

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## **2022 THTR 540D 63250: Advanced Voice Diction**

**Units: 2**

**Spring 2022 Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 to 2:50**

**Fridays 10: 11:50**

**Online and PED 204**

**Instructor: Jeff Crockett**

**Office Hours: by appointment**

**Contact Info: [jc90456@usc.edu](mailto:jc90456@usc.edu)**

**Prerequisite(s): THTR 540C**

"I think we tend to use words as if they belong to either our reason, or to our emotions, so that we either make them only literal and logical, or alternatively only emotional. We do not use them as our thoughts in action, which are always shifting and changing, and are the result of both thought and feeling." Cicely Berry

### **Course Description**

This course focuses on the development of an efficient individual-specific method for integrating the actor as a whole person with the elements that are often thought of as separate aspects of expression: movement, voice, acting. The development of the actor's vocal range includes the integrity of these elements working in unity.

### **Three focuses surround our work this semester:**

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

What supports the work and what diminishes it?

The work is learned and integrated through direct experience

### **Learning Objectives:**

To develop a practice based in the coherence from the intelligence in the body as the central force for integrating the whole person with unity of expression.

We work from a point of view of wholeness from the beginning. Changes in the body directly impact changes in thinking and feeling. Changes in thinking and feeling impact movement and voice. The process of the work is rooted in sensation and the laws the breath movement follows rather than psychological interpretations or working to release tension in parts separate from the whole. The work is learned through direct experience. One tool we use is Singular/Global focus, another is the foundational principle. The work supports your autonomy, and develops spontaneity and authentic connection. You are placed at the center of your work, empowered and responsible.

From wholeness, everything is in relationship, including you and the group. You co-create the group with the rest of us. You are an individual and you are the group at the same time. Your individuality contributes to the group, and you receive benefit from the uniqueness of the others. What unites us is our common values, not rules and procedures.

The foundational principle: Sensation, presence, and the movement of breath that comes and goes on its own, are inseparable, reciprocal, and in communication. If I work to develop one element, the other two are enhanced.

The Primary Principle: Breath movement, when it is not controlled or directed, moves with intelligence seeking balance and integration on all levels.

You will experience other breath principles as you encounter the work. These principles are archetypal but experienced personally. The principles can be used as tools, but they influence and integrate holistically. They do not operate in a linear progression.

You are engaging in a dialogue between you and your body/breath as you practice. The benefits are embodied choice making, speaking from uncensored impulses, spontaneity and undefended presence.

Speaking and listening have a reciprocal relationship, as does movement and stillness. When thinking and speaking happen simultaneously, nuances of thought, feeling, and the imaginative connection to language are heard and felt. Voice becomes thought in action.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

#### **By the end of the semester:**

You will have developed a sustainable practice that is efficient and responsive to your needs and the conditions you find yourself in. You will have the capacity to develop and evolve by making use of the principles and techniques in your own way. You will have a practice that lives and changes with you, and can support you over the course of your career.

You will have experiential understanding of the autonomic nervous system and the influence it has on your capacity to embody your potential in your work through authentic risk taking and vulnerability.

You will demonstrate somatic listening and the felt communication occurring non-verbally. You will be able to tune into a felt sense of the impact the statement your embodied presence makes on the others, and the power of their presence on you. Speaking is carried out from this foundation of simultaneous communication.

You will make use of the efficiency that comes from integrating movement, voice, and acting and demonstrate in group exercises with text, your artistic statement having an impact on the others, while also being informed by the statements from the others in the group.

### **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 art and craft of acting is developed through experiential learning. We learn through doing, sensing, and feeling. Intellectual concepts can be useful, and at times are important in

understanding what we are experiencing, but ultimately, intellectualizing the work is meaningless without the integration with 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 in a more robust way when they have a felt sense of safety. Safety is not the goal, but rather the condition that supports the growth and learning that is our goal. A felt-sense of safety is a result of 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 the way 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. What I can do as your teacher is to let you know that I value safety, that I encourage the things that invite it, and the things that prevent it will be discouraged. People tend to feel safe when they feel welcome, valued, and accurately seen. Safety is supported when there is choice, transparency, consistency, and respect for each member of the group. Together I will ask that we co-create a space that invites those things.

I also believe that theater is the most collaborative art form. 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 contributes to the focus and growth 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, and realize that it impacts the group as a whole, and to 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 you 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, novelty, and it invites 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 with me, please use my USC email address: 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.

