

THTR 101 Introduction to Acting
Spring 2024—Tues/Thurs (62606)—4 to 5:50pm
Location: PED 205
Units: 4

Instructor: Judith Shelton (Jude)

Office: TBD or Virtual: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/judes.office>

Office Hours by appointment: Tuesday-Friday

Contact Info: You may contact me Tues. – Fri., 9am-5pm

Email preferred – judiths@usc.edu

I return emails on Tuesday – Friday, 9am-5pm

On class days, in an emergency only, text 626.390.3678

Course Description

This class will introduce students to the techniques and exercises, drawn from seminal teachers, that help forge a disciplined approach to the art of acting. Art is humanity applied – to the stage, the canvas, the keyboard, etc. Art can be wild and unpredictable. Having a solid foundation can calm the nerves of an actor and level out feelings of fear and overwhelm, helping an actor approach a scene with focus and confident artistic freedom. This class presents the first steps to knowing yourself as an actor who is truthful and impulsive when presented with the dilemma of a scene. Together, with the ensemble or a specific scene partner, you will investigate the work with an open mind. This classroom is for constant exploration into the human condition. With your curiosity and determination, each class session will be a fruitful experiment.

Learning Objectives

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

- Confidently make clear and meaningful choices in a scene
- Allow those choices to organically evolve during the rehearsal process
- Bring their lived experiences and imagination to the work to emotionalize a scene
- Utilize their voice and body intentionally to physicalize a scene
- Integrate the critiques, suggestions, and feedback offered in class into their own work
- Develop a technique to work with their scene partners, and director, professionally
- Rehearse, outside of class, without a director
- Learn from observing fellow actors working with a scene

Required Reading

Audition: Everything an Actor Needs to Know to Get the Part by Michael Shurtleff

Books Referenced in Class

Acting One by Robert Cohen

Letters to a Young Artist by Anna Deavere Smith

Actions: The Actors' Thesaurus by Maggie Lloyd-Williams and Marina Calderone (phone app OK)

Auditing Student Policy

Auditing students attend class strictly as an observer and will not participate.

Recommended Preparation

STAY HEALTHY, guard yourself in high-risk situations, and wash your hands.
Come to each class on time, prepared mentally and physically, to participate.
Wear non-restrictive clothing and shoes that protect your feet. No flip-flops or slides.
You may get on the floor sometimes, bring a yoga mat, blanket, or big towel, if you like.
We do not take a break during class, but you may use the restroom when it is not disruptive.
Come curious and willing!

Notes on Attendance

This is a performance class where all “the good stuff” happens in class, often with an assigned partner. This class operates on the assumption that each student is part of the ensemble and will act professionally regarding attendance, assignments, participation, etc. “Professionally” means being on time, prepared to participate, respecting your fellow actor, me, and the work at hand. Missing class will leave the ensemble, or your partner, without someone to work with and is flatly unprofessional. Missing class also means losing points for the in-class exercises and discussions, all of which will impact your grade, so make the effort to stay healthy and be present in class. Be advised, if you miss class, it is your responsibility to catch yourself up on the material covered in class and the homework due. For this purpose, I recommend starting some sort of communication thread involving the entire class. Additionally, being late will cost you your daily participation point, which can add up. Please note: I do not check my email during class.

Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment:

Grades are not dictated by the instructor’s subjective opinion of talent and intellect.

Grades are dictated by:

Points. Each aspect of class has a point value: participation, in-class exercises, assignments, Midterm, and Final. You all start out with 100 points. Being late to class, you will lose a point. Missing our daily, in-class exercise, you will lose 3 points. Missing a class where you were due to work with an assigned partner, you will lose 5 points and be reassigned to a new day. I provide options to make up 8 points per semester. Details listed under “Make-Up Options”.

