

Introduction to Acting

THEA 160 – Section 001

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

Course Syllabus, Fall 2016

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, NFAC 120 (Studio Theatre)

Final Exam Period: Monday, December 19, 2:45pm – 4:45pm

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed, 3-4pm

(and by appointment)

PURPOSE

This course is an introduction to the basic skill set and vocabulary of the acting craft with hands-on experience through games, exercises, analytical preparation, partnered scene work and monologue exploration. You will learn how an actor prepares physically, vocally, mentally, and emotionally for a performance on stage. You will learn and put into practice the vocabulary and tools that an actor uses to analyze a script, develop a character, and allow his/herself to live truthfully under imaginary circumstances. We will also strive for increased comfort with performing in front of a live audience. Most importantly, you will *play*.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Enduring Understandings – Through this course, students will understand that...

- Acting is behaving truthfully under imaginary circumstances.

Essential Questions

- What is an actor's process?
- What are an actor's responsibilities?
- What does it really mean to pursue an objective and play action?

Specific Goals

- *Knowledge* – Acting students will be able to...
 - Define and correctly utilize the vocabulary of an actor, including words like action, objective, given circumstances, obstacle and inner life.
- *Skills* – Acting students will be able to...
 - Pursue an objective by playing action on a scene partner in scene work and in a monologue (imaginary partner).
 - Analyze a play, scene, and character to directly inform acting choices in performance.
 - Critique and discuss the work of other actors in full productions as well as their own work and that of their peers in class.
 - Prepare for an audition.
- *Dispositions* – Acting students will...
 - Strive for a vibrant imagination, an open heart and a willingness to play.
 - Increase their individual comfort level with performing for a live audience.

“Acting is hard work, but I believe that it’s no accident that the alternative word we have for it is ‘playing.’” ~ John Barton, Playing Shakespeare

CLASS POLICIES

Required Plays

- Auburn, David. *Proof*. Faber & Faber.

Required Text

- Benedetti, Robert. *The Actor In You: Sixteen Simple Steps to Understanding the Art of Acting*, 5th edition. Allyn & Bacon.

Required UWSP Theatre Production Attendance

- *Unnecessary Farce* – Studio Theatre – Oct. 14-16, 19-22
- *La Cage Aux Folles* – Jenkins Theatre – Nov. 4-6, 9-12

Course Requirements

- Complete all **assigned readings** on time and actively participate in all **class discussions** of the reading materials.
- Memorize, rehearse, and perform in **two scenes**: one from the assigned play, one from a play of your choice. For each, write a thoughtful **character analysis** to be handed in before the first performance.
- Give your **best effort** to all in-class acting exercises and warm-ups.
- Prepare a **monologue** suitable for an audition.
- There will be one **quiz** to test your knowledge of the actor's vocabulary.
- Attend the following UWSP productions: *Unnecessary Farce* and *La Cage Aux Folles*. For ONE of these shows, prepare a typed **critique** of one actor's performance.
- **Final Exam** – Your final exam will be the second performance of your second scene.

Grade Breakdown

Active, daily participation.....	250 pts
Open Scene.....	50 pts
Scene #1 Character Analysis	100 pts
Scene #1 Performance	100 pts
Vocab Quiz.....	100 pts
Monologue.....	100 pts
Acting Critique.....	100 pts
Scene #2 Character Analysis	100 pts
<u>Scene #2 Performance</u>	<u>100 pts</u>
Total.....	1000 pts

Final Grade:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>
A	940 – 1000	C+	780 – 809
A-	910 – 939	C	740 – 779
B+	880 – 909	C-	710 – 739
B	840 – 879	D	660 – 709
B-	810 – 839	F	659 and below

