USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTR 480A
Units: 2
Spring 2024 Tuesday 9-11.50

Location: SHR 105 and on Zoom

Instructor: Professor Katherine Burton
Office: JEF 211
Office Hours: by appointment
Contact Info: burtonk@usc.edu

IT Help: USC IT
Hours of Service: 24/7
Contact Info: consult@usc.edu

Course Description

This course is "Acting for the Camera" and will be taught in a hybrid format, both in the room (where we can record) and on zoom (where we might record). It is the first screen acting class you will have in your BFA Stage and Screen program. We will divide the curriculum into three parts: 1. Auditioning for the Camera 2. Acting for the Camera and 3. Playing the Villain on Camera.

Part 1 "Auditioning": "Ladybird" by Greta Gerwig. The instructor will send you the script. We will discuss how to prepare our auditions for both zoom and in person, self tapes and cold readings. We will discuss over preparing and under preparing and how to most effectively present yourself as well as the etiquette for both in person and zoom auditions. There are many genres of TV/Film that can be explored for auditioning and moving us in to our next phase, "Acting".

Part 2 "Acting": multiple scripts. This will be the main focus of the curriculum. We will work on scripts from many genres: comedy, drama, single camera TV, multi camera TV (sit coms), romantic comedies, superhero franchises, horror, action dramas et al. This work should complement and enhance previous acting studies and help you move to an understanding about the nuanced shift actors need to make when they are acting for the camera. Our work on different genres will lead us in to our last phase, "Playing the Villain".

Part 3 "Playing the Villain": multiple scripts. As we make our way through Part 2 we will come across scripts with vibrant antagonistic characters. As Joe Hacker writes " Villains have very active minds. They are clever; unpredictable; compelling; contradictory; impassioned; have a wicked sense of humor. In other words, the camera loves them". We will focus on the three archetypes of the villain as outlined in Mr Hacker's seminal work "Auditioning for the Camera" 1. The psychopathic individual, 2. Those driven by the inclination to create chaos and 3. Those who get caught up in an illicit scheme to get something (money, power, revenge, love). We will look at all of these archetypes as we make our way through playing these indelible characters.

By the end of the semester you will have usable recordings of your audition pieces for Script #1 as well as 2-4 scenes from scripts from Parts 2 and 3. We will choose material that strengthens and stretches you. In the latter two thirds of the semester, we will be exploring what you have to do when you get the role and need to prepare for your first day of shooting. Your instructor is a working actor and will be leading you through what you have to know before you show up on a set to film. In addition, your instructor will also be available to you during your senior year to prepare for showcase scenes as well as content for reels and head shot and resume materials.

Learning Objectives

To learn to prepare audition scenes, in person and on Zoom as well as self tapes and cold auditions.
To learn to tackle both protagonist and antagonist screen characters and fully explore playing for the camera.
To learn to be prepared for the first day on set having fully explored the script and the characters and the schedule of shooting.

Prerequisite(s): none

Recommended Preparation: Watch the films and TV shows that you enjoy. They can be very inspiring.

Course Notes
This course will be taught in a hybrid format: you can join the zoom on Blackboard on Zoom days.   Your instructor will provide you with scripts when needed but you are welcome to find your own.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required
The class will occasionally be taught on Zoom, as mentioned above. You will access the Zoom through Blackboard. Students can purchase a memory card to use in class to record their auditions: 32 GB/64 GB digital SD card class 10 with a speed of 94/95 for the duration of the course. 35$. This will enable you to have these recordings for your use. USC Technology Support Links [Zoom information for students], [Blackboard help for students], [Software available to USC Campus.]]

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
None

Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials
Auditioning on Camera: Joseph Hacker (Routledge)
Acting in Film: Michael Caine (Applause)

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Students will be expected to have read Ladybird by Greta Gerwig by the second class. Audition scenes will be provided by the instructor. These will be presented as audition pieces over three sessions: first is a cold read, second is a memorized read in person that will be filmed, third is a recorded callback on zoom. We will then move to other scripts and will follow this format for Part 2 and Part 3. On the in person days we will record in the room. We will also explore preparing for "The First Day of Shooting" once we have mastered each script; this will be discussed on Zoom or in person. We will discuss the difference between stage and film acting using some of the language used in your theater acting classes. You are welcome to work with scene partners or on your own but mixing it up is great. We will culminate the semester with 2-5 filmed pieces for your use. You will be assessed by how well you prepare for class and how you have fully realized your characters in preparation for either auditioning for or playing your

characters. You may have a mid term but there is no grade for that. Final grades will be assigned.

Participation
100% participation is expected at this level and in your program.

Grading Breakdown
Auditoning scene: 20%
First film/TV characters: 40%
Villain characters: 30%
Final: 10%
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Table 1 Grading Breakdown
See above.

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
TOTAL		

Grading Scale
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Table 2 Course Grading Scale

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
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

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy
[Describe how and when assignments are to be submitted.]

Grading Timeline
Midterm assessment. Final grade.

