

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Thtr 115B 62610

Units: 2

Spring 2022

Tuesdays and Thursdays

8:00 to 9:50

Location: Online and PED 207

Instructor: Jeff Crockett

Office Hours: By appt

Contact Info: email: jc90456@usc.edu

Response within 48 hours

Prerequisite: THTR 115A

“As actors, we must rejoice in the possession of our physical faculties. We must experience joy in the use of our hands, arms, body, etc. Without this appreciation and realization of the body and its many possibilities, we cannot perform as artists.

You should feel a flow of joy because you are alive. Your body will feel full of life. That is what you must give from the stage. Your life. No less. That is art: to give all you have. And what have you? Your life-nothing more. And to give life means to feel life throughout your whole being.”

—Michael Chekhov

Course Description

In this course, movement is practiced as an aspect of acting. Physical expression is developed through working with the relationship between moving and thinking, movement and stillness, moving and being moved.

Central questions:

What is the work, and what does it ask of me?

What supports the work, and what diminishes it?

Learning Objectives

To enhance your artistic and personal experience of living in your body. How you relate with your body influences how you work with your body, which determines the quality of what you receive from it creatively.

To learn to dialogue with your body. Through sensing, you connect with your body and learn to listen without interfering. The innate intelligence in the body regulates and organizes without your control. You learn to “talk” to your body through the offers you make with exercises and techniques. The exercises become specific and meaningful through listening to the body’s responses. This dialogue supports a close relationship with your body that brings you into a direct experience of *being* your body. You are no longer watching and judging yourself from the outside. Embodiment brings integration with moving, thinking, feeling, creating, responding.

To be introduced to a working method that includes you as a whole person. The body is not seen as an instrument separate from you, and the exercises are not designed as a routine to bring a specific result. We are cultivating an ongoing relationship with the body, influencing your capacity for vulnerability, courage, listening, and responding from your unique impulses.

To learn the role the autonomic nervous system plays in your experience of safety and to partner with your nervous system effectively, allowing the body to regulate when you experience the effects from being triggered. When you understand what safety is and how it operates from the perspective of the nervous system, you can make choices that invite safety, which supports risk-taking, vulnerability, and authentic connections with others.

To use basic structures of anatomy as a tool for embodied clarity and to gain awareness for the possibilities of moving in new ways.

To demonstrate and understand the value of the approach:

- Be simple
- Work with ease
- Invite pleasure

To cultivate Singular/Global Focus as a dynamic tool to support coherence and integration with any singular component and the whole of which it is a part.

To demonstrate and make use of the three basic relationships to gravity:

- Dropping
- Pulling up
- Being carried

To expand the possibilities of embodied expression using:

- Passive Potency
- Active Potency
- The Penumbra

To recognize the foundation for authentic physical expression lies in the relationship between thinking and the body. Movement follows thought. Movement also influences thought. Both are true and work simultaneously.

To work from a spirit of play and to value what it brings. To let go of the need to be “right” and to be willing to let go of your goals and expectations. As you develop a tolerance for uncertainty and risk-taking, you reveal what is alive in you, and you allow the impact of your expression, whether in movement or in stillness, to be felt by others.

To utilize physical theater games and exercises as a means for recognizing tendencies that limit expression while developing the components that expand and clarify expression, with an

emphasis on letting go of expectations and goals; listening with the body, being moved, allowing transitions, responding spontaneously, following through, making impactful contact.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

Lead yourself in a 10 to 15-minute practice using the three-part structure from class: working, resonating, resting. This practice is a dialogue you have with your body rather than a routine of exercises. It is alive, spontaneous, and yet organized from moment to moment, listening and responding to the communication from your body.

Access your resources of creativity and embodied choice-making with ease and commitment.

Devise, create, and perform small performance pieces and exercises that demonstrate authentic experiences of thinking leading movement and movement influencing thinking.

My Teaching Philosophy:

My teaching is centered in the awareness that the body is not separate from the person living in it and that each person's lived experience is present as we work with the body.

