

## Improvisation and Theatre Games (322)

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Office hours by appointment

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**Improvisation and Theatre Games (322)** That is the official name of this class, however, for my Advanced Improv class, I call it “**Wholehearted Improv.**” We will improvise with complete *sincerity and commitment*. Using your basics from level one, you will be asked to add emotional awareness and breathe life into fully developed characters that you find at the start of scenes.

### OBJECTIVE

To understand, learn and apply the basic tenets of improvisation and discover how improvisation can be applied to storytelling, character development, acting, the workplace, and being a contributor to the human experience.

BE CHANGED! We will cultivate authenticity and LET GO OF JUDGEMENT. We will let go of perfectionism and be aware of self-compassion. We will cultivate trust in ourselves and each other and connect to our intuition. We will also embrace JOY/PLAY with reckless abandon! *Without judgment and with courage. ‘To risk, to fail and still strive to do their best, spend themselves at a worthy cause, and prepared to fail while daring greatly!’* (h/t Teddy Roosevelt\* See below) In both life and improv, failure is inevitable. You don’t always win, and winning doesn’t always mean you are successful. You can, however, learn from that failure, pick yourself up with great enthusiasm, and place yourself in the arena again.

This is meaningful work so learning to let go of self-doubt and how we are ‘supposed to improvise/be funny’ will drive us through each class! (Who wants to create or have fun with all those rules hanging over our heads!) Letting go of being ‘cool’ and always being in control, letting go of comparison, and letting go of powerlessness or a lack of agency! Please be aware, this class does NOT conform to gender and heteronormative scene work. Speaking of scene work, we will focus on scenes and character building throughout the semester along with our work on strengthening our foundational work.

This is the second course in my workshop series, in which each student actively participates in every class. There are traditionally no written midterms or exams. However, students must attend class for the Final Exam period during its regularly scheduled time. ***If you are NOT at the warm up you are NOT in the class.***

*\*It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly;*

*who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.- Theodore Roosevelt, The Man in the Arena. Excerpt from the speech "Citizenship In A Republic"*

## **GRADING**

Grades are based on the quality of participation (i.e. frequency of attendance (5%), supportiveness of fellow students (20%), commitment to the exercises (50%), enthusiasm for learning and improvement (25%), at each student's own capability.) Students are NOT judged on their mastery of each exercise, but on their willingness to **COMMIT ENTHUSIASTICALLY** to each exercise or scene. I strongly encourage you to use this class as an opportunity to trust yourselves, have fun, go for it and take risks!

**ONE** as in 1, absence is permitted per semester, excused or unexcused, other than documented medical explanations. Each absence after the first will result in a 1/2 point grade drop (e.g. from an A to an A-). Lateness is not allowed and *two lates are recorded as an absence*.

## **CLASS RULES:**

Be fiercely supportive and respectful of each other. During other students' scenes, please **DO NOT TALK. DO NOT TEXT. DO NOT CHECK CELL PHONES.** There will be a brief break at the halfway mark, so you will have an opportunity then to take personal time. **DO NOT DO OTHER CLASS HOMEWORK.** These actions will cause your grades to drop immediately. Pay attention to your classmates' work onstage. You will learn as much from their participation as your own.

Show up every week. Come to play. Commit to the warm up. *Muster your energy and play hard.* Be supportive and respectful of each other. Be vulnerable! Be prepared to be on your feet for the entire class. Exhibit a concrete desire to improve your skills. Do all this: You get an A.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is an in-depth study of improvised scene work. We will explore the primary tools for creating improvised scenes and developing full characters. You will be encouraged to make strong emotional and character choices. This course emphasizes character development

through exercises and scene work, while introducing advanced improv theory and technique. We will continue to explore the WHY ("today is important") of the scene.

We will also review/reinforce the basic concepts of improv:

- Building on my scene partners idea!
- Yes and No.
- BE CHANGED!
- Yes And...Because...ing
- Why? Why? Why? Why? WHY?!
- Listen! Let go! Listen! Lets GO!
- Ensemble! Ensemble! Ensemble!
- Teamwork makes the scene work.
- Strong Emotional Choices = Strong Emotional Characters
- Risk/Danger/Fearlessness/Make Believe
- Commitment and how not to fear relationships.
- Being Specific. Be very, very, specific.
- Operating at the height of *your* intelligence.
- Relationships\* \*See commitment
- Justification and support. Be a team supporter!
- Triangulation in scenes and life. The Tilt!
- Listening skills for life AND BEYOND!

### **EMPHASIS ON STORY AND CHARACTER POV**

A character is a person you create who is, in at least one very specific way, unlike yourself. This can be a behavioral aspect, a different value system, point of view, demeanor, IQ, cultural context, etc. How does your character view the world and the people around you? This course gives you a great opportunity to use your imagination and try out behaviors and attitudes that might be very different from your own.

A character is not merely an accent, a posture, a repeated catch phrase or an overly broad stereotype void of original features. For the character to be effective it must be grounded in reality. I encourage you to observe people around you and keep a notebook of your observations. What character traits make you laugh? Make you crazy? Pay attention to specifics/details. You will be asked to create at least 2 original fully-formed characters in this course.

## **BE CHANGED TO DISCOVER YOUR STORY**

A story has a beginning, middle and end. However, it's what happens to our characters during those events that causes them to change. That change is what makes a story so satisfying. Who is our character and how do they handle the situation in front of them? Do they evolve emotionally based on what has happened to them? Character is story, and if story means change then characters changing is what makes a great story.

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## **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**

### **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 the 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](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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### **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.

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### **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>

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### **Support Systems:**

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://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](https://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](https://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](https://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](https://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](https://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.