Participation (15% of total grade):

- In-class active analysis of presented materials such as text and video clips
- Constructive observation of classmates’ presented work
- Willingness to experiment and apply the constructive feedback of instructor, and your own artistic discernment, to one’s own work
- If you are late, you will lose your participation point for that day

Exercises and Assignments (50% of total grade):

- Due to the live performance aspect of this class, exercises and homework assignments will be presented in class, no video submissions accepted
- If you cannot commit to being in each class, on time, please wait for another semester
- You will invest fully, use the techniques presented to approach the material, connect with your scene partner, and apply notes to improve over time
- If you miss an exercise or assignment, you accept that you missed your opportunity to develop, abandoned your scene partner, and lost points which will impact your grade
- The above may seem harsh, but the purpose of this class is to act, over and over, almost always with a partner. You need each other to refine your abilities. Being a reliable actor can make or break a career, as well. Come to class.

Midterm Open Scene (11% of total grade):

- The Midterm open scene is worth 11 points, presented in class w/no paper due
- I will award 7 points (preparation, commitment, flexibility, technique)
- Your scene partner will award 4 points (reliability, punctuality, preparation, and focus)
- If you miss the Midterm, you lose 11 points for the day, which will impact your grade
- The policy for tardiness (pg. 4) applies to the Midterm, as well

Contemporary Scene (16% of total grade):

- The Contemporary scene is worth 16 points, presented in class w/no paper due
- I will award all 14 points (see above for what I am looking for)
- Your partner will state what you can improve on and what you do that is a gift, 2 points
- If you miss your day to perform, you lose 16 points which will impact your grade
- The policy for tardiness/leaving early (pg. 4) applies to this day, as well

Final (8% of total grade):

- The Final is a paper worth 8 points, due by the end of the 2-hour Final period and must be at least 500 words.
- The Final must be submitted electronically, via Blackboard discussion board.
- Tech problems happen during Finals week, figure it out. No late papers accepted.
- Not posting a paper on time will result in a loss of 8 points and impact your grade.

Make-up options (8 points, max):

- If you miss one scene assignment with a partner, I offer a make-up day on 4/9 during class time. First come, first served. Anyone who comes to watch will receive 3 points.
- If you just need points, I have a printed essay test for you to do and hand back in.
- Or, you may make up 8 points, total, by Friday, April 26th, at 11:59pm. Blackboard submissions close at Midnight. No emailed or late work accepted.
- We will decide together what your specific make-up assignment will be.
- If you and your partner volunteer to take the place of a team that misses a class, day of, you each will receive 3 extra points. It pays to be prepared, so rehearse and be ready.
- Make-up points do not count toward the Final. You must submit a final paper.

Exercises and Assignments	Points	% Of Grade
Participation	15	15
In-Class Exercises (including homework assignments and readings)	50	50
Midterm Open Scene	7	7
Partner Input	4	4
Contemporary Scene	14	14
Partner Input	2	2
Final Paper	8	8
Total	100	100

Grading Scale:

Excellent: A (4) = 100-96; A- (3.7) = 95-90

Good: B+ (3.3) = 89-86; B (3) = 85-84; B- (2.7) = 83-80

Average: C+ (2.3) = 79-76; C (2) = 75-74; C- (1.7) = 73-70

Poor: D (.7-1.3) = 60's

Fail: F (0) = 59 and below

Further Grading Notes:

- Students joining the class late must make up all the missed week's points.
- If your work in class is unsatisfactory, you will be warned before the deadline for dropping the course with a "W", April 5th. I will discuss your work at any time.

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](#).

Assignment Submission Policy

This is a live performance class, no video submissions of presentations or exercises. However, as a courtesy, if you are asked to isolate due to Covid-19, you may ask another pair of actors to switch days with you. You must set this up on your own and notify me so that I can adjust my performance schedule. **I reserve the right to withdraw this courtesy if I feel it is being abused.**

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 experience 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 me as the instructor to offer any feedback on the course.

ATTENDANCE

Absences:

Being a student in this class means you are part of an ensemble. Each class helps you build and refine your approach to acting, the material, and working with a scene partner, over time. **Be advised: if you miss a class, points awarded that day for participating, class work, and being an active audience member will be lost.** I provide options to make-up 8 points, total, should you need to miss a class. I am firm on this, please understand being in class is the only way to get the most out of this course and progress. Actors must act any chance they get.

