

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

## THTR 101 Introduction to Acting

Spring 2024

Units: 4

Mondays & Wednesdays—1-2:50

Location: PED 202

Instructor: Sabina Zúñiga Varela

Office Hours: By Appointment Only

Contact Info: [zunigava@usc.edu](mailto:zunigava@usc.edu)

*"The word theatre comes from the Greeks.*

*It means the seeing place.*

*It is the place people come to see the truth about life and the social situation."*

*- Stella Adler*

### Course Description

In this class students explore techniques and fundamentals of performance.

Through out this course we will:

- \* Engage in group exercises and discussions to build a company.
- \* Participate in vocal and physical warm-ups to develop a readiness for performance.
- \* Read selected plays and write reflections.
- \* Rehearse and perform group & partner scenes and individual monologues.
- \* Practice wellness and mindfulness techniques to support the creative work.
- \* Attend at least one SDA Spring production.

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will have:

- \* Created a company with their fellow classmates through acting games and exercises.
- \* Demonstrated routine physical and vocal warm-ups that can be utilized in future public speaking and performance preparation.
- \* Explored beyond their comfort zone in order to free their authentic voice and share personal insight in regards to storytelling.
- \* Analyzed selected plays that will be read outside of class.
- \* Obtain a toolbox of 15 Wellness/Mindfulness exercises that can be used beyond this class.
- \* A deeper understanding of the fundamentals and steps that create a theatrical piece.

### Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

We will be reading 5 plays throughout the semester. Each play will be available by PDF that will be supplied by the professor

### Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

Letters to a Young Artist by Anna Deveare Smith

Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen

The Art of Acting by Stella Adler

Letters to a Young Poet by Rainer Marie Rilke

### Description and Assessment of Assignments

**We have four units for this class: Company Building/Open Scenes/Monologues/Final Scenes.**

Each of these units will culminate with an IN CLASS performance. Guidelines for these performances will be distributed at the beginning of each unit. There will be classroom time for rehearsal and notes during the process leading up to the performance. We will also have written reflections in regards to content we cover in class, scripts that we are reading and any special events that we attend during the semester. Not only do the unit culminations count for their own percentage of the grade, they also count towards your participation percentage. In-Class discussions and written reflections also count towards your participation.

### Grading Rubric

Criteria	Exemplar (5)	Developed (4)	Limited (3)	Unacceptable (0)
PROCESS	There was a significant amount of rehearsal and attention given to the development of the project.	There was the minimum amount of rehearsal and attention given to the development of the project.	There was not enough rehearsal or attention given to the development of the project.	There was little to no rehearsal or attention given to the development of the project.
CREATIVITY	The project held a bold sense of personal creativity and a willingness to share.	The project had moments of personal creativity and willingness to share.	The project had very little personal creativity and willingness to share.	The project held no creativity or willingness to share.
COMPLETION	The project was completed on time and conveyed a sense of readiness and preparation.	The project was completed but did not convey a strong sense of readiness and/or preparation.	The project was not completed on time and conveyed very little readiness or preparation.	The project was not completed.

Criteria	Exemplar (5)	Developed (4)	Limited (3)	Unacceptable (0)
TOTAL (15)				

### Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	% of Grade
Attendance	25
Participation	15
Unit Culminations (15% each)	60
<b>TOTAL</b>	

### Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

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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 Timeline

Students will receive a completed grading rubric with feedback from the instructors at least 72 hours after the In-Class performances.

### Attendance

#### 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.

## **Classroom norms/ Company Agreement**

- \* We are working in draft: The Focus is process not product.
- \* Respect each others ideas and avoid being dismissive.
- \* Refrain from Judgement and comparison.
- \* Show up on time and give adequate notice of absences.

## **Academic Integrity**

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

## **Policy for the use of AI Generators**

Since creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

## Course Schedule

\*Course activities are subject to change based on the Company's needs.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
<b>Week 1</b> Mon 1/8 Wed 1/10	UNIT ONE: Company Building Introductions/ Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Company building exercises/ <i>Wellness Workshop: Legs Up</i>	Begin reading: <i>Twilight: Los Angeles 1992</i>	Complete reading <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i> by Wednesday January 31st.
<b>Week 2</b> *No Class Mon 1/15 * MLK Day Wed 1/17	Go over syllabus in class/Physical and Vocal Warm-up/ Company building exercises/ Playbuilding brainstorming/ <i>Wellness workshop: Box Breathing</i>	Continue reading: <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i>	Class check in about <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i> on Wed 1/17
<b>Week 3</b> Mon 1/23 Wed 1/25	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Company Building exercises/ Playbuilding rehearsal/ <i>Wellness workshop: Sound Bath</i>	Continue reading: <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i>	Class check in about <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i> on Wed 1/25

