

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

**Course ID and Title: 20243 THTR 520C Advanced acting**

**Units: 4**

**Fall 2024 - M/W - 3:00-5:50**

**Location: M - DAB 213**

**W - DAB 213**

**Instructor: Mia Barron**

**Office: TBA**

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

**Contact Info:** [miabarro@usc.edu](mailto:miabarro@usc.edu)

**Teaching Assistant:**

**Office: NA**

**Office Hours: NA**

**Contact Info: NA**

## **Course Description**

This is a process-oriented advanced acting class for the second year graduate students. Primarily focused on scene study work, it also incorporates elements of physical exploration, vocal/text exercises, as well as theatre games that encourage play, spontaneity and freedom to make mistakes. This class does not teach one specific acting technique, but rather is focused on the release of individual creativity, which is the ultimate goal of technique.

Training as a company of actors depends on establishing a common vocabulary and definable goals. Through text analysis and partnered scene study, you will focus on developing craft by rehearsing in an intentional way. By setting up goals for each rehearsal, you will learn to investigate character and rehearse scenes in a way that can be articulated to yourself and to the class.

Scene work will focus primarily on contemporary plays by writers who are a vital part of the current American theatrical landscape. Works from writers such as; Annie Baker, Dominique Morisseau, Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins, Young Jean Lee, Samuel Hunter, Robert O'Hara, Tarrell Alvin McCraney, Madeleine George, Rajiv Joseph, Lynn Nottage, Hanson Jung, Sarah Ruhl, Bruce Norris, Leslye Headland, Lucas Hnath, Joshua

Harmon, Aleshea Harris, and others will be allow students to deeply explore character, while also being exposed to multiple contemporary writers.

## **Learning Objectives**

You will read and analyze plays from an actor's perspective; looking for how the scene fits into the arc of the play, how to identify the important events within the scene and how to connect those events to actions that are playable. You will practice identifying your character's needs in ways that are not academic, but that stimulate you and incite you to each scene..

Through partnered scene work you will build muscle memory experiences of rehearsing with a scene partner in a relaxed, open, playful way. You will learn to focus your attention on your scene partner. You will investigate the act of listening deeply to your partner, with the ultimate goal of working together to make the event of the scene truly come alive.

Through physical exploration both before and during the scene work, you will focus on moving the knowledge you have of the scene and its given circumstances from your head into your body.

Through physical and textual improvisation connected to the given circumstances of the scene you will work towards granting your scene partner the power to affect you; recognizing that it is your ability to affect the other person and to be affected by them that makes your work come alive and allows the play to be experienced in a full way by an audience.

Through the continued practice of studying the given circumstances of the scene and of playing an action in order to affect your scene partner, you will learn that preparation is the key to giving up on your idea of how the scene should go. You will build muscle memory experiences of letting go of your "plan" and will focus on responding in the moment to your partner.

You will use both your private rehearsals outside of class and your in-class scene study to practice working slowly, deeply and with patience.

**Prerequisite(s):** Completion of Year 1 MFA Acting

**Co-Requisite(s):** NA

**Concurrent Enrollment:** NA

**Recommended Preparation:** NA

## **Course Notes**

Please check your email regularly. The class is designed so that everyone will get a chance to work on their scenes at least once every week. You should always, however, continue to have rehearsal outside each class in between each session, so that if any scheduled scene is unable to work for any reason, another scene can be ready to work in its place.

## Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

*Brokeback Mountain* by Annie Proulx (Short story, provided as PDF)

Plays for individual scene work. Included but not limited to:

*The Flick* by Annie Baker

*Paradise Blue* by Dominique Morisseau

*Fat Ham* by James Ijames

*Lobby Hero* by Kenneth Lonergan

Students need to make every effort to obtain a copy of necessary plays. If the student has trouble getting a copy of the play, they must notify the instructor at least 48 hours in advance of the next class and the instructor will work with them to find a copy.

## Optional Readings and Supplementary Materials

*The Actor and The Target* by Declan Donnellan

This book is a very helpful supplement to many of the principles we will cover in class

## Participation

As this is an experiential class, participation is of paramount importance. Alertness, collaboration, openness to feedback, and engagement in non-judgemental observation of self and others are vital for growth in this class.

A precautionary note: much of the scene work for this contains intense material. Please consider this syllabus a “trigger warning” and gauge your openness 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.

## Grading Breakdown

Table 1 Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Scenework in class		50
Preparation for class (Rehearsals, Reading of Material)		25
Discussion Participation		15
Professional Etiquette (Focus, Promptness, Ability to give and receive feedback)		10
<b>TOTAL</b>		100

## 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
F	59 and below

### Grading Timeline

Midterm grading will be only “Not at risk”. Final grades will be given.

### Grading Policies

Three (3) absences will result in a demotion of your grade. The totality of 3 absences results in a full letter grade demotion. If you miss a total of five (5) classes, you fail the class. Any failed class will result in academic probation.

### Attendance

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 five 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.*

### Classroom norms

In order to fully participate in this class you need;

1. To come prepared (having read the material, rehearsed your scene)
2. Have an understanding of classroom etiquette (Respectful collaboration, openness to others)
3. Have a willingness to reflect on your own work, receive feedback, and engage in non-judgemental feedback with your classmates
4. Focus on the work for the duration of the class
5. Approach the process with a generosity of spirit

### 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.

## **Course Evaluations**

[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. [Contact CET](#) for support in creating a mid-semester evaluation.]

## **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**

	<b>Topics/Daily Activities</b>	<b>Readings/Preparation</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Warmup/Games/ Discussion/Text Exploration	Read the play that your scene is from (Fat Ham, Lobby Hero, The Flick, Paradise Blue)	Discussion Participation
<b>Week 2</b>	Games/ Scene Work on first round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work Group Exercise Participation
<b>Week 3</b>	Scene work on first round of scenes/Text Analysis	Rehearse Scene outside of class/ Read Brokeback Mountain	Scene work Text Analysis Discussion
<b>Week 4</b>	Scene work on first round of scenes//Text Analysis	Rehearse Scene outside of class/ Everyone read Lobby Hero	Scene work Text Analysis Discussion
<b>Week 5</b>	Scene work on first round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 6</b>	Scene work on second round of scenes	Read the play that your new scene is from/Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 7</b>	Scene work on second round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 8</b>	Scene work on second round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 9</b>	Scene work on second round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 10</b>	Scene work on second round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 11</b>	Scene work on last round of scenes	Read the play that your new scene is from/Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 12</b>	Scene work on last round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 13</b>	Scene work on last round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 14</b>	Scene work on last round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>Week 15</b>	Scene work on last round of scenes	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Scene work
<b>FINAL</b>	Final Scene presentations	Rehearse Scene outside of class	Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC <i>Schedule of Classes</i> at <a href="http://classes.usc.edu">classes.usc.edu</a> .

## **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.