

USC School of Dramatic Arts

GESM 111g (Section #35300R): The Actor at Work
Units: 4
Spring 2023
Monday and Wednesday, 8am-9:50am
Location: MRF 206
Instructor: RODNEY TO
Office Location: JEF
Office Hours: Hours available upon request
Contact Info: rodneyto@usc.edu / (917) 445-1040 m.

Course Description

Appreciating art is a global experience and, at its best, connects its enthusiasts at the most vital center of their being - their soul. However, all art is certainly a subjective experience and open to interpretation. Acting is no exception. This course is designed to develop an intricate, yet holistic understanding of all fundamental creative and business elements which comprise the work of professional actors. Students will examine texts, plays and major theories that are the foundation of the professional actor's work. Students will use this primary knowledge in examining various styles of performances to critically and intelligently discuss acting in an informed, empathetic manner. In doing so, students gain a stronger appreciation for the Performing Arts and an even greater understanding of the dedication that goes into the Actor's life.

Learning Objectives

- Intelligently discuss the profession of Acting and its various forms.
- Examine Uta Hagen and Stanislavsky (founders of prominent acting techniques) and gain understanding of the differences and how they are applied to an actor's work.
- Run through fundamental breathing and movement exercises to understand the mechanics of the body and how it applies to performance.
- Rehearse and perform an open scene and understand its use in fundamental acting work in creating 'real life behavior under imaginary circumstances'.
- Attend several different performances (improv, stand up comedy, religious ceremony, etc.) throughout the Los Angeles area to witness 'performance in life' and its ubiquity.
- Through analyses, critique performances and gain a stronger, informed language with which to discuss them.
- Understand the various positions (agent, manager, casting director, etc.) involved in an actor's career, how they function, and how they use portfolio tools (headshot, reel, etc.) to aide in (hopefully) procuring work for actors.
- Have complete knowledge of the day-to-day of working actors, covering auditioning, physical and mental health, financial responsibilities and supplemental work.

“Acting is not rocket science, but it is an art form. What you are doing is illuminating humanity.” - Viola Davis

“Acting in Theatre or Television or Screen is only for the irrecoverably diseased, those so smitten there is no choice.” - Michael Shurtleff

“Anyone who is called to pursuing the vocation of a professional actor is insane. A hero. But definitely insane.” - Rodney To

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

No textbook required. Coursework and assigned reading will be conferred throughout the semester.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

Grading Breakdown

- Analysis #1: 10pts **considering making this an interview analysis - TBA**
- Analysis #2: 10pts **considering making this an interview analysis - TBA**
- Final exam/paper: 30pts
- Performance #1: 10pts (Zero points if you do not attend or if alternate option is not approved)
- Performance #2: 10pts (Zero points if you do not attend or if alternate option is not approved)
- SDA Spring Season show: 15pts (Zero points if you do not attend or if alternate option is not approved)
- Class participation: 15pts † (see *Participation breakdown below*)

Total: 100 points

† **Participation Breakdown. Participation will be assessed in TWO different ways:**

• **Class Participation**

† **15pts EXCELLENT participation.** Demonstrates active, everyday engagement. Shows willingness & enthusiasm in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **10pts GOOD participation.** Frequent active participation. Engaged, willing semi-regular participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

† **7pts AVERAGE participation.** Semi-regular, but active participation in discussions, class activity, and collaborations

• **Attendance at Required Performances (TBA)**

Attendance will be taken at each required performance(TBA). Any unexcused absence will negatively affect participation. You can't participate or engage if you are not present!

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

Further Participation Notes:

All aspects of a life in the Performing Arts is nothing short of a fully collaborative, immersive process. Also, we learn best when we learn from each other. I cannot emphasize enough how much (more) you will learn by listening to, working with, and supporting your fellow classmates. Therefore daily participation and active engagement in class (discussions, classwork, etc.) is essential and *will* factor into your final grade. **Therefore no absences or late arrivals will be allowed.** *Participation is weighted at no more than 15% as per University Guidelines.*

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be discussed in detail at the end of each class period. Assignments will be either emailed, uploaded, or presented in class per Rodney's instruction.

Late Submission Policy

Assignments are expected to be completed by the due date & time. Grades on late assignments will be deducted appropriately. I reserve the right to not accept late assignments at my discretion.

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).

Course evaluation

Course 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.

