

COURSE SYLLABUS INTRODUCTION TO ACTING

THE106H
Spring 2010
Mon. & Wed.
6:30 PM – 7:45 PM
MFA Studio Theatre

Instructor, **DERRICK A. HOPKINS**
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and by appointment
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It is expected that all students enrolled in this class support the letter and the spirit of the Academic Honesty Policy as stated in the college catalog.

Catalogue Description:

Exploration of the fundamentals of acting both on and off-stage, with emphasis on improvisation, theatre games, and play theory and activities. Intended to develop an awareness of the theatre's usefulness as a tool for personal discovery and communication, and to develop critical judgment of actors in performance.

Course Objectives: Students will

- develop and demonstrate theatrical characters through improvisational games.
- develop and demonstrate theatrical and improvisational skills such as projection, enunciation, verbal flow, interplay, stage movement, body positioning, and timing.
- analyze and perform various contemporary monologues and scenes.
- discern the elements of acting skill in the performances of oneself and others.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory since this is a performance course. Your performance skills can only get better through active ensemble participation and observation. You are permitted three excused and communicated absences (voicemail, email, Health Services note). Each absence thereafter will result in a drop of one full letter grade. Missing six or more classes will result in an automatic failure of the course. Three tardies will constitute one absence and will be reflected in your grade.

Grading Criteria:

20 points – ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND GROWTH: All twenty points will be awarded for the improvisation games in the first half of the semester. Every time you participate, you earn 1 point. Essentially, you would need to participate in two games per class to earn the maximum score. Participation points will be divided in half if a student is absent from the final exam, *Ringling Down The Curtain*, which is open to the public on May 6, 2010 at 7:00 PM.

20 points – WRITTEN CRITIQUES: Two papers are due throughout the semester worth ten points each. The papers must be written on two of the three productions being presented on campus. They are *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying* (March 4-7), *Almost, Maine* (April 23 & 24), and *Wit* (May 1). Each critique should be a minimum of 2 pages, double spaced, typed, Times New Roman, size 12 font, and should include multiple performance aspects and personal impressions on acting, writing lighting, costumes, makeup, set design, and overall concept.

20 points – MIDTERM: Students will be asked to perform two improv games for the instructor to demonstrate understanding by practical implementation of strategies and rules instructed (10 points; scores averaged together). Students will then be asked to explain, in a typed outline, the rules on how to play an improv game, the acting skills the game emphasizes, and any tips to mastery (10 points).

10 points – EVALUATIONS: Students will be evaluated on his or her memorized monologue and scene (5 points each). Students will be evaluated on memorization accuracy (1 point), character development (2 points), projection (1 point), and diction (1 point). Monologues are not to exceed two minutes and scenes are not to exceed four minutes. An automatic five bonus points will be given for creating an original monologue or scene. Monologues/Scenes must be selected by the student(s) and approved by the instructor. Monologues/Scenes should incorporate techniques from in-class discussions and games.

20 points – FINAL: Students will perform a theatre game, his or her memorized monologue, or his or her scene during the final, *Ringling Down the Curtain*, which will be presented for the public on May 6, 2010 at 7:00 PM. Information regarding the final will be provided in class as the class progresses.

10 points – SELF EVALUATION PAPER: The paper should be a minimum of 2 pages, double spaced, typed, Times New Roman, size 12 font, and should include the student's impression of his or her growth as a performer, any areas the student found difficult or did not get right away, the student's understanding/appreciation of acting as an art form, and if applicable, how the student will incorporate these skills into his or her daily life.

Calculating Midterm Grade & Grading Scale:

Participation Points.....	20 points
1 Critique.....	10 points
<u>Midterm.....</u>	<u>20 points</u>
Total.....	50 points

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Range of Points</i>
A	50 – 46
A-	45 – 40
B+	39 – 37
B	36 – 34
B-	33 – 30
C+	29 – 27
C	26 – 24
C-	23 – 20
D+	19 – 17
D	16 – 14
E	13 – 0

Calculating Final Grade & Grading Scale:

Participation Points.....	20 points
2 Critiques	20 points
Midterm	20 Points
Evaluations	10 points
Final.....	20 points
<u>Self-Evaluation.....</u>	<u>10 points</u>
Total.....	100 points

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Range of Points</i>
A	100 – 96
A-	95 – 90
B+	89 – 87
B	86 – 84
B-	83 – 80
C+	79 – 77
C	76 – 74
C-	73 – 70
D+	69 – 67
D	66 – 64
E	63 – 0

