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Office Hours: By appointment — schedule via email

Course Description

*"I love acting. It is so much more real than life."
— Oscar Wilde*

Acting is often considered an interpretive skill, because of its close ties to playwriting and directing. But acting is its own independent art form, through which actors craft performances using techniques that differ from those of other artists — telling stories of humanity using the human form. As such, acting is a distinguishable art that can be studied and evaluated on its own terms. This class investigates major theories and techniques that characterize twentieth and twenty-first century acting in the United States. Students will examine primary texts about acting theories; will closely analyze performances that embody these theories; and will engage in basic studio exercises that explore the techniques of acting. The studio exercises will uncover how actors explore the meanings and visions in plays, and how intellectual study of texts uncovers and supports the training of voice, speech, and movement. Thus, students will develop respect for the complexity of acting as they learn to articulate how the actor's art is distinctive and meaningful.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the creative and intellectual work of the actor as artist, describing with appropriate vocabulary, examination of formal elements, and engaging in research to understand the context;
2. Create an acting experience/performance and explain the process;
3. Explore and demonstrate connections between acting/actors and concurrent political, religious, and social conditions, and how the art affects cultural needs.
4. Practice life-long engagement with the art of acting as a supporter or participant.

Course Notes

Classes must be attended live and in-person (medical status withstanding), due to the collaborative, experiential, and performative nature of acting and discussion. This course is both discussion- and studio- based. It is up to you to come to class prepared to engage in lively conversation, respectful debate, and enthusiastic presence.

You are also expected to rehearse with your fellow actors outside of class, as part of the collaborative nature of theatre. We will discuss your outside rehearsals in class. Both in-class and outside scenework/rehearsal require notes to be taken — please be prepared.

Communication

Please email me at kqeggers@usc.edu any time with questions or concerns. Emails will generally be returned within 48 hours on weekdays. I can also meet with you via my Zoom personal meeting room, or at an on-campus location as schedules allow.

I also ask that the class as a whole have a communication group, platform of your choice, so you can easily get in touch with each other.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Blackboard will be updated regularly with announcements, readings, etc. Please check often. Blackboard help for students is at studentblackboardhelp.usc.edu.

"I'm in the business of creating human beings." — Viola Davis

Required Reading

- *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods* by Richard Brestoff (Available through the USC Bookstore (www.uscbookstore.com/textbooks) or wherever you like to buy books.)
- PDFs and/or links of other required readings will be assigned throughout the semester and posted to Blackboard.

Required Viewing

Links to interviews and performances will be assigned throughout the semester and posted to Blackboard.

Supplemental Reading

- *Letters to a Young Artist* by Anna Deavere Smith
- *The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act* by Isaac Butler
- *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by M. Bruder, LM Cohn, M. Olnek, N. Pollack, R. Previto, S. Zigler
- *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches* by Sharrell D. Lockett with Tia Shaffer
- *The Art of Acting* by Stella Adler
- *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen
- *A Korean Approach to Actor Training* by Jeungsook Yoo
- *Acting in Film* by Michael Caine

Supplemental Viewing/Watching/Listening

- Live theatre, including School of Dramatic Arts performances
- High quality recorded theatre — Digital Theatre+ and Broadway HD are both excellent resources
- *Variety Studio: "Actors on Actors,"* available on Youtube
- Narrative film and television, both of and outside your personal identity, both current and historical — "Best Of" lists can be found on *Rolling Stone*, *Screenrant*, *IMDb*, etc.

*"I feel like telling stories is a spiritual exercise
and I think that it's something that we need as a culture and as humans.
You put your nightmares up there, you put your dreams up there, and people can see them better because
they can stand outside of it and recognize themselves inside it."
— Holly Hunter*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Below is a general overview of the assignments. A detailed assignment description will be posted on Blackboard with ample time for each assignment.

- Studio Activities — With the intention of understanding and appreciating the work of the actor, students will participate regularly in Acting Studio experiences, including working on scenes with classmates. You are expected to participate and commit with a generous heart, an open mind and a devoted work ethic. No acting experience is necessary and you are not graded on talent or ability, you are graded on your effort.
"Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment." — Mahatma Gandhi
- Discussion — You are expected to participate thoughtfully, respectfully and fully in discussions about readings, viewings, rehearsals, and other topics as they arise. Taking notes on and/or highlighting readings/viewings is strongly suggested so you can refer back easily.

Performance Analysis — You will select a film or theatrical performance and write a 2-3 page analysis of the acting in the scene. This might include thoughts on vocal or physical adjustments, the soul or inner life, any moments of the performance that feel forced or unbelievable to you, other tools the actor uses for their transformation and storytelling. Detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard with ample time.

