

THTR 252a: Intermediate Acting

Section: 62811R

Units: 2.0

Fall 2021 / Mondays, Wednesdays / 11am-12:50pm

Location: PED 204

Instructor: RODNEY TO

Office:

Office Hours: *Hours available upon request*

Contact Info: rodneyto@usc.edu / (917) 445-1040 m.*

* If non-emergency, please text before calling.

Course Description

This course begins by reinforcing basic Acting philosophies and skills. We'll expand on those and develop an advanced, personal, reliable and sustainable technique that will become the foundation of the actor's creative process. Actors will explore a stronger personal connection to their work, therefore bringing a unique perspective to character and story to create strong, compelling performances.

Learning Objectives

By the end of your time with me, you should be able to:

- Read material for comprehension, character arc, motivations, etc.
- Broaden their awareness and knowledge of current playwrights to understand and (intelligently) discuss what informs their styles (ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic background, nationality, activism, etc.) and the characters and worlds they create.
- Gain a clear understanding of the character's point of view, which is the basis of character development.
- Execute advanced script analysis (given circumstances, world of the play, time, space, etc.) and create comprehensive, grounded characters based on the actor's discoveries.
- Understand and apply Hagen's philosophy that the 'actor must draw from their own life to find meaning in their character's' also referred to as *substitution*. Through this, the actor should be confident and fearless in approaching any character/role.
- Identify 'clues' in the script that support choices and actions.
- Be 'action-driven' in your work. *You are not acting if there is no action - Rodney.*
- Understand and infuse *stakes* in a scene and how *stakes* can elevate intention.
- Understand 'emotions are a by-product of action' and to not be 'results-oriented', but instead, 'action-oriented'.
- Identify personal strengths, weaknesses and habits in order to confidently create characters and performances that are unique and sustainable.
- Have a strong, confident understanding how technique translates across all acting mediums including television, film, and one's own content creation.
- Clearly and intelligently breakdown and discuss technique as it applies to their process, characterization and style.

Prerequisite: THTR101

Required Reading and Supplementary Materials/Plays to read (order subject to change):

- *Cats Talk Back* by Bess Wohl (handout)
- *Dog Sees God* by Bert V. Royal (handout)
- *Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them* by A.Rey Pamatmat (please purchase)
- *Gloria* by Branden Jacobs Jenkins (please purchase)
- 2 TBA plays (handouts)

Other coursework and supplemental, assigned reading materials will be conferred throughout the semester.

GRADING: Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Description and Assessment of Assignments

The semester schedule will, for the most part, follow this order:

- The first few weeks, we'll review technique to refresh and revitalize after being online for the last year and a half. We'll use monologues to get us back on our feet.
- We will work on each play in two week sections: the first week we'll read, review, and rehearse the play/scenes. The second week, we'll perform and receive notes.

Grading Criteria:

- Acting class should *never* be a talent competition. You will *not* be graded based on your "talent". You *will* be graded on your efforts in uncovering and fostering it.
- The quality of work for all components(see *Grading Breakdown*) is determined by the willingness & thoroughness of the effort, class contributions, comprehension, process, follow-through, rehearsal, and the imagination displayed.

Grading Scale:

- A work of excellent quality / A = 100-95, A- = 94-90
- B work of good quality / B+ = 89-87, B = 86-83, B- = 82-80
- C work of average quality / C+ = 79-77, C = 76-73, C- = 72-70
- D work of below average quality / D+ = 69-67, D = 66-63, D- = 62-60
- F work of poor, inadequate quality / F = 59 and below

Further Grading Notes:

- When the GPA falls between two grades, the final grade will be weighted toward the positive end of the scale for students with EXCELLENT in-class participation. Grades will be weighted towards the negative end of the scale for those with POOR in-class participation.
- I am available to discuss work and progress at anytime.