Course Outline:

<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics</i>
M	January 25	Course Syllabus, “Pirates”
W	January 27	“Name Game,” “Trust,” “Lap, Clap, & Snap”
M	February 1	“Same Tune,” “Mirroring,” “Movie Picture”
W	February 3	“Shoe Director / Actor,” “House Party”
M	February 8	“Dating Game,” “Hitchhiker”
W	February 10	“Vacation Slideshow,” “Superheroes,”
M	February 15	“News Broadcast,” “Whose Line Is It Anyway?”
W	February 17	“Mirror Scene,” Review of previous games
M	February 22	“Park Bench,” Review of previous games
W	February 24	“Song Lyric Scene,” Review of previous Games
M	March 1	Game Review Day; Annie-Laurie Burdo visits
W	March 3	Game Review Day
M	March 8	Midterm Performance Exams
W	March 10	Midterm Performance Exams; Critique of <i>How to Succeed...</i> Due!
M	March 15	No Class
W	March 17	No Class
M	March 22	How to prepare a monologue; bring your monologue with you
W	March 24	Monologue Coaching Session
M	March 29	Monologue Coaching Session
W	March 31	Prepared monologues; monologues must be memorized
M	April 5	No Class; studio will be available to work with T.A.
W	April 7	Prepared monologues; monologues must be memorized
M	April 12	How to prepare a scene; bring your scene with you
W	April 14	Scene Coaching Session
M	April 19	Scene Coaching Session
W	April 21	Prepared scenes; An Education of George Hearn
M	April 26	Tony & Emmy Award Winner George Hearn Visits
W	April 28	Prepared scenes; Critique of <i>Almost, Maine</i> Due!
M	May 3	Final Dress Rehearsal
W	May 5	Final Dress Rehearsal; Critique of <i>Wit</i> Due!
R	May 6	Ringin' Down The Curtain, 7:00 PM, Hartman; This is your final!
M	May 10	Self evaluation papers turned in by 4:00 PM

This syllabus is not a contract for THE 106 and is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

IMPROVISATION EVALUATION FORM

Name: _____

Date: _____

Who, Where, What, Button:

0 1 2 3 4 5

Character Commitment:

0 1

Physical Commitment:

0 1

Projection:

0 1

Diction:

0 1

Stage Presence:

0 1

Total: _____/10

MONOLOGUE / SCENE EVALUATION FORM

Name: _____

Date: _____

Memorization Accuracy:

0 1

Character Commitment / Believability:

0 1 2

Projection:

0 1

Diction:

0 1

Total: _____ /5

FINAL EVALUATION FORM

Name: _____

Date: May 6, 2010

Character Commitment / Believability:

0 1 2 3 4 5

Physical Commitment, Projection, Diction, & Stage Presence:

0 1 2 3 4 5

Overall Stage Performance / Presentation:

0 1 2 3 4 5

Memorization Accuracy (or) Who, Where, What, Button:

0 1 2 3

Growth from Prior In-Class Performance:

0 1 2

Total: _____/20

Talent and Accomplishment: (courtesy of Dr. Tim Palkovic)

In acting, such a thing as talent exists, but it is particularly elusive. Actors do the things we do everyday. If done well, it seems that little has been done by the actor at all. A frequent problem is negative self-talk: "I am not an actor" or "I am not creative" A student who believes these statements will deprive themselves from learning the skills of acting. Developmental processes can be learned, but only with positive self-talk.

Self-awareness is a key that allows emotional vulnerability. For this reason *each student works at their own level with no comparison to the other class members*. Self-judgment is the saboteur of good acting. Group co-operation, relation to others, and self-awareness are keys to success.

Frequently students state, as a personal goal in the class, that they wish to lose their fear of appearing before strangers. In practice, this is a goal that is next to impossible to achieve. Think of it-each of us acts silly when we are certain that those we are with accept us without reservations for who we are. The reverse of losing fear must happen if we are to make progress as a class. Each of us must have the goal to become a non-critical and loving friend to everyone in the class. We can all become expressive and willing to take risks because nobody is a stranger, but is a friend.

The loving acceptance of each other's frailties does not mean that we do not share in helping one another grow. The process is quite simple. Each game has rules and we, as watchers, can determine whether or not the players played by the rules in each game.