<p><b>Week 4</b> Mon 1/29 Wed 1/31</p>	<p>Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Company Building exercises/ Playbuilding rehearsal and performance/ <i>Wellness workshop:</i> <i>Doodling</i></p>	<p>Continue reading: <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i></p>	<p>Complete reading <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i> In-class written reflection on Wed 1/31 Playbuilding project performance on Wed 1/31</p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> Mon 2/5 Wed 2/7</p>	<p>UNIT TWO: Open Scenes Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Open Scene work in class/ Explore setting and background/ <i>Wellness workshop:</i> <i>Hand Yoga</i></p>	<p>Begin reading: <i>I and You</i> by Lauren Gunderson</p>	<p>Complete reading <i>I and You</i> by Lauren Gunderson Wed 2/21</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b> Mon 2/12 Wed 2/14</p>	<p>Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Open Scene rehearsal/ <i>Wellness workshop:</i> <i>Jaw Jiggle</i></p>	<p>Continue reading: <i>I and You</i> by Lauren Gunderson</p>	
<p><b>Week 7</b> * No Class Mon 2/19 President's Day* * Wed 2/21</p>	<p>Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Open Scene project performance/ <i>Wellness workshop:</i> <i>Alternate Nostril Breathing</i></p>	<p>Continue reading: <i>I and You</i> by Lauren Gunderson</p>	<p>Wed 2/21: Open Scene Presentations and written reflection on <i>I and You</i> and Scene Work.</p>
<p><b>Week 8</b> Mon 2/26 Wed 2/28</p>	<p>UNIT THREE: Monologues Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Group monologue work/ Explore character and objective/ Monologue Learning by Heart technique/ <i>Wellness workshop:</i> <i>Chakras</i></p>	<p>Begin reading choice of play as well as the play that the selected monologue is from. * List of plays will be available at the beginning of the unit.</p>	

<b>Week 9</b> Mon 3/4 Wed 3/6	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/ Monologue rehearsal/Character worksheets/Wellness <i>Workshop: Lion's Breath</i>	Begin to learn monologue by heart. Continue reading chosen play and monologue play.	
*No Classes Spring Break 3/10-3/17	<b>ENJOY</b>	<b>YOUR</b>	<b>WEEK!</b>
<b>Week 10</b> Mon 3/18 Wed 3/20	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/ Monologue rehearsal and performance/ <i>Wellness Workshop: Earthing (Grounding)</i>	Complete reading both the chosen play and monologue play.  Finish learning monologue by heart.	Written reflections on plays.
<b>Week 11</b> Mon 3/25 Wed 3/27	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/ Monologue rehearsal and performance/ <i>Wellness Workshop: Stretching for Stress</i>		Wednesday 3/27 Monologue Presentations
<b>Week 12</b> Mon 4/1 Wed 4/3	UNIT FOUR: FINAL SCENES Physical and Vocal Warm-up/ Choose Scene Partners and begin scene selection/Explore Setting, Background, Character, Objective and Architecture. <i>Wellness Workshop: Journaling with Ambient Music</i>	Begin reading play with selected scene and begin rehearsing scene with partner(s)	Complete reading play with selected scene by 4/11

<b>Week 13</b> Mon 4/8 Wed 4/11	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Scene rehearsals/Continue to explore Setting, Background, Character, Objective and Architecture/ Re-visit Character worksheet/ <i>Wellness Workshop: Tapping</i>	Continue rehearsing scene outside of class with partner(s) and be prepared to work in class.	
<b>Week 14</b> Mon 4/15 Wed 4/17	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Scene rehearsals/Continue to explore Setting, Background, Character, Objective and Architecture. <i>Wellness Workshop: Essential Oils</i>	Continue rehearsing scene outside of class with partner(s) and be prepared to work in class.	
<b>Week 15</b> Mon 4/22 Wed 4/24	Physical and Vocal Warm-up/Scene rehearsals/Continue to explore Setting, Background, Character, Objective and Architecture. <i>Wellness Workshop: Dance Party</i>	Continue rehearsing scene outside of class with partner(s) and be prepared to work in class.	
<b>Final</b>			<b>May 1st 2pm-4pm Final Scene Presentations</b>

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit



work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity’s website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

**Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

**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

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.