

USC School of Dramatic Arts

Course ID: THTR-342b #63060 BFA MT - Dramatic Scene Study
Units: 2 Term: Spring 2025 Day: Mon/Wed Time: 4-5:50PM

Location: MCC 111
Instructor: Hugh O’Gorman
Office: 1010 MCC Room 214
Office Hours: By appointment
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Mobile: 213.840.6729

IT Help: If you experience difficulties with Zoom or Blackboard please go to:

<https://kepteaching.usc.edu/get-help/>

Course Description

This is a process-oriented, exercise and scene study intensive class for the third year BFA Musical Theatre student with a concentration on exploration of Psychological Realism via contemporary and/or classical dramatic literature and training theories. Acting, physical, imagination and vocal exercises will be used in conjunction with scenes to advance the growth of the actor in their acting process. The aim is to get the focus off oneself and onto one’s scene partner in service to the play and live believably under imaginary circumstances with precise repeatability and complete spontaneity. Selected source material will be used for exploration of Konstantin Stanislavski’s *Active Analysis* and *Playing Action* as well as fundamentals from the Michael Chekhov acting technique.

Learning Objectives

- To fully explain, comprehend, examine, and execute “Active Analysis”.
- To fully explain, comprehend, examine, and execute “Playing Action”.
- To take the focus off oneself and target *outside of self*.
- To fully understand and execute “sourcing” & “releasing”.
- To fully understand and fully execute the “Five Questions”.
- To develop the actor’s *Imagination*.
- To further develop the actor’s *Impulse & Expression* ratio.
- To further develop a quotidian warm-up process to move from the “Daily Self” to the “Artistic Self” based on the foundational principles of the Michael Chekhov technique.
- Provide a brave, supportive, and challenging artistic environment for actors to continue developing their craft as artists by taking risks and refining their relationship to the perception of “failure”.
- To train for *Adversity*.
- To train and develop artistic *Accountability*.
- To deeply examine the artist’s relationship to perceived *Failure* and develop a practice of *Failing Better*.
- To develop a practice of *non-judgmental observation* of self and others.
- To read, study and apply the principles from the reading *Michael Chekhov*.
- To read, study and apply the principles from the reading *The Actor and the Target*.
- To read, study and apply the principles from the reading *Acting Action: A Primer for Actors*.

Prerequisite(s): THTR 125, 120a, 120b, 201aL, 201bL, 342A

Recommended Preparation: Prepared, memorized, monologue or song. Have completed reading ACTING ACTION A PRIMER FOR ACTORS by Hugh O’Gorman. Have completed reading the full play for your assigned scene work.

Assessment Based on Overall Growth

Course Outcomes:

I. You will acquire skills needed to deepen Professional Artistry

1. You will have the ability to work respectfully with your process and collaboratively with others
2. Use skills to clarify your process in constructing character journey
3. Create personal artistic safety as well as express and expand boundaries of expression
4. Measurement: Participation in class and willingness to explore
5. Measurement: Giving constructive input by actively witnessing the work of others
6. Measurement: Develop a grounded criteria for excellence thru Faculty evaluation, Self-evaluation/Peer feedback
7. Measurement: The ability to source imagery both visually and kinesthetically
8. Measurement: The ability to live believably under imaginary circumstances with precise repeatability and complete spontaneity
9. Measurement: The ability to create a three-dimensional character based on text and imagination
10. Measurement: The ability to receive feedback and make adjustment in a timely manner
11. Measurement: Creation of a prompt-book/journal for performance preparation and as a reflective tool for self-evaluation

II. You will learn to articulate the actor’s craft as well as incorporate, respond to and develop creative imagery under imaginary dramatic circumstances

1. Become proficient at acknowledging and acting on impulse with physical, vocal, and emotional range
2. You will be able to independently personalize circumstance beyond naturalistic acting
3. Measurement: Ability to identify specifically implicit as well as explicit acting obligations in texts
4. Measurement: Ability to talk about the actor’s craft with precision and detail
5. Measurement: Ability to receive and respond to what is being given to you
6. Measurement: Allowing yourself to deepen your capacity to employ actions that include emotion tactics to achieve objectives.
7. Measurement tool: Self-evaluation based on building sensitivity, awareness and exploration of human drives
8. Measurement tool: Connecting with specific actions
9. Measurement tool: The ability to make the Event of the scene happen
10. Measurement tools: Scene work, Character development/arch/range Feedback and adjustments