RODNEY'S IN-CLASS POLICY REGARDING COVID AND SAFETY

- While I cannot require you to wear a (KN95) mask, I ask that students wear one at all times from the moment you walk into class, to the moment you leave. Rodney will wear one as well.
- As a professional actor myself, and one currently working outside of USC, I must NOT take wearing a mask lightly. If for any reason you do not agree or feel indifferent or anticipate not wanting to wear a mask, MY CLASS SECTION IS NOT THE CLASS FOR YOU.
- Students and faculty (including myself) have household members who are immunocompromised and it's imperative that we not put them at any more risk than necessary.
- NO EATING OR DRINKING IN CLASS because in order to do so, you would have to remove your mask. So if you even want to sip water, step outside of the building. Again, no excuses.

I pride myself in treating all students like professionals-in-training. It's important that you begin your journey to becoming professionals by behaving as such throughout this course which, at the very least, begins with proper, respectful usage of your devices. No one in the history of the world has died or will die because of you paying attention in class.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

*****SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED. WILL NOTIFY OF ALL CHANGES*****

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverables/Due Dates
WEEK 1			
1/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro to course • What is an actor? • What makes a great performance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Uta Hagen handout 'Substitution' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to discuss next class
1/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss 'Substitution' • Class examples • 'Trigger' object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring ONE personal object from home and be prepared to discuss its significance in your life. • Read Uta Hagen handout 'Sense Memory', 'Emotional Memory' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared to discuss and incorporate ideas into classwork next week.
WEEK 2			
1/16	MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY	NO CLASS	
1/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss handouts • Present 'trigger object and story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Open Scene handout 	
WEEK 3			
1/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin discussion of Open Scene 		
1/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open scene cont'd. / Rehearse open scene 		

WEEK 4			
1/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Scene performance 		
2/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Scene performance cont'd. 		
WEEK 5			
2/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend performance 	(TBA, we will all go as a class)	
2/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss & Debrief Performance #1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 page double-spaced, no header analysis (#1) on performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUE NO LATER THAN 2/15 END OF DAY!
WEEK 6			
2/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch pilot episode of The West Wing 		
2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis #1 due today! • Discuss The West Wing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Play #1 (TBA) 	
WEEK 7			
2/20	PRESIDENTS DAY	NO	CLASS
2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Performance #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 page double-spaced, no header analysis on performance #2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUE NO LATER THAN 3/1

WEEK 8			
2/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss & Debrief Performance #2 • Discuss Play #1 		
3/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis #2 due today! • Watch and Discuss pilot episode of Parks and Recreation 		
WEEK 9			
3/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch programming for guest(TBA) 		
3/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest (Entertainment professional, TBA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Play #2 (From SDA Spring season, TBA) 	
3/12-19	SPRING	BREAK	NO CLASSES
WEEK 10			
3/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss & Debrief Guest #1 • Discuss Play #2 		
3/22	Attend Performance		
WEEK 11			
3/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business: The Multi-hyphenate. Actors Options (Writing, directing, etc.) 		
3/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest: Multi-hyphenate 		

WEEK 12			
4/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business: Procuring employment/ Representation (Agent, manager) 		
4/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business: The Actor in Audition. • Process • Callbacks, PINs, testing, etc. 		
WEEK 13			
4/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch programming for Guest #2 (Entertainment professional, TBA) 		
4/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest #2 (TBA) 		
WEEK 14			
4/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Performance 		
4/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss & Debrief Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose FINAL PAPER topic. 	
WEEK 15			
4/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review semester • Begin choice for final paper 		
4/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual meetings to discuss final paper option. • Meeting times will be assigned (TBA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 page, double-spaced, no header, first person review of what the course taught you about the professional actor. Incorporate what was touched upon this semester (from plays, to tv shows, to business, to technique) and demonstrate strong understanding of the Creative's profession. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR FINAL PAPER WILL BE DUE BEFORE THE FINAL CLASS WHICH IS ON MONDAY, MAY 8 at 11am! I ENCOURAGE YOU TO GET IT DONE MUCH EARLIER THAN THEN!

4/28-5/2	STUDY	DAYS	NO CLASSES
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******YOUR FINAL CLASS WILL TAKE PLACE ON MONDAY, MAY 8 at 11am in the same classroom all semester******

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 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 (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.

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 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>

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.