USC School of Dramatic Arts

THEATER 101: INTRODUCTION TO ACTING

Fall 2022

Instructor: Carvens Lissaint **Email:** lissaint@usc.edu **Phone:** 917-754-5197 **Office:** By appointment via Zoom	**Course:** THTR 101: Intro to Acting **Class Time:** Mon & Wed 8:00am – 9:50am **Room:** DRC 120 **Credit:** 4 Units

"Acting is the simplicity and the complexity of TRUTH TELLING"

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will lay out the foundational principles for studying the craft of Acting. We will explore this artform and discipline as a means of storytelling and performance. Our goal is to break down various pedagogical approaches, find a dynamic understanding of our instrument, and explore theories that will enhance our knowledge of the American theater. During the semester, we will utilize improv, sensory exercises, clowning, ensemble-based workshops, movement, text analysis, monologue coaching, and extensive Scene Study to sharpen our skills and approach to the work. Our hope is to *BUILD* the Body, *OPEN* the Voice and *IGNITE* the Imagination. We will strive every day to foster a safe space, where each artist can create and explore freely, in an environment that will also challenge their comfort zone. In addition to this, students will examine various forms of artistry, from solo show performance, poetry, and music. Actors are encouraged to lead with respect, generosity, curiosity, compassion, and courage so they can grow as an ensemble and cohort.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Write & preform their own monologues.
- Lead their own personal warmups.
- Have a beginning framework of text analysis for the actor.
- Apply various techniques into daily acting exercises.
- Engage in play with openness, relaxation, healthy impulse and focus.
- Effectively practice the basic anatomy of a scene (Previous Circumstance, Given Circumstance, Wants, Objectives, Activity, Spatial Relationship & Actioning).

EXPECTATIONS

- **Preparedness** - There will be a high expectation of professionalism that will mirror the same standard as actors in the industry. Students will agree to show up on time, rehearse extensively outside of classroom hours, and do the work of taking care of your mind, body

and soul with the same care as a fine-tuned instrument. Every class will begin with group warm up. Exploring foundations of voice, physicality, relaxation, concentration, imagination, focus, playfulness, and ensemble-building. **Please come DRESSED WITH APPROPRIATE MOVEMENT ATTIRE!!!**

- **Respect** - The work we explore throughout the course of the semester will be raw, vulnerable, and honest. We cannot have breakthroughs if we don't uphold a level of respect for each member of this cohort. This means attentiveness while your fellow ensemble mates are working, refrain from harsh language and bullying, showing compassion and understanding while people are learning, and being committed to conflict resolution when disagreements arise.
- **Hard Work** - Acting is a craft and should be treated as such. Though this career path can lead to a life in entertainment, not every entertainer is a true actor. Actors are athletes of the heart and soul. This art form takes a high level of diligence and dedication, it takes consistent study, focus, concentration, and resilience. Please do not disrespect the pioneers of this practice by not giving your maximum effort.
- **Dignity & Integrity** - When the world is in crisis, artists are called upon to put the mirror to humanity's face. We are charged with the task to make people laugh, make people cry and to make people think. There will be a high emphasize on the responsibility of what it means to be an *artist citizen*. We will do the daily work on acknowledging the supernatural calling on our lives to tell other people's stories. We will strive to do so with honor and with care.
- ***SAFE SPACE* - *There are two types of discomfort: 1. discomfort of the unfamiliar and 2. discomfort of UNSAFETY. We strive for the unfamiliar, this is where our best work lives, but we protect ourselves from the unsafety. The nature of our artform is one that calls us to dig deep into the untouched aspects of the human condition. Often times, this can bring up triggers for people in the room. I believe in pushing students to a place of growth that has been hidden deep within, but not at the expense of your mental health and your physical health. We will foster and create a community and culture of boundaries to ensure the safety of everyone.***

REQUIRED READING

- "Words Become Flesh" by Marc Bamuthi Joseph *(will be available via Blackboard)*
- **TDB Play** Assigned for Final Contemporary Scene Performance
- Handouts: *(Including selected articles, Essays or Poems)*

REQUIRED VIEWING

- "Words Become Flesh" by Marc Bamuthi Joseph *(via YouTube)*
- At Least One USC School of Dramatic Arts Production this season
- Interviews: *(Via YouTube Links)*

SUPPLEMENTAL READING *(Not required but highly encouraged)*

- "The Second Circle: *How to Use Positive Energy for Success in Every Situation"* by: Patsy Rondenburg
- "Respect for Acting" by Uta Hagen
- "Actions: *The Actor's Thesaurus*" by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd-Williams

BREAKDOWN OF WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Schedule Note: In light of the creative and spontaneous nature of this course (in addition to this new season of navigating COVID-19), our weekly schedule structure can and will be subject to change to accommodate the needs of the ensemble. Please remain patient and flexible as we learn and grow together.

Week	Date	Topic & Focus	Due Today	Homework
1	Mon - Aug 22nd	Introductory Day. (Go over Syllabus)		
	Wed - Aug 24th	"GITS" *(Get Into The Story)*		Find a piece of art that speaks to you. A poem, a song or a monologue and be prepared to perform it for sharing's.
2	Mon - Aug 29th	"GITS" & begin Sharing's.	Sharing's	Weekly Poem or reflection
	Wed - Aug 31st	Warm up & Sharing's continued.	Weekly Poem or reflection	READ "Words Become Flesh" by Marc Bamuthi Joseph. ***DO NOT WATCH ON YOUTUBE YET***
3	**Mon - Sep 5th**	***NO CLASS*** ***(Labor Day)***		
	Wed - Sep 7th	Warm up, Discussion about play, intro to sensory work.	2 Page Play Reflection Paper on "Words Become Flesh"	
4	Mon - Sep 12th	Warm up, sensory work & theater games	N/A	Draft one of Monologue.