Tardiness:

Each student is a valuable member of the ensemble. When you are late it is unprofessional, disruptive, and unsupportive. Committing to this class means being here from 4 to 5:50pm, each class period. **If you arrive after 4:05pm you will lose your participation point for the day.** If it is your assigned day to perform your scene and you arrive late you, AND YOUR SCENE PARTNER, are put at the end of the order and might not get up, depending on time. I take the late pairs last, in the order they arrived. I do, however, try my best to get you all up but this class is full, only 2 hours, and we have a lot of scenes to cover. I end class at 5:40pm to give homework. If you are not in class for the homework refer to this syllabus or consult the class communication thread before contacting me. Please do not email me asking what the homework is. It is all here in this syllabus. Make the choice to be in class on time and remain aware of what is required of you.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Text in **bold** indicates **assignment requiring preparation.**

(This timeline is subject to change. Being in class ensures you are aware of any changes.)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Homework	Deliverable/ Due Date
Week 1 Tues. 1/9	Warm-up and introductions What do you want out of this class? Discussion of syllabus (our contract)	What actors/scenes made an impact on you and why?	Discussion: Thurs. 1/11
Thurs. 1/11	Warm-up exercises Discussion: what actors/scenes made an impact? Improv games to build ensemble	Read, "What is Acting?" by Robert Cohen on Blackboard	Due: Tues. 1/16
Week 2 Tues. 1/16	Warm up exercises Discuss "What is Acting?" 3-line scenes	Read "Guidepost 1" from Audition-Relationship	Due: Thurs. 1/18
Thurs. 1/18	Warm up exercises Short film and discussion: "The Origins of Acting and 'The Method'" Short discussion: Relationship in a scene 3-line scenes, continued	Read "Guidepost 2" from Audition-Conflict	Due: Tues. 1/23

Week 3 Tues. 1/23	Warm up exercises 3-line scenes, concluded Short discussion: Conflict in a scene Assign Excuse Me scene partners Exchange information with scene partner	Read "Guidepost 3" from Audition- The Moment Before Memorize "Excuse Me" on Blackboard	Due: Thurs. 1/25
Thurs. 1/25	Warm up exercises Short discussion: The Moment Before the scene "Excuse Me" open scenes	Read "Guidepost 4,5" from Audition Read: Ch. 10 "Rehearsals" from Acting One , PDF on Bb	Due: Tues. 1/30
Week 4 Tues 1/30	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Humor and Opposites in a scene Short discussion: "Rehearsals" "Excuse me" open scenes, continued	Read "Guidepost 6,7" from Audition- Discoveries and Competition	Due: Thurs. 2/1
Thurs. 2/1	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Discoveries and Competition in a scene "Excuse me" open scenes, concluded Assign Individual open scenes and partners Exchange information with scene partner	Read "Guidepost 8" from Audition Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the first pass of your open scene	Due: Tues. 2/6
Week 5 Tues. 2/6	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Importance in a scene Open scenes, first pass	Read "Guidepost 9" from Audition Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the first pass of your open scene.	Due: Thurs. 2/8
Thurs. 2/8	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Events in a scene Open scenes, first pass, continued	Read "Guidepost 10" from Audition Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the first pass of your open scene.	Due: Tues. 2/13
Week 6 Tues. 2/13	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Place in a scene Open scenes, first pass, continued	Read "Guidepost 11" from Audition Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the first pass of your open scene.	Due: Thurs. 2/15
Thurs. 2/15	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Game Playing and Role Playing in a scene Open scenes, first pass, concluded	Read "Guidepost 12" from Audition	Due: Tues. 2/20