Helpful Tips and Things to Know: (courtesy of Ken Roberts)

- It is important that the improv contain *who, what, where*;
 - ✓ *who*: define your character
 - ✓ *what*: what is the situation, what is the conflict that will move or drive the scene
 - ✓ *where*: define your space.
- Warm-ups and exercises will help break the ice, stimulate the imagination and make the group feel easier about being silly as well as develop focus, risk taking, listening with ears and bodies, synchronicity, response time, trust within the group, reacting without thinking, quick thinking, and working together.
- Improvisational skills will enable the actor to instill the character with "real" and "personal" characteristics, as well as allow the actor to make the lines "his own".
- Improvisational skills will give the actor the ability to "cover" or "ad lib" in a scene if necessary.
- Improvisation within the context of the monologue will enable the actor to create his space, to approach the work with self-confidence, and to present a truly unique interpretation.
- Improvisation of the scene or the monologue will let the actor know how well he/she knows the material.
- Monologues are used by the actor, not only in the context of the performance of the play as a whole, but are used in audition situations as well. Therefore it is essential that the actor have a stable of monologues to perform in auditions encompassing comedy, drama, tragedy, spanning the classical theater to the modern theater.
- Perhaps the most important building block to having a successful semester is to trust each other. Without trust we cannot explore and fully realize the objectives and components of this course.

Three Rules of Improvisation: (According to Dan Diggles book, *Improv for Actors*)

- “Say the first thing that comes into your head.”
- “Say, ‘Yes. And ...’ to all of your partner’s offers.”
- “Make your partner look good.”

20 Theatrical Terms:

1. Ad lib – Lines supplied by the actor wherever they may be required, as in crowd scenes or to fill in where there would otherwise be an undesirable pause.
2. Blocking – The arrangement of the actors’ movements on the stage with respect to one another and the stage pace.
3. Closed – The actor is turned away from the audience.
4. Counter Cross – A movement in opposition to the cross of another actor.
5. Cross – Movement from one area to another.
6. Cue – The last words of a speech or line indicating the time for another actor to speak.
7. Downstage – Toward the audience.
8. Enunciation – To speak clearly.
9. Motivation – Why the character acts a certain way.
10. Offstage – All parts of the stage not enclosed by the setting.
11. Onstage – The part of the stage enclosed by the setting that is visible to the audience.
12. Open – The actor is turned toward the audience.
13. Pacing – The rate of speed at which an actor speaks their lines.
14. Presence – The “it” quality that makes the audience want to watch an actor.
15. Projection -
16. Stage Left – The actor’s left as he/she stands onstage facing the audience.
17. Stage Right – The actor’s right as he/she stands onstage facing the audience.
18. Stealing – Taking the audiences attention when it should be elsewhere.
19. Upstage – Away from the audience.
20. Upstaging – One actor is downstage and another is upstage, resulting in the downstage actor needing to turn upstage, which should be avoided.

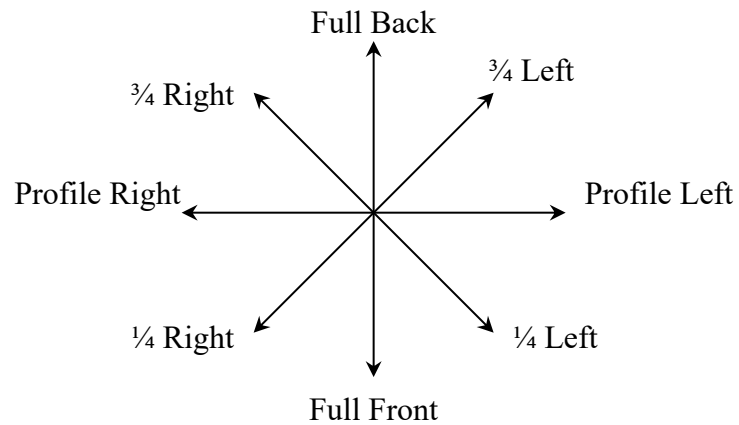
Stage areas:

Back of Stage

Up Right	Up Right Center	Up Center	Up Left Center	Up Left
Right	Right Center	Center	Left Center	Left
Down Right	Down Right Center	Down Center	Down Left Center	Down Left

Audience

Body Position:



Aspects of Production

1. Advertising
2. Audience
3. Backstage
4. Box Office
5. Costumes
6. Directing
7. Fundraising
8. Lighting
9. Make-up, Masks & Hair
10. Musicians, Orchestra, & Conductor
11. Performance Space
12. Photography
13. Playbill
14. Professionalism
15. Properties
16. Scenery
17. Set
18. Sound
19. Stage Manager
20. Writers & Composers