

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**THTR 101: Introduction to Acting**  
**4 Units**  
**Fall 2024**  
**Mondays & Wednesdays — 8-9:50am**  
**Location: MCC 112**

**Instructor: Kirstin Eggers (she/her)**  
**Email: [kqeggers@usc.edu](mailto:kqeggers@usc.edu)**  
**Office: JEF 204**  
**Zoom Office: <https://usc.zoom.us/my/kirstin.sda>**  
**Office Hours: By appointment — schedule via email**

## Course Description

*"Imagination is more important than knowledge.  
For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces  
the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." — Albert Einstein*

This course lays the foundation for studying the discipline and art of acting, and will explore and apply these concepts through classroom exercises and performances. Students will

- begin to examine the actor's role in storytelling, including connecting the specifics of text analysis to the emotional and physical portrayal of a role,
- study concepts of acting theory, as put forth by prominent acting teachers and actors
- strive to be present and mindful,
- consider both their own and others' uniqueness,
- explore their own innate ability to imagine deeply and fully engage in play,
- respect their body as an instrument and build its physical and vocal abilities, including mind-body connection,
- adhere to the required discipline — being on time, rehearsing outside of class, and staying strong and healthy,
- live in a Process over Result mindset and think of every exercise as an experiment, with the intent of exploration and discovery,
- think analytically and respectfully in response to others' work,
- reinforce a spirit of generosity, curiosity, compassion, and courage as we work to build an ensemble.

## Learning Objectives

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

1. Practice basic acting skills such as focus, concentration, relaxation, imagination, play, vocal/physical/mental presence
2. Apply successful ensemble/partnership techniques
3. Relate observed acting techniques to their own work
4. Research and interpret text as it relates to acting and storytelling choices
5. Deconstruct a script to make active, specific, physical choices
6. Integrate established acting theory and rehearsal techniques into their own work

## Course Notes

Classes must be attended live and in-person (medical status withstanding), due to the collaborative, experiential, and performative nature of acting.

You are also expected to rehearse with your fellow actors outside of class, as part of the collaborative nature of theatre. We will discuss your outside rehearsals in class. Both in-class and outside scenework/rehearsal require notes to be taken — please be prepared.

### **Communication**

Please email me at [kqeggers@usc.edu](mailto:kqeggers@usc.edu) any time with questions or concerns. Emails will generally be returned within 48 hours on weekdays. I can also meet with you via my Zoom personal meeting room, or at an on-campus location as schedules allow.

I also ask that the class as a whole have a communication group, platform of your choice, so you can easily get in touch with each other.

### **Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

Brightspace will be updated regularly with announcements, readings, etc. Please check often. Brightspace help for students is at [studentbrightspacehelp.usc.edu](http://studentbrightspacehelp.usc.edu).

You will occasionally need to print scripts — please be prepared with printing capability.

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*“Unless you learn how to be in your head,  
you’ll never learn how to create.” — Lin-Manuel Miranda*

### **Required Reading**

PDFs of selected readings will be posted to Brightspace, which students are expected to read and retain for discussion. There may be assigned readings beyond the syllabus, depending on the needs of the work.

### **Required Viewing**

You are required to attend a School of Dramatic Arts performance, and turn in a written response.

### **Optional Supplemental Reading**

- *Letters to a Young Artist* by Anna Deavere Smith \*\*HIGHLY ENCOURAGED
- *Actions: The Actors’ Thesaurus* by Marina Caldarone & Maggie Lloyd Williams (book OR smartphone app). \*\*HIGHLY ENCOURAGED
  
- *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods*, Vol. 1 & 2 by Richard Brestoff
- *The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act* by Isaac Butler
- *Acting: The First Six Lessons* by Richard Boleslavsky
- *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches* by Sharrell D. Lockett with Tia Shaffer
- *The Art of Acting* by Stella Adler
- *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen
- *A Korean Approach to Actor Training* by Jeungsook Yoo

### **Optional Supplemental Viewing/Watching/Listening**

- Additional School of Dramatic Arts performances
- Live theatre — local suggestions given upon request
- High quality recorded theatre — Digital Theatre+ and Broadway HD are both excellent resources
- *Variety’s “Actors on Actors”* and *The Hollywood Reporter’s “Actors Roundtable”*
- Podcasts about acting — *Backstage* has a good suggestion list; I also like *Dead Eyes* and *I Don’t Need an Acting Class*

### **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

Below is a general overview of assignments. A detailed assignment description will be posted on Brightspace with ample time for each assignment.

In-Class Activities — *“Art resides in the quality of doing; process is not magic.” — Charles Eames*  
*“Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment.” — Mahatma Gandhi*

This is an experience-based course, and you are expected to participate and commit with a generous heart, an open mind and a devoted work ethic. You are not graded on 'talent' in this class, you are graded on your Quality of Doing — there is no progress without the effort. This includes your active and supportive nature as a member of the ensemble, both in and observing the playing space. Points (1 per week) are awarded for presence, focus, attitude, and willingness.

