

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

Course: Intermediate Acting I - **Drama**/Comedy (THTR 252b)

Units: 4

Time: Spring 2024, Tuesdays / Thursdays **1:10 - 2:50 pm**

Location: MCC 111

Instructor: Assistant Professor in Acting [Esther K. Chae](#)  
(Yale School of Drama Acting M.F.A., University of Michigan Theater Studies M.A.)

Office Hours: By appointment only, request via email to the instructor (before/after class or Zoom)

Contact Info: [chaeesth@usc.edu](mailto:chaeesth@usc.edu) (response in 48 hours or less) <https://usc.zoom.us/my/estherchae>

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services, <http://itservices.usc.edu>

IT School of Dramatic Arts – Mr. Prakash Shirke, Contact Info: [shirke@usc.edu](mailto:shirke@usc.edu), (213) 740-1288

## Course Description and Overview

The course is structured in 3 parts: The Physical World, The Verbal World and The Psychological/Emotional world for developing the actor's instrument. Of course none of these exist silo or separate for the actor when developing a character or scene - they serve as valuable focal points to build upon, as students practice and become proficient in the skills needed to analyze a scene and the arc of a character in a dramatic text. Students will explore the journey of ensemble work and scene study in dramatic text through independent research and foundational acting principles from [The Viewpoints Books](#) and [The Actor Prepares](#).

An inclusive range of genres (non-verbal theater, modern classics/adaptation of classics and BIPOC plays) drawn from the global canon of diverse voices, texts, and methodologies will be used, with focus on the modern classic [The Seagull](#). Students will master the basic principles of acting needed to analyze a scene, character, and world of play.

## Learning Outcome:

- Students will be able to perform using different acting methodologies, including full body warm-up, improv, Viewpoints + Composition ensemble work, text analysis/research, character development and scene study.
- Students will independently create, develop, and sustain a role in the particular given circumstances.
- Students will master the basic principles of acting needed to analyze a character, scene, and world of play in the dramatic genre, based on Stanislavsky and Chekhov's methodologies.

## Required Reading

*Links of recordings and reading material or purchase links provided through out in hyperlinks in Google Doc syllabus*

The Viewpoints Book: A practical guide to Viewpoints and Composition  
by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau (library or [purchase](#))

An Actor Prepares by Constantin Stanislavski (library or [purchase](#))

The Seagull by Anton Chekhov, translation by Ronald Hingley (library or [purchase](#))

## Reference Links

[Stupid Fucking Bird](#) by Aaron Posner (Password: USCSDA)

[Drowning Crow](#) by Regina Taylor

[BIPOC Swap list - the plays](#)

[List of BIPOC Plays and Creatives](#)

## Class Notes

Before each class, students must check live syllabus and (pin/star) emails from the professor for all updates, including safety precautions, class location, reading plays and reviewing preparation materials, such as articles, videos, and websites. Assignments generally follow the ‘flipped classroom’ style where preliminary research and review are done prior to classroom teaching.

Bring yoga mats (as needed), personal Reflection/Progression Journal (RPJ) (physical pen/paper, no electronics), and **hardcopy print outs of scripts** for rehearsals (do not rehearse from electronic devices!), personal water bottles, hand sanitizers.

Phones/Electronic Devices must **be off your body**, in the bag, and out of sight during class (unless cleared by the instructor for possible classwork) Stating the obvious - no texts, calls, emails for the duration of the class.

Attendance and participation in class are mandatory. No unexcused absences are allowed, in accordance with School of Dramatic Arts guidelines. Each unexcused absence will result in a -2 point reduction in your overall grade. An excused absence is due to serious illness, grave emergency, or the appropriate SDA leave of absence. Frequently arising illnesses during the semester (Covid, flu/cold, mono, food poisoning etc.) and manageable personal and family matters do not constitute a basis for an excused absence. Zoom attendance and with email notification to me 12 hours prior is considered default. You are responsible for all work missed. There is no negotiation unless there is a health or family crisis. In that case, you must document the incident officially. Please read the Student Handbook regarding Health Service notes.

Lateness is disruptive and unprofessional. If you enter after attendance has been taken you are considered tardy, a -1 point deduction will be taken. If the student has three or more unexplained absences or "tardies" during the course, their final overall grade will be docked -5 points.

