of the character we are playing, which is essential. These cautionary words from master acting teacher Mel Shapiro may put it best:

“The art of acting starts when the actor begins exploiting feelings, memories, dreams, and fantasies that he or she has experienced. Later, when the actor plays the character, there is a bridge between the real person's life and the life of the fictional one. The actor's life is an excellent tool for acting and can be creatively exploited. What's the point of having lived through all that we have if we can't put it into our work? (However) The only person who should derive pleasure from the pain is the actor. If you dip into areas of your experience that are painful to you, but you know you can use it in your work and really want to use, go carefully! You are the only one who knows what you can handle.”

These guidelines will maximize your success in the training. Each professor and school will have its own best practices, policies, and procedures for the learning environment in which you will adapt and adhere.

**** 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/>).

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

All SDA students are welcome to join an interactive community building experience that explores how we integrate core values of equity, diversity, and inclusion into our educational and artistic journey at SDA. Competencies that will be covered will include, but not limited to, Anti-Racism as Everyday Practice; Equity-Mindedness (w/colleagues from USC Race & Equity Center); and Theatrical Intimacy & Building Cultures of Consent. More details will follow. NOTE: All SDA classes will be cancelled to support involvement in this effort. We encourage all to participate.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

***Subject to Change**

For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of out of class student work per week over a semester.

****SUBJECT TO CHANGE
MEISNER TUTORIALS EVERY SUNDAY 3:15-5 PST – VOLUNTARY
Topic: SUNDAY TUTORIALS
Kenneth Mitchell is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://usc.zoom.us/j/92591701371?pwd=dXlvUmQ1aHV5WGJRd3FVUjh2OUVYQT09>

Meeting ID: 925 9170 1371
Passcode: 154231

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1-8/22 Tues	Orientation	Artist Way	

Thurs	Syllabus/Ensemble Building		
Week 2-8/29 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other Repetition/Focus on the Other	Artist Way Repeat 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log assigned	
Week 3 -9/5 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/independent Activity/Environment	Artist Way Repeat 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	Last week repetition log due
Week 4-9/12 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/Independent Activity/Environment/Partner and Door	Artist Way Repeat 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	Last week repetition log due
Week 5-9/14 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/Independent Activity/Environment/Partner and Door	Artist Way Repeat 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	Last week repetition log due
Week 6-9/19 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/Independent Activity/Environment/Partner and Door/imaginary Relationship	Artist Way Repeat 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	Last week repetition log due
Week 7-9/26 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/Independent Activity/Environment/Partner and Door/imaginary Relationship	Artist Way Repeat & Work with partner 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	Last week repetition log due
Week 8-10/3 Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/Independent Activity/Environment/Partner and Door/imaginary Relationship	Artist Way Repeat & Work with partner 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	Last week repetition log due
Week 9-10/10		Artist Way	Last week repetition log due

Tues Thurs	Repetition/Focus on the Other/Independent Activity/Environment/Partner and Door/imaginary Relationship FALL BREAK NO CLASS	Repeat & Work with partner 2 hrs. outside of class Repetition log	
Week 10 - 10/17 Tues Thurs	Relationship/Activity/Circumstance/ Focus on the Other	Artist Way Repeat & Work with partner/Build an Environment 3 hrs. outside of class Final Assigned	Last week repetition log due
Week 11- 10/24 Tues Thurs	Creative Project/AutoDrama Creative Project/AutoDrama	Final Work ASSIGNED Rehearsal Outside of class	Last week repetition log due
Week 12- 10/31 Tues Thurs	Creative Project/AutoDrama Creative Project/AutoDrama		Last week rehearsal log due
Week 13- 11/7 Tues Thurs	Creative Project/AutoDrama Creative Project/AutoDrama *YoungArts/Guest		Last week rehearsal log due
Week 14- 11/14 Tues Thurs	Creative Project/AutoDrama Creative Project/AutoDrama		Last week rehearsal log due
Week 15- 11/21 Tues Thurs	Creative Project/AutoDrama THANKSGIVING-NO CLASS		Last week rehearsal log due
Week 16- 11/28 Tues Thurs	Creative Project/AutoDrama Creative Project/AutoDrama		Last week rehearsal log due
FINAL 12/14 Tues	11-1		Date: For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC <i>Schedule of</i>

			Classes at classes.usc.edu .
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SDA PRODUCTIONS

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 (Video 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

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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: <http://bit.ly/sdasupport>

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/carereport

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.