### **Access needs:**

It is my desire for each actor in the group to feel welcome, respected, and seen. The experience of this course being accessible to everyone in the group is essential for the experience of being welcome, seen, and respected. If you have access needs that you would like to communicate to me, I am eager to receive that information and I will make sure your needs are respected and met. I will respect your confidentiality and any concern you might have around disclosure or how those needs are met.

### **Elements of Participation:**

#### **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 the way you store your personal 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 other's work, that 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 useful 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 we are working breath, movement, and voice, how you articulate your experience strengthens your personal ownership of the work and assists you in embodying the principles. You are free to speak 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 experiences in class, and the relevance and integration with other classes, acting, and your life. It will be a useful resource for you. From time to time I will give a suggestion or a prompt for you to consider and include in your journal.

**Written assignments:**

There will be written assignments focused on a principle from class and your experiences working with it. Be specific as you define the meaning of the principle, and how you engage with it. You should include your personal experience working with it, what you have found as you explored it, how you find it useful or not, and why. These assignments are to be approximately 300 words.

There will be a final paper, which is to be 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 to 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 engaged with the work, what you experienced, how you integrated the work in 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

### **Written Midterm Exam: 15%**

The midterm will cover principles, terms, and vocabulary from the practice. It will also include the nervous system and how a felt sense of safety operates, and the Brené Brown material. There will be a portion of the midterm that 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 and presence, the organization and timing of the exercises, which should reflect 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 of the learning that was impactful from your experience. You can choose to dive deep into one theme, or to 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 in your acting and artistic life. Due by May 10th.

### **Performance Final 25%**

A series of group explorations that is centered on a piece of text, leading to the acting of the text.

### **Course Notes:**

We will follow the USC guidelines for safety, including mask wearing and following recommendations if you cannot complete Trojan-check or if you 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 longer 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. Late written assignments will be docked 1 point per day late. The final paper will be docked 2 points per day late.

#### **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**

**This is subject to change based on the rhythm of the group.**

**Various themes will be introduced at the appropriate time: Passive Potency/Active Potency and the Penumbra; Non-predominance; The Support Point and Suspension; Move and Being Moved; Movement Following thought-Movement influencing thought**

**Week 1.** Coming together. Where have I been, where do I want to go, and what is alive in me now?

The dynamic between the individual and the group; The relationship between you and your actor self.

What is the work and how do I engage in it?

The practice is a dialogue between you and your body/breath. The dialogue metaphor changes how we relate to the work, what we are doing when we take class. The meaning of exercises changes. Things that prevent the authentic response from the work: Expectation, comparison, straining for results, trying to please, too goal oriented. The work is personal and collaborative. Engage as an individual and as a member of a group. Watch the Brené Brown material

**Week 2** Foundational principle: Sensation, Presence, Breath that comes and goes on its own.

The Dialogue metaphor

Singular/Global focus

Brené Brown Material: Vulnerability, Shame, and Courage and relevance to the work and acting.

Three phases of the practice reflecting the dialogue: working, resonating, resting

Stretch brings inhalation. We don't "breathe into" the stretch. The allowed breath responds to the stretch

**Week 3.** Working with the basic principles with emphasis on Singular/Global focus.

S/G focus with the group. Inner/Outer. **Watch Video on Pelvic Diamond**

**Week 4.** Breath space, the 3 spaces. The lower space, the pelvic diamond

**Week 5.** Lower space and uprising exhale; three ways of relating to gravity

**Week 6.** Uprising exhale, down flowing. Upper and lower in communication.

Anatomy videos: the shoulder girdle and rib cage. Codified Movements lived personally in unison

**Week 7.** Uprising/downflowing. Background/Foreground Presence communicates. Singular/Global: me/you/us. **MIDTERM**

**Week 8** Vowel Breath Space work, voice carried out from the breath space

**Week 9.** Continue with themes that arise, vowel breath space, somatic listening, movement follows thought

**Week 10.** Physical life in words, simple text exploration

**Week 11.** Working with imaginative connection to words. Reading from Cicely Berry *The Actor and the Text*

**Week 12.** Continue with B&M, Physical life of language, with Sonnets.

**Week 13. Weeks 13, 14 and 15** develop group work, text for final

**Week 16** Summary, prep for final, self-led practice

## SDA PRODUCTIONS

SDA productions are courses and therefore do not supersede any other courses in which you are enrolled.

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](http://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](mailto: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.

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## **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://uscsa.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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)