III. You will increase your understanding of psycho-physical dynamics and how they are used to play actions in pursuit of an objective to make the event of the scene happen

1. You will become proficient at living believably under heightened circumstances

2. You will expand the understanding and uses of energy centers in the body
3. You will be able to identify and implement social custom and mores for the period of the play
4. You will identify and implement physical activity and styles of expression
5. Measurement: Identify, construct and investment in imaginary circumstances
6. Measurement: Investment in physical activity and actions
7. Measurement: The creation of space and atmosphere engaging the senses
8. Measurement: Expanding your physical relationship to and the use of psycho-physical space
9. Measurement: Constructing layers and dynamics in an imaginary relationship
10. Measurement tool: Becoming sensitive to rhythm and tempo in relationship to passion, temperature, and temperament in dramatic/dramatic scenes
11. Measurement tool: Ability to implement adjustments to deepen the investment into circumstance, objective, atmosphere, relationship.
12. Measurement tool: Discussion and growth thru the observation of others to discover what compels investment in the character getting their objective. What makes us care?
13. Measurement tool: Discussion and growth in defining preparation practices that sustain living truthfully moment to moment

IV. To remember and practice the basic principles of Professional Behavior

1. Preparation
2. Classroom Etiquette
3. Respect for feedback
4. Reflection
5. Measurement: Enter the space prepared to work (dress, props, etc.)
6. Measurement: Focus
7. Measurement: Generosity of spirit/
8. Measurement: Receiving feedback
9. Measurement tool: Class contract and your ability to live up to commitment

V. Overall Growth

1. Self and faculty evaluation written and oral

VI. Book Tests

1. *The Actor and the Target* by Declan Donnellan

VII. Midterm (scene)

VIII. Final exam (Scene)

Table 3 Course schedule

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
Week 1	Performance Theory & Application/Neutral Scenes	Re-Read Play of Assigned Scene	Scene Process: invisible work and visible work
Week 2	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	Re-read Play of Assigned Scene	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #1
Week 3	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	Re-read Play of Assigned Scene	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #1
Week 4	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	The Actor & the Target Chapters: Intro, 1-2	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #1
Week 5	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	The Actor & the Target Chapters: 3-4	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #2
Week 6	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	The Actor & the Target Chapters: 5-6	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #2
Week 7	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	The Actor & the Target Chapters: 7-8	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #2
Week 8	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	The Actor & the Target Chapters: 9-10	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work – Pass #3
Week 9	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	The Actor & the Target Chapters: 11-12	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work– Pass #3
Week 10	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	Michael Chekhov Reading	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work– Pass #3
Week 11	Active Analysis/Assigned Dramatic Scenes	Michael Chekhov Reading	Mid-Term Final Scene Performance
Week 12	Transformation & Text Psychological Gesture	Michael Chekhov Reading	Written Test: <i>The Actor & the Target</i>
Week 13	Transformation & Text Imaginary Body	Michael Chekhov Reading	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work
Week 14	Transformation & Text Imaginary Centers	Michael Chekhov Reading	Scene rehearsal: invisible work and visible work
Week 15	Transformation & Text Objective Atmosphere	Michael Chekhov Reading	Test: <i>Acting Action</i>
FINAL	Transformation & Text Incorporating Character		Final Scene Performance

Required Reading: The following materials must be read in their entirety during the duration of the course as per in class oral instructions.

1. **Handout (PDF):** *Michael Chekhov - Transformation*
2. **Book:** *The Actor and the Target* by Declan Donnellan
3. **Book:** *Acting Action: A Primer for Actors* by Hugh O’Gorman
4. **Play Scripts:** *Per assigned dramatic scene work*

Weekly Reading Breakdown of The Actor and the Target by Declan Donnellan

- Week 1: Chapters 1-3
- Week 2: Chapters 4-6
- Week 3: Chapters 7-9
- Week 4: Chapters 10-12
- Week 5: Chapters 13-16
- Week 6: Chapters 17-19
- (Midterm Book Exam Week 7)

Description of Grading Criteria

A Each time the student works in class they exceed expectations.

A- The work is usually exceptional.

B+ The student work is very good on a consistent basis. The student has been able to demonstrate the ability to meet all the expectations with sufficient consistency. They can identify the skills being taught in class and the techniques being employed in the process in this class with little support. Student shows promise of great achievement over time.

B The student work is solidly within expectations. The student demonstrates the ability to utilize the skills being taught with regular support.

