

Fall 2024 (Beginning Acting)

My overall reflection of this class is something I can say loudly and proudly. I am beyond grateful that I took this course, and I would recommend it to anyone without hesitation. This class will forever have a special place in my heart because it did so much more than teach me how to act. It helped me find my voice, build confidence in myself, and slowly discover who I am becoming.

During my first semester of college, I lost my father, and my life completely changed. I was forced to grow up faster than I expected, take on responsibilities I never imagined having, and support my family while trying to stay strong for everyone else. Carrying that grief while balancing school was overwhelming, and there were moments when I felt lost, disconnected, and unsure if I could keep going. In many ways, this class truly saved me. It gave me something to hold onto during one of the hardest times of my life.

This course became my safe space. It helped me focus, especially through memorization and performance, but more importantly, it gave me a place where I could escape, express myself, and feel seen. The people I met along the way were exactly who I needed at that moment in my life. I found friendships that turned into family, and I met my two best friends in this class, something I will always be grateful for. TA-SEC 07 ended up being one of the best experiences I've ever had, even though at first I was terrified. I judged this class by its cover because acting scared me. I was afraid of embarrassing myself, of being vulnerable, and of failing in front of others. But as the semester went on, that fear slowly turned into confidence. Each performance pushed me to be braver, more open, and more trusting of myself. Acting became a form of healing I never knew I needed.

Having Oluchi Nwokocha as my professor made all the difference. Her patience, guidance, and calming energy created an environment where I felt supported and safe enough to take risks. She believed in me even when I doubted myself, and that belief meant more than she may ever know. Her kindness, encouragement, and genuine care touched me deeply, and I will truly miss her sweet soul and the light she brought into the classroom.

In conclusion, this class was not just a requirement, it was a turning point in my life. It helped me heal, grow, and rediscover parts of myself I thought I had lost. I will carry the lessons, memories, and love from this course with me forever.

"Professor Oluchi,

Thank you again for an amazing class and an amazing semester. Growing up, I struggled a lot with social anxiety and speaking in front of others. I have been trying to work on becoming the social and outgoing person I want to be, and it's classes like yours that help me with that. Your teaching skills and energy brought the class together and created a fun learning environment for everyone, you really did bring a lot of people out of their shells (including me of course!). I just wanted to thank you and express my gratitude to you."

Peer Review Fall 2024

Oluchi possesses the knowledge, teaching style, and organizational skills that make for a terrific acting teacher. In this particular lesson she demonstrated a clear grasp of some of Michael Chekhov's most fundamental principles of embodied acting and introduced them comprehensively and efficiently. The learning goals of the lesson were clear and connected the class with the broader study of acting as a rigorous pursuit with its own theories and diverse approaches. This would be commendable for any acting class, but is particularly notable in an introductory course.

As an instructor, Oluchi has an easy manner with students, supportive and joking and also clearly in the driver's seat. She remains cheerful as she encourages the more reticent students to engage physically and verbally, and students respond positively in turn. She builds in time for the class to reflect on activities--an excellent strategy for both giving students voice and allowing for processing to cement understanding of concepts.

She responds encouragingly with phrases such as "love that," "appreciate that," and "thank you." She takes advantage of the room's white board to write vocabulary on the board for visual learners, and repeats phrases verbally, and then models the day's main activity before sending students to work on their own. Throughout the class I observed multiple customs that indicate Oluchi has created a consistent environment; for instance, the phrases "toss it off for later," (i.e., let go of that) and "take a pleasure smell" (take a deep and cleansing breath), high fives for students who have accomplished something that is challenging for them, and the practice of taking a few minutes to take down notes at the end of class to ensure retention of ideas.

In addition to her evident expertise and engaging dynamic, Oluchi possesses excellent time management and a strong sense of how to structure a class, two considerable challenges for a lab course in any discipline. In 75 minutes, she managed to lead a comprehensive warm up, introduce a specific method, model an applied activity, and have ALL students rehearse and perform short scenes, as well as closing class with a group circle- a remarkable feat!

Oluchi is a gifted teacher who possesses a rare and wonderful blend of considerable disciplinary knowledge, infectious enthusiasm, and pedagogical acumen. The Theatre department should count itself lucky to have Oluchi as a member of the faculty.