The craft of acting is developed through experiential learning. We learn through doing, sensing, and feeling. Intellectual concepts can be useful and at times are essential in understanding what we are experiencing. Ultimately, intellectualizing the work is meaningless without integrating the body and soul.

This also includes the way we observe the work of others in the group. If an actor can observe from a felt experience of the work they are witnessing, the learning is enhanced exponentially. What is necessary is the embodied experience, which is subjective, personal, and lived.

I believe that people learn more robustly when they have a felt sense of safety. Safety is not the goal but rather the condition that supports our goal's growth and learning. A felt sense of safety results from the autonomic nervous system's response to cues from within your body, between your nervous system and the nervous system of others, and from the environment you are in. A felt sense of safety is determined by your nervous system and how you interpret the cues from your nervous system.

No one can tell you the space is safe. That is up to you to consider with the sensory feedback from your nervous system. As your teacher, I can let you know that I value safety, that I encourage the things that invite it, and that the things that prevent it will be discouraged.

People tend to feel safe when they feel welcome, valued, and accurately seen. Safety is supported in equitable environments for each member and where access needs are met with respect. Safety is reinforced when there is choice, transparency, consistency, and respect for each member of the group. I will ask that we co-create a space that invites those things, and when mistakes are made, and ruptures occur, we work for repair.

How we work together is reflected in the quality of the learning and the work. The work is personal and, at the same time, not personal. Understanding this paradox will help you see the dynamic between the individual and the group that supports the highest learning. The commitment and growth demonstrated by one individual contribute to the focus and development of everyone, and the strength of the group contributes to and inspires the growth of each individual. I encourage you to take responsibility for how you are working with yourself, realize that it impacts the group as a whole, and be invested in the growth of the others in the group, knowing that it is good for your development. Each person contributes and receives from the group, but that does not mean we do it in the same way.

I also believe we go deeper in the work when there is a spirit of play. This doesn't mean that you need to fake a feeling of joy or repress feelings that don't seem "fun." A spirit of play is not one emotional state. It is a spirit of generosity toward yourself and the group, where you lighten up on some things and take other things more seriously. You play for the satisfaction you feel by committing to the work because it matters deeply to you. At the same time, you lighten up on your investment in specific results, competitive comparison, and the need to be right. A spirit of play invites curiosity, creativity, and novelty, inviting connection.

I see our work as a collaboration. While I am teaching this course, you are teaching me about how you learn. You will teach me things about the material of this course that only you can. We are teaching and learning together.

I'm interested in your ongoing feedback. If you have things you would like me to know or hear, or you would like to schedule an appointment, please email me at: jc90456@usc.edu

My Bio

Jeff Crockett was the Head of Voice in the MFA program and Voice and Text Coach for the professional main stage at The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco for over 20 years. Since 2006, he has worked as a movement and embodiment teacher in Italy at the Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica "Silvio D'Amico", Rome, Prima del Teatro, San Miniato, and Teatro Due, Parma. He has taught in various programs: Columbia University, Chautauqua Theater Company, Classic Stage Company, DePaul University, the University of Maryland, Stanford University, and the Esalen Institute. He was resident Voice Coach at the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis. Other coaching credits include Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Mixed Blood, Theatre Manoeuvres (London), Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater. He has an Advanced Diploma in Voice Studies, with distinction, from Central School of Speech and Drama (London) and is a certified Alexander Technique teacher and practitioner of Middendorf Breathwork. He is currently teaching at the Access Acting Academy, a training program for blind and low-vision actors.

Elements of Participation:

The physical space while working online

Consider and prepare your space as though it were your studio. Create for yourself a clean, private, and quiet space to work in. Some exercises will be done while seated so that you will need a chair or stool with a relatively flat seat. For lying down work, you will need a yoga mat if your floor is not carpeted.

Attire

How you dress influences the work

Clothing that supports ease in movement, with focused attention on the work without inhibiting or distracting you, reflects your commitment and respect for yourself and your work.

The atmosphere in the studio is co-created.

