

IMPROVISATION (THEA 281)

FALL 2018

MW 11:00 – 12:50

NFAC 120

INSTRUCTOR: STEVE TROVILLION SMITH

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OFFICE: NFAC #171

OFFICE HOUR: 2:00 – 2:55 WEDNESDAYS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completing this course, you should be able to:

- understand the basic principles of improvisation, both short and long forms.
- use improvisation skills to create a relationship with another actor or actors on stage (talking and listening).
- share and throw focus based on the action without scripted direction.
- take risks while making bigger intellectual, physical and emotional choices (especially involving characterization) without inhibition.
- act on impulse and stay in the moment while following learned improvisational strategies even under the stress of the heightened intellectual demands of the form.
- effectively use storytelling skills including mime and narrative.
- use improvisation to form an ensemble that is cohesive and supportive on and off stage.

COURSEWORK

- We will explore different improvisatory styles, but will predominantly work with the “Second City” model.
- We will work with different improvisatory games, but all exercises will be focused on playing for truth and not just for the laugh, which will usually yield both (if a laugh is desired).
- All ensemble members are expected to be warmed up and prepared to work every day – either performing or providing supportive and objective feedback to fellow ensemble members.

- All ensemble members are expected to be dressed appropriately in clothing that permits movement.
- All ensemble members are expected to keep abreast of local and national current events and to use this breadth of knowledge in their improvisational work. At least once a week you will be expected to bring in a news story that you consider funny, infuriating, horrifying or all of those things. These stories should be brief and shared with the class and can be used in the day's work.
- Beginning midway through the semester, each ensemble member will be expected to lead the class at least once in a game that they have learned or read about outside the class, or a game they have created themselves.
- We may do a unit on comedy writing at the end of the semester depending on the rate of progress of the class.

GRADING

Grading will be based on studio work, ensemble participation, and skills acquired – how “funny” the result becomes is of secondary importance. The grading rubric is as follows:

- A – Outstanding work. Works well in both long and short forms, significant progress in all skill areas, makes big, uninhibited and creative choices, always participates, supportive of ensemble, takes notes well.
- B – Good work. Can handle long and short form, progress in all skill areas, works to lose inhibition, always participates, supportive of ensemble, takes notes well.
- C – Satisfactory work. Can handle long and short form, progress in some skill areas, works to lose inhibition, usually participates, supportive of ensemble, takes notes well.
- D – Poor Work. Unable to successfully work with long and/or short form, is making unsatisfactory progress in skill acquisition, may have issues with participation, attendance, working with the ensemble, or taking notes.
- F – Failing Work. Doesn't make satisfactory effort to handle long or short form, skill acquisition unacceptable, participation, attendance and/or attitude issues.

ABSENCE POLICY

Students are allowed two absences per semester. These excused absences are to cover illness or family emergency. These absences are in addition to official university holidays and university condoned religious holidays. Following the second absence, the student's grade will be lowered ONE FULL GRADE LEVEL for every additional absence.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

This class will require physical contact. Students should be aware that they might be physically touched by others in the class and/or by me. *If you have a problem with this or physical limitations that need to be addressed, please see me at once so we can discuss making an appropriate accommodation.*

OFFICE HOUR

I have an office hour on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 2:55 or you may schedule an appointment if this time conflicts with your schedule. Office hours are for walk-ins; you cannot schedule an appointment for that time. If you wish to make an appointment for another time, you may do so but please do not consider a meeting confirmed until we have spoken in person or by email (ssmith@uwsp.edu).

EMERGENCIES

See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point. We will discuss tornado and fire emergency procedures in class.