Grading Breakdown:

Monologue/Scenes & Scene work	40pts
Midterm scene	15pts
Self-tape	5pts
Final Scene Work & Scene	20pts
Weekly participation (discussions, contributions, etc.)*	15pts
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Total Points	100pts

*** Participation:** If it were up to me, I would base your entire grade on how you participate in class. Alas, I cannot. That said, I can't emphasize enough how

important participation is in this class and all aspects in the life of professional actor. You will (also) learn from your cohort - from sitting and watching, to contributing to discussions - in a much more nuanced and valuable way than any empirical grade can show. Engaging with and being available to your fellow actors/cohort is not only respectful, but **essential** work in an acting class. **No absences or late arrivals will be allowed.** Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines. But again, if it were up to me, this would be the entire grade. Take heed.

Assignment Submission Policy

Rehearsals, scene work, class scenes, and presentations will be presented in class. For the most part, written assignments will be either emailed or posted on Blackboard per my instruction, however, from time to time, I may have you turn in a written assignment. I will be clear when that assignment is due in class. If a video assignment is requested, files will be uploaded and submitted through **Google Drive** which is provided free to all enrolled students.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date & time. Late assignments will NOT BE ACCEPTED. I am going to treat you like mature professionals-in-training. I expect a lot from you, as you should expect from yourselves.

RODNEY'S CLASS POLICY REGARDING COVID AND SAFETY

- ALL STUDENTS WILL WEAR A KN95 MASK AT ALL TIMES FROM THE MOMENT YOU WALK INTO MY CLASS, TO THE MOMENT YOU LEAVE IT. I (RODNEY) WILL WEAR ONE AS WELL.
- I reserve the right to enforce this policy and either not allow you in class or dismiss you during class. Such dismissals will count as absences.
- We must NOT take wearing a mask lightly. It must be fitted over your nose and mouth. This is non-negotiable. If for any reason you do not agree or feel indifferent or anticipate not wanting to wear a mask at some point or feel like you 'won't be able to act' with a mask on your face, MY CLASS SECTION IS NOT THE CLASS FOR YOU.
- Students and faculty (including myself) have household members who are immunocompromised and it's imperative that we not put them at any more risk than necessary.
- NO EATING OR DRINKING IN CLASS because in order to do so, you would have to remove your mask. So if you even want to sip water, step outside of the building. Again, no excuses.
- Once again, if you feel like you will not be ok with my policies, that is your right, however, my class section is not for you.

NOTE: I have been working professionally as an actor and teaching Acting online while using face masks for the past year and a half. I am aware of its limitations, but I TRULY believe we can focus on what works in this vein and become better actors. If you don't agree, one last time, you are free to choose another acting class.

NETIQUETTE POLICY (KEEPING ON SYLLABUS IN THE EVENT WE HAVE TO PIVOT ONLINE)

The online learning modality for the Arts & Entertainment Industry is somewhat of a new frontier for everyone. We are discovering how to best navigate these newer practices together. While certainly not ideal, let's embrace this as an opportunity.

- I will be expecting that you do your best to treat this as a traditional classroom. Do your best to find a quiet space in your home where you can sit up comfortably and focus with little-to-no distractions or disturbances. Ideally, you have a little bit of room to move around as well. No outdoor spots unless you discuss it with me first. I am acutely aware (and sensitive to the fact) that everyone's circumstances vary, so if you're unable to find a reasonable working spot for class, please contact me privately to discuss.
- Even though we will be online and in your homes this semester, students must wear proper rehearsal clothes - loose fitting, comfortable clothing that you are ok moving around in and (possibly) getting a little dirty - no pajamas. Be professional, mature, and respectful: wear nothing revealing or distasteful.
- Please log-on from a desktop (or laptop) if possible. Oftentimes, I find when students log-on from their phone or tablet, the smaller nature of these devices lends itself to the student being too casual, less alert and easily distracted.
- Remember safety at all times. Do NOT drive while in class. Yes, I've seen it all. You will be logged- off and marked with an unexcused absence if you attempt to take class while driving or exercising or shopping or cleaning or babysitting - you get the idea.
- No 'other' technology during class. Phones must be on silent and put away. Unless I invite you to do so, phones may only be taken out during breaks. I am aware when you are reading your phones unnecessarily - trust me.
- Except for water, no food or drinks are allowed in class.
- No pets or any other distractions such as toys, video games, etc.
- Do not share personal class dealings and discoveries outside of class. We will be working hard to establish trust with each other. Respect is paramount. Communicate freely, honestly, and frequently, but always be respectful, mindful, mature.