B- The student work is above average. The student requires regular support, but their work remains within the required parameter. The student demonstrates the ability to use the skills being taught but with less confidence and frequency.

C+ The student work has been above average on occasion but with less consistency than average. The student requires regular and repeated support.

C The student's work is average. They are demonstrating a limited understanding/engagement of the skills being taught. The student requires regular and repeated support. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress. The student demonstrates a lack of consistency.

C- The student work is below average and is not meeting the expectations or criteria of the class. The student is not working with rigor and is not engaging the skills being taught with any consistency. Regular and repeated support may not be effectively advancing the student's progress. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D+ The student work is poor. The student is not engaging in the process with any rigor or discipline. The work is far below the parameters of acceptable application. The student demonstrates little appetite for the skills being taught. Other underlying factors such as discipline, focus, concentration and commitment may be undermining their progress.

D- The work is barely acceptable. The student has shown little to no progress during the course in any visible manner. Most of the homework assigned has not been turned in in a timely manner. The student is not engaged with the work, his classmates and/or the craft of acting.

F A majority of the work is unacceptable.

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Grading Breakdown

Including the above detailed assignments, how will students be graded overall? Participation should be no more than 15%, unless justified for a higher amount. All must total 100%.

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
In Class Scene Pass 1	10	10
In Class Scene Pass 2	10	10
In Class Scene Pass 3	15	15
Mid term Scene Performance	15	15
Chekhov's Transformation Proc	15	15
Acting Action - Process & Test	10	10
The Actor and the Target - Proc	10	10
Final Scene Performance	15	15

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
F	59 and below

Grading Timeline

Feed-back will be given in class.

Class Policies

Attendance & Punctuality:

Acting is about showing up. You can't act if you're not in the room. Attendance for each class is mandatory. This course is almost entirely experiential, and each session builds on the previous one: one must be in class in order to succeed in this course. Each participant in this course is a member of the ensemble and will be working with partners who heavily rely on one another. When one person is absent, it impacts the entire group. The purpose of the attendance policy is to promote professionalism and to set you up for future success. Studying musical theatre requires discipline, consistency, and commitment to a daily practice. Engage fully in each class to strengthen these values, to demonstrate growth, and to meet the learning objectives. Class activities are created with an emphasis on collaboration; partnering, group work and shared performance depend upon each student in a course being present. As a result, most classes cannot be made up at another time. The way to grow as a performer is to show up and attend to your craft. Your

commitment to your classmates' and professor's time and effort is of paramount importance and signals the maturity, mindset, and respect of a student eager to excel, grow, and succeed.

Excused absences (2 allowed):

You must email an official document (on letterhead) such as a positive Covid test result w/date, police report or any other letter that constitutes a verifiable emergency as soon as you know. It will be unacceptable to receive notice minutes or hours before class unless it is a verifiable emergency. Your third absence from class, and every absence, thereafter, will bring your final grade down by a full letter (i.e. B+ to a C+).

Verifiable emergency such as

- Illness requiring attention by a healthcare provider
- Hospitalization, death, or serious illness of a family member
- Required appearance in a court of law

The student is responsible for communicating with the instructor via email regarding any absences.

Documentation (e.g. doctor's letter, court summons, obituary) unsolicited by the instructor is required no later than when the student returns to class if they wish it to be considered excused. **Please note that it is not the instructor's responsibility to request this material from the student.**

The student is asked to notify the instructor in advance of an absence in writing whenever possible. In the case of an official department event, students should notify faculty at least 48 hours prior to an absence.

- Please enter class about 5 minutes prior to the start time. Please be sure you are ready to work - dressed in movement clothes with bags and personal belongings put away in the appropriate place - when class begins.
- Note: Being on time is the responsibility we all hold as members of this group. Lateness disrupts the class already in session and results in a disjointed lesson for the late arriving student. If you arrive after the class start time you will be considered late. Please text me as soon as you can if you are experiencing any difficulties. Be sure to include your name in the text.
- On time means you are already dressed appropriately, have gone to the restroom, and you are ready to work. Clothing: Please wear non-restrictive clothing and footwear. DO NOT wear jewelry as they serve as a hazard for the work we do. Attire such as tight jeans, skirts and flip flops will prevent full participation in some activities.
- Notebook: Please create a notebook for this class. Have it with you during every class. It should contain:

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.

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. 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 Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from OSAS. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. OSAS is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for OSAS and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Vidoe Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) 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.

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>

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](#).

AI

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. 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.]

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).

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.