Discussion — You are expected to participate thoughtfully, respectfully and fully in discussions about readings, viewings, rehearsals, and other topics as they arise. Taking notes on and/or highlighting readings is strongly suggested so you can refer back easily. I do not require a written journal in this class, but I will ask you to relay your outside work orally, so a written journal is encouraged, for your own growth.

Personal Reading — Refer to Week One of Course Schedule. The complete Personal Reading is completed in several parts.

Devised Choral Work — Work will be in small groups as assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of choral work will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory.

Performance Response — You will write a response to an SDA production. A list of the Fall season of plays can be found at <http://dramaticarts.usc.edu/on-stage/>. Consider seeing multiple productions before deciding the focus of your response. Detailed instructions and prompts for response will be posted on Brightspace with ample time. More information on the season can be found at

Open Scene — Work will be in pairs assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. Outside rehearsals will be discussed in class. A final presentation of each open scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory. Written Component of the Open Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace.

Contemporary Scene — Work will be in pairs or groups as assigned by the instructor. Meetings and rehearsals outside of class are crucial to the success of this project. A final presentation of each contemporary scene will be scheduled — full costumes, props and overall preparation is mandatory. Written Component of the Contemporary Scene will be discussed in class and posted on Brightspace.

### Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Available Points
In-class activities (presence, focus, attitude, willingness, ensemble support)	15
Discussion of Readings, Plays, Rehearsals	5
Personal Reading (multiple process steps)	8
Choral Work and Performance	15

Performance Response	8
Open Scene Classwork	10
Open Scene Presentation	15
Open Scene Written Component	5
Contemporary Scene Presentation (Final)	14
Contemporary Scene Written Component (inc. Final Reflection)	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

A = 95-100 pts    B+ = 87-89 pts    C+ = 77-79 pts    D+ = 67-69 pts    F = 59 or below  
A- = 90-94 pts    B = 83-86 pts    C = 73-76 pts    D = 63-66 pts  
B- = 80-82 pts    C- = 70-72 pts    D- = 60-62 pts

### Assignment Submission Policy

Performance Assignments are presented in class, and copies of associated written work do not need to be submitted, although you must be prepared.

Written assignments should be posted on Brightspace as a PDF attachment before the specified date and time, and should be formatted for clarity and readability. Late assignments will not be awarded full points. Do not send links to Google Docs.

Grades will generally be posted to Brightspace within a week. If you fail to turn in an assignment, it will show on Brightspace Grade Center — I cannot follow up with you to ask about missing assignments.

### 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](#).

### **Use of AI Generators**

You may wish 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. However, all work in this course, both in-class and outside of class, is personal and/or creative and AI tools are most likely not appropriate in most scenarios. If you do choose to use it, please discuss with me, acknowledge your use, including notes 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.

### **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. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

This includes filming or recording of instructor and/or classmates. There will be no filming or recording in class of performances or classwork.

### **Learning Experience Evaluation**

Learning Experience 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**

Being absent, late, or leaving early disturbs the important ensemble nature of this class, and in-class activity points will be deducted. Lateness is not permitted. You must be present and ready to work at the start of each class.

Please take to heart:

*"We all came here full of enthusiasm for the work waiting to be done, and now, thanks to you [being late], that mood has been destroyed. To arouse a desire to create is difficult; to kill a desire is extremely easy. If I interfere with my own work, it is my own affair, but what right have I to hold up the work of the whole group? The actor, no less than the soldier, must be subject to iron discipline." — Constantine Stanislavski in An Actor Prepares*

There is no better place to learn discipline, and its rewards, than in acting class, where others depend on you to make their art.

However, your health and the health of our community eclipses all! Do not attend class in-person if you have symptoms of a virus. If you are not sure, please wear a mask. Depending on the circumstances, there may be opportunity for a hybrid (zoom) classroom experience.

Extracurricular activities do not excuse you from class work. Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university are exempt, with pre-submitted official documentation. See SDA Statement on Productions, ISPs, and Extra-Curricular Commitments below.

### **Classroom Norms**

Devices — Engagement with cell phones and other electronic devices during class is prohibited. Cell phones should be left on silent in your backpack/bag (not pocket), away from your work in class. This is to encourage your focus, presence, and respect to your peers. Use of cell phones in class will negatively affect your in-class activity points for the day. Consider yourself untethered in this class. This is a strict policy.

- Attire — Acting is physical and can get sweaty; dress accordingly. Your clothing and shoes should allow you to move freely and comfortably. Shoes should be closed-toed and stay on your feet — no flip-flops. If hair gets in your face, secure it back. Hats are generally discouraged.
- Eating — Open food and drink is not permitted in any SDA classroom. Absolutely no chewing gum, please dispose of before class.
- Break — We generally do not take an official break during class. Please be prepared to stay in the room and active as both a performer and audience member for the entire 110 minutes of class. In the event of an emergency for which you must leave the room, observe theatre rules of being discrete and respectful to your fellow actors (i.e do not enter or leave the room while others are performing).
- Strike — Please restore the classroom to neutral at the end of each class.

*"If you're going to go for a thing, there's no point unless you're going all the way." — Cynthia Erivo*

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### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Please note: due to the fluid and creative nature of this course, weekly structure will change to accommodate the needs of individuals and the ensemble. You are asked to remain flexible, and you will be informed of any changes as much as possible.