Midterm/Open Scene +
Written Component — You will create and perform in an “open” scene, in pairs assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of each open scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory. Written Component of the Open Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

Actor Research Paper — You will select an actor and write a 4-5 page research paper on that actor, and their work and process, including close analysis of at least one scene, and a creative portion on working with the actor. The paper will have proper references. Detailed instructions will be posted on Blackboard with ample time.

Final Scene +
Written Component — You will rehearse and perform in a final scene, in pairs or groups assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. Written Component of the Contemporary Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard, and completed during our designated Final Exam time on December 9.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	% of Grade
In-class Studio Activities (presence, focus, attitude, willingness)	20
Discussion of readings, viewings, concepts	10
Midterm/Open Scene + Written Component	20
Performance Analysis	10
Actor Research Paper	15
Final Scene + Written Response	25
TOTAL	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A = 95-100 pts B+ = 87-89 pts C+ = 77-79 pts D+ = 67-69 pts F = 59 or below

A- = 90-94 pts B = 83-86 pts C = 73-76 pts D = 63-66 pts

B- = 80-82 pts C- = 70-72 pts D- = 60-62 pts

Assignment Submission Policy

Written assignments should be posted on Blackboard as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time, and should be formatted for clarity and readability. Late assignments will not be awarded full points. Do not send links to Google Docs.

Studio Assignments are presented in class. Associated notes do not need to be submitted, although you will refer to your work and must be prepared.

Grades will generally be posted to Blackboard within a week. If you fail to turn in an assignment, it will show on Blackboard Grade Center — I cannot follow up with you to ask about missing assignments.

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).

What happens in class, stays in class!

Learning Experience Evaluation

Learning Experience 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 with me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

Attendance

Being absent, late, or leaving early disturbs the communal nature of this seminar. You will miss in-class studio points for any missed class (medical status withstanding).

However, your health and the health of our community eclipses all! If your Covid-19 (or other virus) status precludes you from attending class in-person, I will attempt to conduct class as hybrid, and request you attend class LIVE (via Zoom). I will not open the Zoom classroom unless you notify me via email before class begins. Travel and other scenarios are not grounds for attending via Zoom.

Extracurricular activities do not excuse you from class work. (Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university are exempt, with pre-submitted official documentation. See SDA Statement on Productions, ISPs, and Extra-Curricular Commitments below.)

Classroom Norms

- Devices — Cell phones and other electronic devices should be left on silent in your backpack/bag, away from your work in class UNLESS you are referring to a reading we are discussing, or taking notes. Laptops and tablets are far preferred for these needs over cellphones, and paper/pen is far preferred for taking notes. This is to encourage your focus, mindfulness, and respect to your peers. Unauthorized use of cellphones in class will negatively affect your in-class studio points for the day.
- Attire — The work of an actor is physical and can get sweaty; be prepared. 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. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged.
- Eating — Food and drink is not permitted during any class. Absolutely no gum.
- Break — We generally do not take an official break during the 110 minutes of class; please be prepared to stay in the room, actively participating. In the event of an emergency for which you must leave the room, observe theatre rules of being discrete and respectful to your fellow classmates.

Strike —

You are expected to restore the classroom to neutral at the end of each class.

"The art of acting consists in keeping people from coughing."
— Ralph Richardson

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Please note: due to the fluid and creative nature of this course, weekly structure will change to accommodate the needs of individuals and the entire seminar cohort. You will be informed of any changes as much as possible.

All Assignments, big and small, will be posted to Blackboard. Please consult Blackboard closely and often!