Course Specific Policies
I expect you to attend every class and be on time. If you cannot attend I need as much notice as possible. Please do not use your technology in class unless requested by the instructor (reading scripts or scenes).

Attendance
You are always expected to attend unless there is illness or religious observation.

Classroom norms
I always encourage active and supportive and constructive discussion and feedback.

Zoom etiquette
As we will have some classes on Zoom, I encourage students to keep their cameras on as a gesture of respect to their fellow students and their instructor. If you cannot do so, pleas let me know before the class. The instructor will be providing you a space on campus from which to zoom on zoom days.
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.

Creating a policy for the use of AI Generators in your course

[Note to Faculty: Review the considerations and sample options below to include language in your syllabi regarding the use of AI in your courses.
Considerations when crafting a policy for AI/Chat GPT use in your course:
- Does your department, program, or school have an existing policy?
- Under what circumstances is AI use permitted in the course and/or for specific assignments?
- How should students cite or credit AI-generated material? (USC Libraries AI Generators Citation Guidance)
- How will students be held accountable for AI's tendency toward hallucination (i.e., deceptive data)?
- What are the ethical considerations of using AI in general and in your discipline?
- How can AI be used as an effective learning tool, rather than a content creator for course assignments?

Sample Option A–not permitted
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.

Option B–permitted on specific assignments
In this course, I encourage you to use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions.

Option C–encouraged use
I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:
- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.

- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.]

[Note to Faculty: Include common examples of activities and assignments that might occur in your class. See the following example.]
[Please ask me if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.
Collaboration. In this class, you are expected to submit work that demonstrates your individual mastery of the course concepts.
Group work. Unless specifically designated as a 'group project,' all assignments are expected to be completed individually.
Computer programs. Plagiarism includes the submission of code written by, or otherwise obtained from someone else.]

[Note to Faculty: Include information regarding grade outcomes a student may expect if found in violation. See the following example]
[If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such as an "F" grade on the assignment, exam, and/or in the course.]

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. 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. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Course Evaluations

Mid semester evaluation, final grade. [Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. The process and intent of the end-of-semester evaluation should be provided. In addition, a mid-semester evaluation is recommended practice for early course correction.]

Course Schedule

See below. [Provide a detailed course calendar that includes a list of deliverables (homework assignments, examinations, etc.) broken down on a weekly basis. The format may vary, but the content must include:

- Subject matter (topic) or activity
- Required preparatory reading or tasks (e.g., viewing videos)
- Deliverables and when each deliverable is due. A blanket statement that there will be a deliverable due at a specified frequency (e.g., there will be homework due weekly) may obviate the need to state when certain deliverables are due

IMPORTANT: In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing and other academic activities. Standard fall and spring sessions (001) require a final summative experience during the University scheduled final exam day and time.]

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.

Table 3 Course schedule

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/	Deliverables
Week 1	Meet and Greet. Presentation of monologues		**SHR 105 1/9/24**
Week 2	**First pass at script #1. Learn how to operate and set up filming**	Read Ladybird and other scripts.	SHR 105 1/16/24
Week 3	Second pass at script #1 memorized	Memorize lines.	On Zoom 1/23/24
Week 4	**Third and final pass at script # 1. Filming.**	**Rehearse memorized scenes.**	**SHR 105 1/30/24**
Week 5	**Auditioning and getting the part. First day of shooting.**	*No HW.*	*On Zoom 2/6/24*
Week 6	**Script # 2 begin**	**Choose scenes.**	**On Zoom 2/13/24**

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Week 2	**First pass at script #1. Learn how to operate and set up filming**	Read Ladybird and other scripts.	SHR 105 1/16/24
Week 3	Second pass at script #1 memorized	Memorize lines.	On Zoom 1/23/24
Week 4	**Third and final pass at script # 1. Filming.**	**Rehearse memorized scenes.**	**SHR 105 1/30/24**
Week 7	**Script #2 second pass possibly with SUB**	**Memorize lines.**	**On Zoom 2/20/24**
Week 8	**Script #2 third pass and filming. FDOS**	**Rehearse memorized scenes.**	**On Zoom 2/27/24**
Week 9	**Script # 3 begin**	**Spring break next week**	**On Zoom 3/4/24**
Week 10	**Script # 3 second pass**	**Memorize lines**	**On Zoom or in person in SHR 105 3/18/24**
Week 11	**Script # 3 third pass. Filming and FDOS**	**Rehearse memorized scenes.**	**On Zoom or in person in SHR 105 3/25/24**
Week 12	**Script # 4 Antagonist begin**	**Choose scenes.**	**On Zoom or in person in SHR 105 4/2/24**
Week 13	**Script #4 second pass**	**Memorize lines**	**On Zoom or in person in SHR 105 4/9/24**
Week 14	**Script # 4 third and final pass. Filming and**	**Rehearse memorized scenes.**	**On Zoom or in person in SHR 105 4/16/24**
Week 15	**Prepare for final**	**Rehearse memorized scenes.**	**On Zoom or in person in SHR 105 4/23/24**
FINAL			**TBD**

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. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

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