Week 7 Tues. 2/20	Warm up exercises Short discussion: Mystery and Secret in a scene GAMES (unless we need more time for scenes)	Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the final "Midterm" pass of your open scene. OFF BOOK!	Due: Thurs. 2/22
Thurs. 2/22	Warm up exercises "Midterm" open scenes	Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the final "Midterm" pass of your open scene. OFF BOOK!	Due: Tues. 2/27
Week 8 Tues. 2/27	Warm up exercises "Midterm" open scenes, continued	Rehearse w/partner. Bring in the final "Midterm" pass of your open scene. OFF BOOK!	Due: Tues. 2/29
Thurs. 2/29	Warm up exercises "Midterm" open scenes, concluded Reflections and questions	Sign up for 1-on-1 via Google Doc Prepare any desires, questions or concerns	Due: Tues. 3/5
Week 9 Tues. 3/5	One-on-One meetings with me via Zoom To offer longer meetings, I will be online 3-5:50pm. Meet me at our class link. *This may be moved to Thursday if needed	Make notes about what we talked about	Keep for yourself
Week 9 cont. Thurs. 3/7	Warm-up exercises Assign partners and contemporary scenes Meet in class to arrange first rehearsal and location Jude-Set performance schedule GAMES for remainder of class	First, enjoy your break, it is wise to rest and renew Then, rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, first pass	Due: Thurs. 3/19
Week 10 Tues. 3/19	Warm-up exercises Contemporary Scenes 1 st pass	Rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, first pass	Due: Thurs. 3/21
Thurs. 3/21	Warm-up exercises Contemporary Scenes 1 st pass, continued	Rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, first pass	Due: Tues. 3/26
Week 11 Tues. 3/26	Warm-up exercises Contemporary Scenes 1 st pass, concluded	Rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, second pass OFF BOOK!	Due: Thurs. 3/28

Thurs. 3/28	Warm-up exercises Contemporary scene 2 nd pass	Rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, second pass OFF BOOK!	Due: Tues. 4/2
Week 12 Tues. 4/2	Warm-up exercises Contemporary scene 2 nd pass, continued	Rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, second pass OFF BOOK!	Due: Thurs. 4/4
Thur. 4/4	Warm-up exercises Contemporary scene 2 nd pass, continued	Rehearse w/partner for Contemporary Scene, second pass OFF BOOK!	Due: Tues. 4/9
Week 13 Tues. 4/9	Warm-up exercises Contemporary scene 2 nd pass, concluded	Sign up for Make-up Day via Google doc Bring a scene, exercise, or take a test to receive credit.	Due: Thurs. 4/11
Thur. 4/11	Make-up Day!* Anyone who comes to support will receive 3 extra points! *Unless we need more time for scenes	Rehearse w/partner for "Final" performance	Due: Tues. 4/16
Week 14 Tues. 4/16	Warm-up exercises Contemporary "Final" Scene Performance with costumes, props, and full commitment	Rehearse w/partner for "Final" performance	Due: Tues. 4/18
Thur. 4/18	Warm-up exercises Contemporary "Final" Scene Performance with costumes, props, and full commitment, cont.	Rehearse w/partner for "Final" performance	Due: Tues. 4/23
Week 15 Tues. 4/23	Warm-up exercises Contemporary "Final" Scene Performance with costumes, props, and full preparation, concluded		
Thurs. 4/25	EVALUATIONS GAMES and goodbyes* *Unless we need more times for scenes	Write Final Paper	Due by 6:30pm on Thurs. 5/2
FINAL Due by Thurs. 5/2	No class meeting, just a paper due via Blackboard by the end of the final period, 6:30pm!	YOU DID IT! Thank you for working with me and the ensemble.	Have a Wonderful summer vacation!

KEY DATES <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20241/calendar/> (be sure to double check these dates)

Jan 8: Spring semester classes begin

Jan. 26: Last day to drop this class without a “W”, or to select “P/NP”

Feb. 23: Last day to drop without a mark of “W” on official transcript only

Feb. 23: Last day to change P/NP to a letter grade

March 11-15: Spring recess

April 5: Last day to drop this class with a mark of “W”

April 26: Spring semester classes end

April 27-30: Study days

May 1-8: Final examinations

May 9: Spring semester ends

May 10: Commencement

Additional Notes

- ***No eating is allowed during class at any time.***
- ***You may drink water, only.***
- ***Phones and computers will be put away once class begins.***
- ***We do not take a break during class, but take one (quietly) if you need one***

Welcome to Introduction to Acting, dear students! It is my joy and privilege to get to work with each of you. Acting class is something you will never forget, good or bad. I will do my best to give you a terrific acting class. It will ask a lot of you, and you will surprise yourself over and over. I hope you make the effort to allow its unfolding.

Judith Shelton (Jude)

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. 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.