The atmosphere we co-create in the studio influences the quality of our presence and engagement. It reflects our respect for each other and the work. Please be mindful of how you store your items, and please participate in keeping the space clean and organized for our work. Silence your cellphones, and refrain from eating or drinking. Water is permitted. If you have medical needs for food, beverage, or medication during class, please let me know, and we will find a solution.

Observing and discussing the work strengthens the learning

How you witness and respond to the work of others greatly enhances your work. The way you observe the work and how you talk about it can strengthen the potential learning and cohesion in the group, or it can dismantle the safety and respect necessary for the work. I ask that when you observe others' work, you stay in touch with how the work is influencing your experience of the work. You will notice that your feedback will tend to be honest, specific, and valuable when you talk about what you saw, felt, heard, and experienced. If you observe the work while focusing on your idea of what the work should be, your feedback will tend to be correcting and will erode your relationship with the other actor and the group. Your job is to let the other actor know how you experienced the work, rather than telling them how they should have done it. I'm not big on rules for communication, but these guidelines are crucial for supporting the individual work of each actor. When speaking about your work, articulating your experience strengthens your personal ownership of the work. You are free to talk about your experience however you like. You are also free to be quiet if that is a better choice for you. I'll simply encourage you to speak out of your honest experience, and I'll do my best to support the environment where that can happen.

Required Readings and Supplementary Videos:

There will be videos and reading material posted on Blackboard that you will be required to read and watch outside of class.

Description and Assessment of Assignments:

Journal: You are encouraged to keep a journal throughout the term as a record of the work from class and your personal experiences. This journal is for you, and I will not read it. It is a place for you to reflect honestly about your class experiences, relevance, integration with other classes, acting, and life. It will be a valuable resource for you. From time to time, I will suggest or prompt for you to consider and include in your journal.

Written assignments:

There will be written assignments focused on principles from class and your experiences working with them, and assigned videos and reading material. These assignments should be approximately 300 words and focus on your personal experience working with and reflecting on the subject or principle.

There will be a final paper, a personal reflection of the entire semester. You can choose any of the learning that was impactful from your experience. You can choose to dive deep into one theme or be broad with the entire scope of the course. This reflection is not a review of the class but a personal reflection of how you engaged with the work, what you experienced, and if you could integrate the work into your acting and artistic life. It should be 900 words. It is due by May 10th

Grading Breakdown:

Participation in class 15%

This includes: dressing for class appropriately, your contribution to the atmosphere in the studio, the quality of your presence in exercises; your generosity in group discussions; and your willingness to take risks in the work.

Written Assignments 10%

You will be graded on your specificity, accuracy, detail, and on thoughtful reflection that is personal.

Midterm Exam: 15%

The midterm will cover principles, terms, and vocabulary from the practice. It will also include the nervous system, how a felt sense of safety operates, and the Brené Brown material. A portion of the midterm will be your demonstration of the principles applied to a “dialogue.” You will work independently with others.

Final self-led practice 20%

At the end of the term, you will lead yourself in a 15-minute practice. You will be graded on the quality of your focus, presence, organization, and timing of the exercises, reflecting a “dialogue” between you and your body. The quality and appropriateness of what you say to the body and the quality of your listening to the body’s response should guide the choice of exercises and the duration. This is not a routine of practiced exercises.

Final Paper 15%

A 900-word personal reflection of the entire semester. You can choose any learning that was impactful from your experience. You can choose to dive deep into one theme or be broad with the entire scope of the course. This reflection is not a review of the class but a personal and specific reflection of how you engage with the work, what you experienced, how you integrated the work into your acting and artistic life. Due by May 10th.

Performance Final 25%

A devised piece that you will create and perform centered on a theme from class.

Course Notes:

We will follow the USC guidelines for safety, including mask-wearing and following recommendations if you cannot complete Trojan-check or are in quarantine. If you are absent, please send me an email, and I will either offer you notes from the day, or I will meet with you on zoom. If you are to be out for a more extended period, we will discuss the best solution: streaming class, watching recordings, receiving detailed notes from me. Written assignments should be submitted on Blackboard or through email to jc90456@usc.edu.