Attendance & Participation

- Prompt, consistent attendance is essential to your growth in this class. Show up dressed to move and ready to engage!
- You may miss two classes without grading penalty. Every absence thereafter will reduce your final course grade by one full letter (i.e. the best possible grade with 3 absences is a “B”, with 4 absences is a “C”, and so on).
- Six absences results in a failing grade for the course.
- There is no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences in this course; save your absences for when you absolutely need them.
- Arriving more than five minutes late to class counts as half an absence.
- If you fail to deliver a performance on your assigned day, your grade on that assignment will be “0.” Make-up performances will only be arranged for the grade of the student who was prepared and ready to perform on the assigned day.
- If there are exceptional circumstances (i.e. serious health/family emergencies), please speak with me privately, asap. If you develop a physical ailment (injury or illness) that prevents you from participating, please still come to class and observe (unless you’re given specific orders otherwise and obtain my express permission).
- If you are late or miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what work and assignments, if any, might have been missed, by e-mailing me and/or seeing me during office hours.
- If a class should need to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, I will e-mail the class and a note will be placed on the classroom door.

Scenes & Rehearsals

There will be two memorized, thoroughly prepared scene presentations, the first from *Proof*, and the second from a play of your choosing (with my approval). These will be “duet” scenes, that is, scenes with one other person (you’ll be working with a different partner on each scene you present). Each scene will be performed twice and graded according to your effort in preparation, imagination, and how well you apply both the principles discussed in class and the notes given to you after your first performance.

While it is possible I may give you time in class to rehearse your scenes, most of your rehearsal time must be scheduled outside of class. If a student misses a scene rehearsal with another student, without communicating in advance, that student loses 25% of their scene grade for the first missed rehearsal and receives a “0” (zero) on the scene for a second missed rehearsal. Be considerate to your partners!

Any student who does not show satisfactory effort on the first scene and associated papers will not be given an opportunity to present the second scene and will fail the course.

Classroom Etiquette

- **Respect** – One of the most important (and possibly most difficult) skills an actor must develop is the ability to allow his/herself to be totally vulnerable on stage. In order to start working on this skill, we must make certain that the classroom is a safe place. Be kind and respectful with your fellow students (and your instructor...). Insulting, destructive criticism will not be tolerated.
- **Cell Phones** – Turn off your cell phone during class. If you are expecting an emergency call, let me know before class begins.
- **Attire** – We will be doing physical warm-ups nearly every class. Please dress appropriately. Wear clothes you can move freely in and don’t mind getting a little dirty (we may get on the floor every now and again).
- **Costumes & Props** – For each scene performance, you are expected to make choices about a costume for your character, and perform in costume. When performing in costume, please be dressed and ready to perform at the start of class. Be prepared to stay in costume throughout

the remainder of the class. Props are also essential to scene work. Within reason, you should be able to provide most costume/prop needs from your personal belongings. For anything that is essential to the scene work and not readily available, ask my permission to request it from the Department's collection. Once I approve, requests for costumes are emailed to Cece Hill and requests for props are emailed to Joe Klug (you must CC me on these emails).

- **Homework** – Hard-copy written assignments (character/script analyses) must be typed, double-spaced and stapled. Acting Critiques must be in MLA format and must be submitted on D2L before class starts the day they are due. All written assignments must be turned in on time. *Late work will not be accepted, period.*
- **Studio** – Please respect our Studio Theatre space. Do not leave trash on the floor of the theater or the risers; please put it in the trashcan! Always put all rehearsal furniture and props that are not yours back where you found them when you are done with them.
- **Comfort** – In this class, students are likely to be in close physical contact with every member of the class at one point or another. I will also be working physically with students to help adjust movements on occasion. If you are uncomfortable with this at any point in the semester, please come speak with me privately, asap.

UWSP Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

UWSP values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the *Rights and Responsibilities* document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Look here for more information:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Pages/rightsandresponsibilities.aspx>

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the *Rights and Responsibilities* document, Chapter 14, which can be accessed here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations (even temporarily), please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here:

<http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

Religious Beliefs

Religious beliefs will be accommodated according to UWS 22.03 as long as the student notifies the instructor within the first three weeks of the beginning of the semester with the days or dates on which he/she wishes to request relief from an examination or academic requirement.