Every class will begin with group work, exploring foundations of voice, physicality, relaxation, concentration, imagination, focus, storytelling, playfulness, and ensemble-building.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
1	Mon Aug 26	Welcome/Introductions. Syllabus and expectations review. Begin ensemble, play, and mindfulness work.		For Wednesday: Read "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen. Posted on Brightspace.
	Wed Aug 28	Ensemble, focus, storytelling work.  Discuss "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen.	Discuss "What is Acting?" from <i>Acting One</i> by Robert Cohen.	FOR WEDNESDAY: Read "Presence," "Being In It, and Out of It at the Same Time," "Questions," and "Art and Reality" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion. Posted on Brightspace.  AND  Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way. This may be a poem, a passage from a book or script, song lyrics, etc. It should not be something you wrote. Please read from a <b>hard copy</b> , NOT a screen.
2	Mon Sep 2	LABOR DAY — NO CLASS		

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
2	Wed Sep 4	Group movement and voice work. Discuss reading. Begin Personal Readings.	Discuss "Presence, "Being In It, and Out of It at the Same Time," "Questions," and "Art and Reality" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> .  Personal readings. Please bring in an existing piece of writing that feels personal to you and ignites you in some way.	FOR WEDNESDAY: Read "Fear," "Sense Memory," "Soul," and "Alienation" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion. Posted on Brightspace.
3	Mon Sep 9	Group movement and voice work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Wed Sep 11	Imagination work. Discuss reading. Personal readings, continued.	Read "Fear," "Sense Memory," "Soul," and "Alienation" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.	FOR WEDNESDAY: Read "Urgency," "The Death of Cool," "You'll End Up Like Dostoevsky," "The World is Your Lab," and "The Ultimate Presence" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion. Posted on Brightspace.
4	Mon Sep 16	Ensemble work. Personal readings, continued.		
	Wed Sep 18	Ensemble work. Discuss reading. Personal readings, continued.	Read "Urgency," "The Death of Cool," "You'll End Up Like Dostoevsky," "The World is Your Lab," and "The Ultimate Presence" from <i>Letters to a Young Artist</i> for discussion.	
5	Mon Sep 23	Introduce choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.  FOR WEDNESDAY: Read Thespis section from <i>The Great Acting Teachers &amp; Their Methods</i> PDF for discussion. Posted on Brightspace.
	Wed Sep 25	Choral work.	Discuss Thespis section from <i>The Great Acting Teachers &amp; Their Methods</i> .	Choral work rehearsal.  DUE NOVEMBER 18: Performance Response, posted to Brightspace before class. Season of Plays begins this weekend.
6	Mon Sep 30 & Wed Oct 2	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.
7	Mon Oct 7	Choral work.		Choral work rehearsal.

	Date	Topics/Daily Activities	Due Today	Homework
	Wed Oct 9	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION.  Relationship and tactic work, in pairs.	CHORAL WORK PRESENTATION.	DUE WEDNESDAY: Read Rehearsal/ Actions compilation PDF, posted on Brightspace.
8	Mon Oct 14	Relationship and tactic work, in pairs. Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
	Wed Oct 16	Open scene work — actions.	Discuss Rehearsal/Actions compilation PDF.	Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
9-11	Mon Oct 21 - Wed Nov 6	Open scene work.		Open scene work/rehearsal/prep.
12	Mon Nov 11	VETERANS DAY — NO CLASS		
	Wed Nov 13	OPEN SCENE PERFORMANCE  Introduce contemporary scene work.	OPEN SCENE PERFORMANCE. Written component due with presentation.	Last chance to see an SDA Play.
13	Mon Nov 18	Contemporary scene work.  Discuss Performance Response.	Performance Response, posted to Brightspace before class.	
	Wed Nov 20	Contemporary scene work.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
14	Mon Nov 25	TBD — POSSIBLE ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS		
	Wed Nov 27	THANKSGIVING BREAK — NO CLASS		
15	Mon Dec 2	Contemporary scene work. Learning Experience Evaluations.		Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
	Wed Dec 4	Contemporary scene work. AMA. Possible Contemporary Scene Performance.	Possible Contemporary Scene Performance.	Contemporary scene work rehearsal/ prep.
Final	WED DEC 11 — 8-10am	Possible Contemporary Scene Performance. Final self-reflection.	CONTEMPORARY SCENE PRESENTATION. Written component due — specifics given in class. Final self-reflection format TBA.	Happy Winter Break!

*"You should feel a flow of joy because you are alive.  
Your body will feel full of life That is what you must give from the stage.  
Your life. No less. That is art: to give all you have." — Anton Chekhov*

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## **SDA Statements on...**

### **Productions, ISPs, and Extra-Curricular Commitments**

SDA productions, ISPs and extracurricular activities\* do 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 are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.)

### **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>

### **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theater Consent Culture**

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.

## **USC Statements on University Academic and Support Systems**

### **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](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### **Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:**

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate-](#) and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

### **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 consists 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) 740-2500

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.