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
1	Mon Aug 22	Welcome/introductions/ syllabus review. Begin studio work — ensemble, play, and mindfulness.		For Wednesday: Read "What is Acting?," posted to Blackboard. Prepare, if needed, story of My Name.
	Wed Aug 24	Studio work — ensemble, focus. Discuss reading. My Name Storytelling.	Discuss "What is Acting?" Story of My Name to share.	For Week Two: Select and share piece of acting that speaks to you. Read selections from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> . Watch selections of "To Be or Not to Be," posted to Blackboard.
2	Mon Aug 29	Studio work — movement/voice. Discuss reading and viewing. Acting share.	Discuss selections of "To Be or Not to Be." Discuss selections from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> . Share piece of acting that speaks to you.	For Week Six: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS specific posted to Blackboard.
	Wed Aug 31	Studio work — movement/voice. Acting share, continued.		For Week Three: Watch Lady Gaga & Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Actors on Actors."
3	Mon Sep 5	LABOR DAY — NO CLASS		
	Wed Sep 7	Studio work — imagination. Discuss viewing. Acting share, continued.	Discuss Lady Gaga & Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Actors on Actors."	For Week Four: Read Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 from <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> . Viewing assignment TBA.
4	Mon Sep 12	Studio work — ensemble. Discuss reading/viewing. Acting share, continued, as needed.	Discuss <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> .	
	Wed Sept 14	Begin Midterm Open Scene work.		For Week Five: Read "Viola Davis: 'My Entire Life Has Been A Protest'" from <i>Vanity Fair</i> . Watch BAFTA Guru's "Viola Davis on Acting" and "Anatomy of a Scene: <i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> " Begin Open Scene work with Partner.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
5	Mon Sep 19	Open scene work. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss Viola Davis reading and viewing. Open Scene prep as specified in class.	Open Scene work with partner.
	Wed Sep 21	Open scene work.		For Week Six: Read Chapters 3 & 4 from <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> . Viewing assignment TBA.
6	Mon Sep 26	Open scene work. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> and viewing. DUE: PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS.	For Week Fourteen: ACTOR RESEARCH PAPER Open Scene work with partner.
	Wed Sep 28	Open scene work.		For Week Seven: Read "On 'Succession,' Jeremy Strong Doesn't Get the Joke" from <i>The New Yorker</i> . Viewing assignment TBA.
7	Mon Oct 3	Open scene work. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss Jeremy Strong reading and viewing.	Open Scene work with partner.
	Wed Oct 5	Open scene work.		For Week Eight: Read Chapters 5, 6 & 7 from <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> . Viewing assignment TBA.
8	Mon Oct 10	Open scene work. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> and viewing.	Final rehearsal for Open Scene, finalize Written Component.
	Wed Oct 12	Midterm: Open Scene Presentations. Midterm written component due.	DUE: MIDTERM SCENE + WRITTEN COMPONENT	For Week Nine: Read "Ritual Poetic Drama" from <i>Black Acting Methods</i> . Viewing assignment TBA.
9	Mon Oct 17	Begin scene study. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss "Ritual Poetic Drama" and viewing.	
	Wed Oct 19	Scene study. Begin Final scene work.		For Week Ten: Read Chapters 8, 9, 10 & 11 from <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> . Viewing assignment TBA. Final Scene work with partner or group.
10	Mon Oct 24	Scene study. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss <i>The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods</i> and viewing.	Final Scene work with partner or group.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Wed Oct 26	Scene study.		For Week Eleven: Read "The Many Lives of Steven Yeun" from <i>The NYTimes</i> Viewing assignment TBA.
11	Mon Oct 31	Scene study. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss Steven Yeun reading and viewing.	Final Scene work with partner or group.
	Wed Nov 2	Scene study.		For Week Twelve: Read "All the Means of Expression" and "The Method and the Future" from <i>The Method</i> . Viewing assignment TBA.
12	Mon Nov 7	Scene study. Discuss reading/viewing.	Discuss <i>The Method</i> readings and viewing.	Final Scene work with partner or group.
	Wed Nov 9	Scene study.		For Week Thirteen: Reading assignment TBA. Viewing assignment TBA.
13	Mon Nov 14	Scene study. Discuss reading/viewing.		Final Scene work with partner or group.
	Wed Nov 16	Scene study.		For Week Fourteen: Reading assignment TBA. Viewing assignment TBA. Actor Research Paper due Monday!
14	Mon Nov 21	Scene study. Discuss actor research.	DUE: ACTOR RESEARCH PAPER	Final Scene work with partner or group. Due Monday!
	Wed Nov 23	THANKSGIVING BREAK — NO CLASS		
15	Mon Nov 28	Final Scene Presentation	DUE: FINAL SCENE	
	Wed Nov 30	Discuss Final Scenes, prep for Final. Learning Experience Evaluations.		Reflect on Final Scene, and review content.
Final	FRIDAY DECEMBER 9 — 2pm-4pm	Final Scene Written Component, reflection and short answer.		Happy Winter Break!

"I think good acting results when working together in a comfortable environment."
— Ji Chang-wook

SDA Statements On...

Productions, ISPs, and Extra-Curricular Commitments

SDA productions, ISPs and extracurricular activities* do 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 are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.)

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: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite (engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

Statement on 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 Needing Accessibility Services

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX), osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Statement on Emergency Preparedness/ Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency or 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, emergency.usc.edu.

Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health

213-740-9355 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)

213-740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)

213-740-5086 equity.usc.edu
Title IX – 213-821-8298 titleix.usc.edu
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment

213-740-5086 or 213-821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
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.

USC Campus Support and Intervention

213-821-4710 campussupport.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC

213-740-2101 diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency / Dept. of Public Safety

Emergency: 213-740-4321 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency: 213-740-6000 — 24/7 on-call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime.