

**THTR 520A ADVANCED ACTING**

**Units: 4**

**FALL 2023—M/W—3:00pm – 5:50pm**

**Location: SCD**

**Instructor: Natsuko Ohama (she/her)**

**Office: Jeff**

**Office Hours:** Available by appointment. Call or email as above. **Mentorship is an essential element of the instructional technique in the MFA program; make it a point to make an appointment**

**Contact Info:** [nohama@usc.edu](mailto:nohama@usc.edu) cell 646-258-0503

**Course Description**

*“An actor’s tool is you, but this use of oneself is informed by all the things which inform one’s mind and body – your observations, your struggles, your nightmares, your prison, your patterns – yourself as a citizen of **your** times and **your** society. **Technique is a means to free the artist.**”*

*--Joseph Chaiken*

The goal of this course is to begin the intellectual, technical, physical, emotional and ritual understanding of what personalization is and how it applies to the story of a play via the written text and processing that information into an intensive formal scene study class focusing on contemporary American playwrights.

*A precautionary note: much of the course material contains intense, gritty, and, for some, potentially offensive materials. Please consider this syllabus a “trigger warning” and gauge your receptibility to controversial artworks before you join the class. Your voluntary participation in the course constitutes an explicit consent to experiencing difficult and/or troubling art.*

**Learning Objectives**

- To begin the practical understanding and application of the craft of acting. What acting is and what it isn’t. How to break down a piece of text (i.e. “table work”). Being able to understand and utilize Objectives, Obstacles, Actions as applied to the given circumstances of the play.
- Moving through personalization--making the connection between yourself, your story, the story of the play and the so-called “character” that you are attempting to portray.

- What is Sub-Text. Point of View. Technical Proficiency
- We will utilize active text analysis with particular focus on verbs (what you are doing) and objectives (what you want).

In this class we will explore the idea that the individual actor is infinitely more interesting and imaginative than any finite character that he, she, or they might play.

**Recommended Preparation:** Undergraduate Degree

**Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required**

Highest speed internet available, most recent lap top available, external microphone and camera, uncluttered well-lit space to work in.

**Suggested Readings and Supplementary Materials**

*The Empty Space* by Peter Brook  
*Theatre of the Unimpressed* by Jordan Tannahill  
*The Presence of the ACTOR* by Joseph Chaiken

\*Ordered for you and available at the USC Bookstore

**Description and Assessment of Assignments**

Monologues and Scene Work. Material to be decided as we get to know each other. The exploration of material (i.e. reading plays) is essential to your progress.

**Grading Breakdown**

- A work of excellent quality
- B work of good quality
- C work of average quality
- D work of below average quality

**Your grade is assessed according to**

Class Work – 50%  
 Attendance – 25%  
 Final – 25%

**Attendance Policy**

- **The training at this MFA program is ensemble-based work; therefore, it is a requirement for the entirety of the ensemble to be present for every class. Absences will directly affect your grade and standing in the program. A lateness will be counted as an absence. A lateness is anything after a 5 minute grace period at the official start time of class. Anything longer than five minutes will result in being locked out of class. Don't be absent. Don't be late.**

**Absences**

- THREE (3) absences will result in a full letter grade demotion. If you miss a total of FIVE (5) classes, you fail the class. Any failed class results in academic probation.
- Excused and unexcused absences are the same.

Email records

- All latenesses and absences need to be documented by the Student at fault via email. The Student must email the specific professor for which class will be missed, as well as David Warshofsky and Natsuko Ohama.
- If a Student is late/absent to class and an email has not been sent in advance, the professor must report these events to David Warshofsky and Natsuko Ohama.

Lateness

- There is no need to text professors if you are late.

Illness

- Stay healthy. Illness counts as an absence. Please notify your professor, as well as David Warshofsky and Natsuko Ohama with a doctor's note.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>FIRST CLASS</b>	<b>SECOND CLASS</b>
1	Formal Orientation	Exercises warming up
2	Monologues	Monologues
3	Monologues	Monologues
4	Monologues	Monologues
5	Show/work scene 1	Show/work scene
6	Show/work scene 1	Show/work scene
7	Show/work scene 1	Show/work scene
8	Show/work scene 1	Show/work scene
9	Show/work scene 1	Run-thru of Scene

10	Show/work scene 2	Show/work scene
11	Show/work scene 2	Show/work scene
12	Show/work scene 2	Show/work scene
13	Show/work scene 2	Show/work scene
14	Culmination in class	Show/work scenes
15	Culmination in class	Final review work scenes

### **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.

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### **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.

## **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.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

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.

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## **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theatre 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>

## **Statement 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.