

# USC Kaufman

## Glorya Kaufman School of Dance

### **DANC 499 - Acting for Dancers**

**Section:**

**Units:**

**Term:** Fall 2022

**Day:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Instructor:** Grasan Kingsberry

**Office Hours:** To be scheduled via email

**Contact:** [grasan.kingsberry@usc.edu](mailto:grasan.kingsberry@usc.edu)

***“Always tell the truth. It’s the easiest thing to remember.”***

### **Catalog Description**

This introductory course in acting, for dancers, is for individuals interested in understanding and developing the fundamental tools of theatrical acting. Acknowledging that the dynamic field of theater is a useful tool for communicating in any arena, this course also serves as an excellent opportunity for students to sharpen their public speaking skills.

### **Full Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce dancers to the essential introductory tools in acting, with an emphasis on observational and improv exercises, character study & development, breathwork & vocal production, and scene analysis. The course consists of various group discussions and exercises to develop physical/emotional/psychological awareness, concentration, imagination, and freedom. Basic physical, vocal and analytical concepts; theories and methods; vocabulary; and discipline required of the beginning actor will also be explored. Students will develop personalized creative processes through monologues, dialogues/scene work, and exercises in observational awareness. These exercises will be utilized to facilitate the creative process as well as foster an environment of trust within the class. All members of the class will work towards creating an environment that is supportive and celebratory of each other’s work.

### **Learning Objectives**

- To establish a common vocabulary that serves as a foundation for the acting process.
- To increase observational awareness, listening skills, imagination, and develop self-awareness through exercise and improvisation.
- To develop in the student the ability to understand, analyze, and connect with text in ways that are necessary to an actor.
- To develop an understanding on character breakdown through character study.
- To introduce the student to the basic methods of relaxation as well as physical and vocal freedom and control.

## Learning Outcomes

- Use and articulate the basic vocabulary of theatrical acting.
- Demonstrate proper speaking skills through breathwork, intentionality, and diction.
- Demonstrate how to break down and perform audition sides and texts.
- Create a character through understanding given circumstances and applying psychological, emotional, and behavioral qualities.
- Keenly and acutely listen and respond from their instinctive core.

## Course Expectations & Assignments

- Students will be required to maintain a journal and take notes throughout the duration of this course. This journal is not private; as the student may be asked to turn it in periodically to be reviewed by the instructor.
- Students will participate in two observational assignments and are expected to present their work in-class. (Inanimate, Human-being)
- Storytelling Exercise (STE): Students will be expected to compose and present a personal story (between 2-5 minutes in length). Instructions on the criteria of the exercise will be given and explained during the course by the instructor.
- Students will be expected to participate and engage in group exercises, individual presentations, improv games, and scene work. No sleeping, phone use, or impassive participation.
- Students will be assigned a scene and scene partner(s), and are expected to rehearse scenes in collaboration with classmates outside of class.

## Required Reading

Students will be required to purchase and read *A Practical Handbook For The Actor*, by Bruder, Cohn, Olnek, Pollack, Previto, and Zigler by the end of the course.

Options to purchase book: Amazon.com, thriftbooks.com, betterworldbooks.com.

## Required Viewing

Students are required to view a theatrical piece, and write a review with emphasis on a compelling actor's performance using the vocabulary taught in this course. (I'm happy to discuss recommended theaters or productions. I would consider seeing multiple productions before deciding the focus of your response.)

## Policies:

### PARTICIPATION & CLASS CONDUCT

Active participation in all exercises, discussion, and studio course work is necessary for the student to be successful in the class. This is an experience based course, and you are expected to participate and commit with a generous heart, an open mind and a devoted work ethic. You are not graded on 'talent' in this class, you are graded on your Quality of Doing — there is no progress without putting in the work. More specifically:

- Listen and remain actively attentive during class.
- Engage in in-class discussions regarding exercises, observations, and any other prompts given by the instructor.
- Remain respectful and attentive while others are speaking/demonstrating in class.
- No gum, food, or drinks (other than water) are allowed in the studio.

- Phones will not be allowed and should not be visible during class, with the exception of recording for learning purposes only (when advised). Texting or internet engagement during class time will result in lowering of your class grade.
- Please bring a paper notebook and writing instrument to class; laptops, notebooks, tablets and other technology will only be permitted at certain times.
- Any injuries that prohibit class participation must be reported to the instructor immediately either via email ([kingsber@usc.edu](mailto:kingsber@usc.edu)) or prior to the start of class.
- If you cannot participate in class due to an injury you must quietly take notes on the exercises, ideas, and concepts discussed in class. These notes may be requested to be turned in to the instructor at the end of the class period.
- If you must leave the classroom before the end of class, please let the instructor know beforehand.
- Wearing appropriate attire to all classes (as described within the syllabus)

**Rehearsal** — You are expected to rehearse on your own (and when applicable) with your fellow actors outside of class, as part of the collaborative nature of theater. We will discuss your outside rehearsals in class. Both in-class and outside scenework/rehearsal usually requires notes to be taken — please be prepared with a pencil.

**Written Assignments** — Unless otherwise specified, written assignments should be emailed to me ([kingsber@usc.edu](mailto:kingsber@usc.edu)) as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time. Written assignments should follow MLA guidelines. Late assignments will receive an initial 5 point deduction off their grade, and 1 point for each subsequent day after the deadline.

**Devices** — No cell phone or electronic devices of any kind may be used in class, unless specifically instructed. This is to encourage your focus, mindfulness, and respect to your peers. You must leave phone/device in your bag, silenced. If needed, bags and backpacks may be quarantined in a designated classroom corner. Unauthorized use of devices will deduct your participation points for the day.

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

### **Resources and Supplementary Materials Used for Course**

- Bruder, Cohn, Olnek, Pollack, Previto, and Zigler; *A Practical Handbook For The Actor*
- Adler, Stella; *The Art of Acting*
- Chekhov, Michael; *To The Actor*
- Hagen, Uta; *Respect for Acting*
- McCallion, Michael; *The Voice Book*
- Templeton, Penny; *Acting Lions*
- Various Broadway shows/plays for scene study

## Grading Rubric

Total possible points: 100 (see breakdown below)

### Process & Progress:

5 points - Class Journal/Notes

10 points - Quiz on Required Reading

15 points - Participation in Acting Exercises (This is an evaluation of a combination of factors applicable to lecture, discussion, performance, and in-class group work and practice. These factors may include (but are not limited to) attention, engagement, courtesy, attitude, involvement, contribution, commitment, courage, progress, inquisitiveness, and skill.)

### Product & Performance:

10 points - Observation Assignment #1 (inanimate)

10 points - Observation Assignment #2 (person)

10 points - Storytelling Exercise #1 (STE#1; turning personal story into a monologue)

15 points - Midterm - Self tape assignment (STE #2; creating a self-tape out of STE to submit to instructor)

15 points - Final - Performance ( in-class) - Scene

10 points - Performance Viewing Report (This is an evaluation on how well the student is able to articulate their fondness for a particular actor's performance - in the medium of theater. The student should be able to discern why they were drawn to the actor's performance by giving specifics on topics covered in the course. This will be turned in to the instructor for review.)

The final course grade is articulated as a Letter Grade, determined using the following scale:

A: 95-100	A-: 94-90		
B+: 87-89	B: 84-86	B-: 80-83	F: 59 and below
C+: 77-79	C: 74-76	C-: 70-73	
D+: 67-69	D: 64-66	D-: 60-63	

## Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

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

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

**Week 1 (Aug 22)** — Welcome/Introduction: Syllabus and expectations review. Intro to Observation Ex.

**Week 2 (Aug 29)**— Observational Exercises #1 (Inanimate)

**Week 3 (Sept 5)** — Labor Day — NO CLASSES

**Week 4 (Sept 12)** — Due today: Observational Exercise #1; Presentation Day 1

**Week 5 (Sept 19)** — Observational Exercise #1; Presentation Day 2 (if necessary)/Intro to Observational Exercise #2 (Human behavior and physicalization)