**Lastly, you must be available to rehearse and participate in group presentation preparation outside of class and make yourself available to other students.**

### **Classroom norms**

Our body, with our mind and soul, is who we are, and opening ourselves to critique (or peer feedback) can be a vulnerable process. To model the expectations of a professional work environment in our field, and promote a respectful, safe, and creative classroom environment, we agree to be respectful to the space/equipment, to fellow students, to the instructor, and to our shared experiences. All students are expected to be open to receiving and giving each other respectful and thoughtful performance feedback and constructive criticism in the positive spirit with which it is given as a means of development.

### **Trigger warning** (referenced from Prof. Meiling Cheng and Prof. Oliver Meyer's syllabus)

Plays often deal with distressing circumstances/conflict and characters may use language or behave in ways that are upsetting. In this course, we will be exploring the authentic human condition in potentially dangerous and controversial character portrayals or settings. We will do so responsibly and with sensitivity but please gauge your receptibility to potentially controversial character exploration work before you join the class. We, as an ensemble, are obligated to respect each other's artistic decisions and process and withhold any judgment regarding work presented in class, however uncomfortable it might make you feel personally. And we stay open and in "soft focus" to any feedback, or analysis that pertains to the process and vulnerable work. Your voluntary participation in the course constitutes agreement to experiencing difficult and/or challenging classwork.

### **Course evaluation**

Student feedback and active participation is essential to making this course the best it can be. Students will have an opportunity to share comments during mid-semester 1:1 check-in and the standard USC course evaluation survey at the end of the semester.

### **Faculty Statement**

As a professor who works professionally as an actor, there will be times this semester when I am likely to be absent from class. In this case, you will have asynchronous class work and/or be taught and guided by a seasoned and professional teaching SDA professor. By reading this acknowledgment, you agree to these particular terms. Please make an appointment with me if you would like to further discuss any concerns.

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## **Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

The class schedule is a “live” syllabus, where content changes under the professor’s discretion regarding students’ needs, space availability, guest speaker scheduling, and safety protocols - especially towards finals. It is your responsibility to manage the time and finals of various classes; and to keep updated on changes by attending class, reviewing class Google Doc syllabus and reviewing & responding back to emails from the professor. Assignment deadline dates will be specified weekly, depending on classroom progress and needs.

### **<Part 1: The Physical World + Ensemble Work>**

#### **Week 1 (1/9)**

Warm-up exercises

Introduction to class + Syllabus review

Class check in and creating ensemble

1 word/phrase semester goal for self

Improv (MingMaengMong, Yes, and...)

Assignment:

Read/review and prepare discussion points or questions for following class

[Viewpoints Chapter 5](#)

[Understanding Viewpoints](#) article and 2 embedded videos of Anne Bogart Interview and Symposium with Tadashi Suzuki

#### **Week 2 (1/16)**

Warm-up exercises (bring individual yoga mats)

Discussion on Viewpoints and Understanding Viewpoints reading material

Mirror exercise / Amplification Scale 1-10

Introduction to 9 Viewpoints:

Tempo/Duration/Repetition/Kinesthetic Response/Shape/Gesture/

Spatial Relationship/Topography/Architecture

Review in class Viewpoint Composition examples

Assignment: Read and review for following week

[Introducing Composition](#)

[Starting to Speak Chapter 9](#) (Vocal Viewpoints)

#### **Week 3 (1/23)**

Warm-up exercises (bring individual yoga mats)

Viewpoint Circle exercise with stop/turns/jumps + Yoga circle

Vocal Viewpoints

Composition Exercise (TBD groups / 5 mins) under “Exquisite Pressure”

Composition scripts/scoring must be notated in RPJ and will be spot checked.

Assignment:

Start reading An Actor Prepares Chapter 1-6 to prepare for Part 2 and notate useful takeaways and questions in RPJ. (*\*Use discretion with dated content from a different time period and culture.*)

#### **Week 4 (1/30)**

Warm-up exercises

Composition rehearsal in groups

Composition presentations (graded)

Assignment:

Start reading The Seagull and choose 1 scene that you would like to work on in class and with whom.

**Bring 3 hardcopies.**

Research and notate Stanislavski and Chekhov and their significance for discussion in RPJ.

Starting point here <http://essentialdrama.com/practitioners/stanislavskisproductions/>.

### **<Part 2 The Verbal World; Stanislavski + Chekhov's The Seagull>**

#### **Week 5 (2/6)**

Vocal warm-ups

Bring An Actor Prepares book (or digital copy that you can make notes on)

Discussion on Stanislavski and Chekhov and from An Actor Prepares Chapter 1-6

Table read of scenes from The Seagull and student-led casting.