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 me to offer any feedback on the course.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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*****THIS WILL CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

	Topics/Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1			
8/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intro to course	Read Stanislavsky's ACTION (handout)	
8/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss ACTION• Discuss monologue application w/ STAKES.• In-class example	Read <i>Cats Talk Back</i> by Bess Wohl / Work on assigned monologues from <i>Cats Talk Back</i>	Be ready to work on monologues by next week! GROUPS WILL BE ASSIGNED!
Week 2			
8/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GROUP A: Lab <i>Cats Talk Back</i> monologues w/ notes		
9/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GROUP B: Lab <i>Cats Talk Back</i> monologues w/ notes	Read <i>Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them</i> by A.Rey Pamatmat & <i>Dog Sees God</i> by Bert V. Royal	

	Topics/Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 3 9/6	LABOR	DAY	NO CLASS
9/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform <i>CTB</i> monologues • Begin Scenework discussion. • Assign scene partners for <i>Edith Can Shoot Things and Hit Them</i> by A.Rey Pamatmat & <i>Dog Sees God</i> by Bert V. Royal 	Rehearse assigned scenes	Groups A and B will be assigned!
Week 4 9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group A lab w/ notes • Group B lab w/ notes 	Read <i>Dry Land</i> by Sarah De Lappe.	
9/15	NO	CLASS	EDI / COMMUNITY DAY: SEPT 15 See '**' below!
Week 5 9/20	Scene work cont'd: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss <i>Dry Land</i> • In-class scene work 	Assign scene partners and rehearse.	Be ready to lab scenes in class on Wed, 9/22
9/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class rehearsals w/ notes. 	Rehearse <i>Dry Land</i> scenes w/ scene partners	Groups A and B will be assigned!
Week 6 9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group A performs w/ notes 	Read play Christopher Oscar Pena's (<i>TBA, handout</i>)	
9/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group B performs w/ notes 		
Week 7 10/4	Scene work cont'd: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss (<i>play</i>) • In-class scene work 	Assign MIDTERM scene partners and rehearse.	Be ready to begin work on MIDTERM scenes in class on Wed, 10/6
10/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-class rehearsals w/ notes. 	Sign up for rehearsal times and rehearse (<i>play</i>) scenes w/ scene partners	

	Topics/Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 8 10/11 10/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned rehearsal (w/ Rodney) times all week (TBA) 	Rehearse when you are not working with assigned group!	MIDTERM GROUPS A&B will be assigned and you will perform next week.
Week 9 10/18 10/20	<p>IN-CLASS MIDTERM SCENE PERFORMANCES. ALL MUST ATTEND!</p>	* READ SEMESTER'S FINAL PLAY TBA*	* This week, your partner and scenes will be assigned in advance of next week*
Week 10 10/25 10/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehearse Group A w/ notes Rehearse Group B w/ notes 		
Week 11 11/1 11/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group A performs w/ notes Group B performs w/ notes 	Read and watch material for next week's guest lecturer	Be prepared to discuss work of guest lecturer and be prepared with questions
Week 12 11/8 11/10	<p>GUEST LECTURER (TBA)</p> <p>Discuss and begin FINAL SCENE selection</p>	Begin FINAL SCENE selection	

	Topics/Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 13			
11/15	FINAL SCENE LAB: Rehearse and discuss final scene options	Continue scene selection and rehearsal	
11/17	FINAL SCENE LAB: Rehearse and discuss final scene options		
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FINAL EXAM SCENE MUST BE FINALIZED TODAY! • Lecture: AUDITION technique for THEATRE / Self-taping for theatre 	Self-tape audition material	Self-tape due via GOOGLE DRIVE by SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28 at 12NOON! No exceptions!
11//24	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING	BREAK
Week 15			
11/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review self-tapes • Discuss FINAL scenes and progress. 	Continue rehearsing	
12/1	LAST CLASS!!!		

Final Examination Date: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 11am to 1pm.

*** 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.**

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

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

Support Systems:

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

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

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

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/ notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

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.