	Wed - Sep 14th	Warm up, Share/ Discuss monologue writing intro & "Anatomy of a Scene".	Draft one of Monologue.	
5	Mon - Sep 19th	Warm up, Partner improv, ensemble movement.		Watch "Words Become Flesh" by Marc Bamuthi Joseph (Via YouTube link)
	Wed - Sep 21st	Warm up & Discussion about play viewing.	Play discussion	
6	Mon - Sep 26th	Warm up, Previous Circumstance, Given Circumstance, Wants!		Weekly Poem or reflection
	Wed - Sep 28th	Warm up & Objectives, Activity, Space.	Weekly Poem or reflection	
7	Mon - Oct 3rd	Warm up & Actions		Final draft of Monologue.
	Wed - Oct 5th	Warm up & Monologue work.	Final draft of Monologue.	
8	Mon - Oct 10th	Warm up & Monologue work continued.		

	Wed - Oct 12th	****MONOLOUGE MIDTERM PERFOMANCE****		
9	Mon - Oct 17th Wed - Oct 19th	Warm up & Scene 1 Exploration Warm up & Scene 1 Exploration		
10	Mon - Oct 24th Wed - Oct 26th	Warm up & Scene 1 Exploration Warm up & Scene 1 Exploration	 Weekly Poem or reflection	Weekly Poem or reflection
11	Mon - Oct 31st Wed - Nov 2nd	Warm up & Scene 1 Exploration ****PERFORMANCE SCENE 1****		 Read Assigned play for Scene Work
12	Mon - Nov 7th Wed - Nov 9th	Warm up, Scene Work & Scene Script Analysis. Warm up & Scene Work.	 Weekly Poem or reflection	Weekly Poem or reflection Rehearse Scene
13	Mon - Nov 14th	Warm up & Scene Work.		Rehearse Scene

	Wed - Nov 16th	Warm up & Scene Work.		Rehearse Scene
14	Mon - Nov 21st	Warm up & Scene Work.		Weekly Poem or reflection & Rehearse Scene
	Wed - Nov 23rd	Warm up & Scene Work.	Weekly Poem or reflection	
15	Mon - Nov 28th	Warm up & Scene Work.		Rehearse Scene
	Wed - Nov 30th	Warm up & Scene Work.		Rehearse Scene
16	Mon - Dec 5th	***NO CLASS* (Study Day)**		- Weekly Poem or reflection & 2 page - Contemporary Scene Rehearsal Reflection
	Wed - Dec 7th	****FINAL SCENE EXAM. Last day of class)****	- Weekly Poem or reflection - Contemporary Scene Rehearsal Reflection	

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW & SUBMISSION POLICY

Assignment note: 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.

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

Written

- 6 (One Page) Poem or Reflection
- 2 (One Page Drafts of Monologues *(First Draft & Final Draft)*
- 1 (Two Page) Play Reflection
- 1 (Two Page) Contemporary Scene Rehearsal Reflection

Total of 10 Writing Assignments

Performance

- Monologue Midterm Performance
- Performance Scene 1
- Final Contemporary Scene Performance

Total of 3 Performances

GRADING BREAKDOWN - GRADING SCALE – GRADING ASSESSMENT

Grading Breakdown

ASSIGNMENT	% GRADE
In Class Activities & Participation	% 10
Monologue Midterm Performance	% 15
Attendance	% 15
Performance Scene 1	% 20
Final Scene Performance	% 20
Written Assignments	% 20
TOTAL	100

Grading 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

Grading Assessment

Written assignments will be assessed in

1. Completion.
2. Timeliness.
3. Effort & Depth of Thought.

Performance will be assessed on

1. Memorization.

2. Outside rehearsal preparation.
3. Demonstrates knowledge of the "Anatomy of a Scene".

In Class Activities & Participation will be assessed by

1. Actively engaging with the exercises and with classmates.
2. Initiates thoughtful discussion in reference to readings and other materials.
3. Demonstrates positive attitude and receives feedback with professionalism.

COVID SAFETY

As of now University and CDC guidelines state that masks are encouraged but NOT required indoors. We will leave this to the digression of everyone's personal comfort level. *(Please see USC's guidelines for Covid-19)*. I cannot control what you do outside of the classroom but please be mindful and move with an abundance of caution while in large groups on and off campus. Please be considerate of your fellow ensemble members.

ATTENDACNE POLICY

It is imperative that you do your best to remain healthy throughout the course of the semester so that you can be present for you cohort. In the event you are absent, it is your responsibility to refer to the syllabus for all homework assignments, and it is your job to confer with your fellow classmates about information that was given during class hours you missed.

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES*

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC CONDUCT AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

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.

S Campus 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).

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 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 me (or to TA) 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 (Vidoe 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.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture Statement
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.

SDA Student Support & Reporting
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

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

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
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.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776
https://osas.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710
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 - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.