Assignment: Read An Actor Prepares Chapter 7-11

#### **Week 6 (2/13)**

Vocal warm-ups

Discussions from An Actor Prepares Chapter 7-11

Scene rehearsals

\*Overview on rehearsal techniques (also grading rubric):

- a) Text analysis - figure out objective, beats, conflict in the scene.  
(Basically anything you can investigate/mine/research, off your feet.)
- b) Imagination work using **5 Ws + How** as action
- c) Action = "I want to make X feel Y"
- d) Characterization through physicality and wardrobe/props (use Viewpoint's Shape and Gesture)
- e) The moment/beat before AND after the scene (use Composition's clear entrance and exit concept) and hold for at least 3 secs
- f) Use Viewpoints during rehearsals to break the 'talking head' pattern
- g) (optional\*) mirroring and/or 5 sec hold tableaus for extra drama/tension

Assignment: Rehearse using all of above components and off book by TBD

**Week 7 (2/20)**

Vocal warm-ups  
Imagination work  
Rehearsal of The Seagull scenes  
First share on TBD

**Week 8 (2/27)**

Vocal warm-ups  
Rehearsals continued  
Final presentations of The Seagull (graded) TBD

Assignment:

Start reading plays from **Reference Links** and choose one scene to work on as final presentations. Upload a digital copy of the scene in Google Folder and bring 3 hard copies to class once rehearsal starts.

**Week 9 (3/5)**

Mid-term buffer  
Mid-term check-in and assessment - in-person or Zoom TBD

Assignment: Read An Actor Prepares Chapter 12-16

*~ Spring Recess 3/10-17 ~*

**<Part 3 The Psychological & Emotional World>**

**Week 10 (3/19)**

Check in and review of syllabus and rest of semester trajectory and expectations  
Warm-up exercise  
Discussion on An Actor Prepares Chapter 12-16  
Table read of various scenes from chosen plays

**Week 11(3/26)**

Table read of scenes, finalize scenes and casting  
Start rehearsal for final presentations

**Week 12 (4/2)**

5Ws (Who/What/When/Where/Why) dropping in exercise  
First share TBD

**Week 13 (4/9)**

Rehearsal continued - be ready for quick set change and set up! Everyone else must use this class time for rehearsal on your own!

**Week 14 (4/16) - Prof. Chae at conference (guest professor and speaker TBD)**

Dress rehearsal

**Week 15 (4/23)**

Final Scene Presentations

Semester wrap up

*Presentations must fully incorporate all methodologies covered in class = Viewpoints + Stanislavski Method + Overview on rehearsal techniques*

<Study Days 4/27-4/30 Sat-Tues>

**Finals Wed May 8, 2-4pm) <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20241/finals/>**

Written exam (remote submission)

Check for any conflicts!

**Grading breakdown**

Grades are based on performance and active participation, both in class and out of class on-line communication, including responding back to emails/required exercise deadlines via Google Doc.	% (points) of Grade
1) the quality of class participation (including daily attendance, class discussion, peer feedback, and respectful and positive attitude) (10)	30
2) satisfactory completion of assignments and meeting deadlines (including reviewing material outside of class and uploading assignments) (10)	
3) the quality of in-class acting performances (attention, commitment, willingness to collaborate/experiment and being an attentive audience) and out of class recordings/uploads, rehearsals and availability to fellow students (non-availability for your partner will be penalized). (10)	
<b>Performance Assignments:</b> Warm ups @ top of class (if tardy, -1 deduction) (10) First Viewpoint Composition (5) In-class rehearsal presentations (5) Scene work <u>The Seagull</u> (10) Final presentation (20) - must include Viewpoints + Stanislavski Method + grading rubric	50
<b>Written Assignments:</b> Reflection and Progression Journaling (RPJ) related to all assignments (5)	20

Final Written Exam (15)	
<b>Grade Reductions:</b> Missing an assignment -3 points Unsatisfactory or inactive participation/collaboration outlined in the above breakdown - 3 points Absence - 2 points for each, post mid-term absences also affect <Attendance and Participation category> ex. 1 absence after mid-term will be -3 point reduction Tardiness - 1 point for each	
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								

### SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities\* will not excuse you from any classwork. There will be no exceptions made for absences in a 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 Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through



Friday. Website for DSP 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](http://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](http://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](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://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](http://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.

**Students with disabilities must provide accommodation letter and form to professor at the beginning of the semester.**

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.