**Week 6 (Sept 26)** — Observational Exercise #2: Studying mundane actions and human physicalization and behavior.

**Week 7 (Oct 3)** — Due: Observational Exercise #2; Presentation Day #1

**Week 8 (Oct 10)** — Observational Exercise #2; Presentation Day #2 (if necessary)/Intro to Storytelling Exercise #1

**Week 9 (Oct 17)** — Due: Storytelling Exercise #1: Intro to text; Presentation Day #1

**Week 10 (Oct 24)** — Storytelling Exercise #1: Intro to text; Presentation Day #2

**Week 11 (Oct 31)** — Scene study #1: Understanding how to read a side (breaking down sides)

**Week 12 (Nov 7)** — Scene study #2: Building a character (objective, circumstances, obstacles, feelings/tactics/action/gesture lists).

**Week 13 (Nov 14)** — Read Scenes (in-class); Distribute Scenes to all students by Thursday

**Week 14 (Nov 21)** — Open Group Scene Work #1

**Week 15 (Nov 28)** — Open Group Scene Work #2

**(Dec 2)** — Writing Assignment Due: Performance Review Report (emailed as PDF attachment before midnight)

**FINAL — Dec. 12** — Final Presentation of Scenes

## **Statement on Academic Conduct:**

### 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 Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. 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>. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity, <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the Department of Public Safety, <http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community— such as a friend, classmate, advisor, mentor, or faculty member— can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men, <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/>

provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

### Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs, [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.htm](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.htm), provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.

- 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. <https://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. <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. <https://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: <http://sarc.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. <https://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://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>
- The Office of Disability Services and Programs Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>
- Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student, ex: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>
- 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. <https://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, <http://emergency.usc.edu>
- USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

## Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information, <http://emergency.usc.edu>, will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

*"In the event of a university-wide emergency, guidance and directions will be shared by Campus Emergency Operations in all available outlets, including the website and TrojanAlerts. Students are encouraged to maintain close contact with all available communications avenues for updates to university operations. USC Kaufman will abide by all university protocols and recommendations. If the Kaufman Dance Center is not available when classes resume, students can receive updates from the school's Departmental Operations Center (DOC) on Ramo Lawn (between the Thornton School of Music and Norris Cinema, close to the Bing Theatre)."*

## **Statement on Mental and Physical Health at Kaufman:**

Student Health: phone number (213) 740-9355 (WELL). On call 24/7 Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. Dr. Greco: Kelly.Greco@med.usc.edu Marisa Hentis: Hentis@usc.edu

## Names and Pronouns

If you want to be called by a different name or wish to be referred to by a different gender pronoun than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please let me know. Students are expected to respectfully refer to each other by their preferred names and pronouns in class.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

This class takes place at a university committed to equity for all students, where diversity and inclusion are considered critical to the academic environment. In this classroom, free speech is respected, and civil discourse is expected, with a safe learning environment the priority. We will endeavor to use language that is respectful—sometimes being inquisitive and creative, because language changes all the time—particularly when it comes to differences in age, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, race or socioeconomic status.

## "Call-In" Agreement

Optional policy about calling people IN to the conversation about racial justice, as opposed to calling people out.

## Statement on Physical Contact

As an embodied art form, acting is a physical and an emotional undertaking. In the process of studying acting, students often experience physical contact with their instructors and peers. Faculty members may use touch to provide proprioceptive and kinesthetic feedback to students; they may use touch to correct

alignment, improve technique, and promote healthier movement practices. In some classes, particularly those involving improv, students' will experience physical contact with their peers. As developing artists experimenting with modes of expression, students may also experience a variety of emotions in the classroom. As such, it is imperative that the studio-classroom be a safe, inclusive, and respectful space for all students and faculty. Open and honest communication and respectful and considerate interactions are always expected and are a fundamental requirement of studying in the USC Kaufman School of Dance. Unless otherwise articulated to a faculty member or peer, consent to discipline-specific and appropriate touching is assumed. Students always have the right to revoke that consent and should express any discomfort they feel in the classroom to the faculty instructor or Vice Dean immediately. USC Kaufman seeks to nurture compassionate artists who respect the dignity, humanity, and personal embodied experience of all individuals.

*(Note: Although not likely, this syllabus is subject to change or may be slightly altered in order to take full advantage of the process and progression of this new course.)*