Written assignments submitted after the due date will be docked 1 point per day late. The final paper will be docked 5 points if submitted on May 11th. Final papers will not be accepted after May 11th.

Grading Breakdown:

Participation: 15%

Written Assignments: 10%

Written Midterm: 15%

Final Self-led Practice: 20%

Final Paper 15%

Performance Final 25%

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

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

Assignment Submission Policy

Written assignments should be submitted on Blackboard or through email to jc90456@usc.edu. Late written assignments will be docked 1 point per day late. The final paper will be docked 2 points and will not be accepted after May 11th.

Grading Timeline

Assignments will be graded within one week of submission.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Outline

Themes are subject to change based on the needs and rhythm of the group.

	Themes/Activities	Outside Reading/ Viewing	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1	Building the ensemble/ Establish a way of working: The autonomic nervous system and a felt-sense of safety The importance of consent and choice making; Primary choices/ secondary choices: Choice to study theater		
Week 2	How do we relate to our body and what is it to be in a dialogue with the body. Sensation, presence, breath that comes and goes on its own are inseparable and in communication. Singular/global focus; Environment of safety Fragrance, atmosphere, imagination		
Week 3	Presence communicates; Somatic listening, sensing the group The Space Between, moving and being moved; transitions		

Week 4	Transitions; Bouyancy; Active potency Passive potency and The Penumbra; Making contact: simple and direct	Videos on vulnerability	
Week 5	Three ways of relating to gravity: Being carried and a state of trust; The power of vulnerability; Autonomic nervous system: Neuroception and the Polyvagal Theory: why does my body react with such fear when I know I'm okay? Being in stillness, Being seen, living in your privacy,	Videos and reading: The autonomic nervous system and the Polyvagal Theory	Feb 10th Quiz: vulnerability, shame, courage
Week 6	Embodied choice making; transitions; the space between; somatic listening	Anatomy videos: Pelvic Diamond	Quiz Feb 17th: A.Nervous System and principles
Week 7	Group games develop craft, reveal tendencies: no big deal; Rhythm reflects thought		
Week 8	Movement follows thought, thought influences movement; Singular/Global Focus in transitions Buoyancy and Glide		Mid-term quiz: Vulnerability, the Autonomic Nervous System and the Polyvagal Theory, and principles of movement

Week 9	The outer and inner environment Passing time/ filling time Being in stillness; passing time and the nature of change; transition, filling time	Anatomy videos	
Week 10	The element of surprise		
Week 11	The creative process, embodied choice making; Being a collaborator		
Week 12	The environment, clothing, props		
Week 13	Resonding to the inner/responding to the outer		
Week 14	Activity, reality of doing, thought influencing movement		
Week 15	Summary Autonomy and ownership of the work		15 minute Self-led practice
FINAL			Performance Final:May 11, 8:00 to 10:00 Final Paper due by May 10th

SDA PRODUCTIONS

SDA productions are courses and therefore do not supersede any other courses you are enrolled in. When in an SDA production, students must not register for evening classes that conflict with regularly scheduled rehearsals. In short, being involved in an SDA production is a curricular assignment and must be treated as any other curricular assignment.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS AND ISPS

Should you choose to participate in any extra-curricular project, such as an Independent Student Production, the SDA administration and faculty will not make allowances or exceptions for absences in class, missed or

delayed assignments, home work that is required as preparation for class, or lack of participation in class resulting from your extra-curricular involvement.

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.

Support Systems:

Campus Support & Intervention (CSI) – (213) 740-0411

Campus Support & Intervention is an office within Campus Wellbeing and Crisis Intervention. We are a team of professionals here to assist students, faculty, and staff in navigating complex issues. Whether you are here seeking support for yourself or someone else, we are available to help you problem solve, understand options, and connect with resources. <https://uscscsa.usc.edu>

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <https://titleix.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://titleix.usc.edu/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu