

# Movement for Actors I

THEA 165 – Section 001

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

Course Syllabus, Fall 2016

Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:00 – 10:50 am, NFAC 283

Final Exam Period: Wednesday, December 21, 10:15am – 12:15pm

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## PURPOSE

Movement for Actors I is an introduction to actor movement training and the development of physical awareness and characterization. This course will look specifically at two modes of movement training: the Alexander Technique and Michael Chekhov Technique. With the Alexander Technique, we will build a foundation of awareness of habit, good physical use, proper alignment and freedom from tension. With the Michael Chekhov Technique, we will learn how the connection between imagination and physical sensitivity can be exploited to create vibrant inner life and expand our range of truthful physical expression for a variety of acting styles. Throughout the semester we will discuss and employ good physical practices essential to an actor's preparation and ability to handle performance demands.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- The body is a versatile primary tool used by actors to project themselves believably into imaginary circumstances.
- An actor must work to improve his/her awareness of his/her body and its unique habits (proficiencies and limitations) in order to build on strengths and limit weaknesses – in other words, be adaptable.
- Building a strong connection between the imagination and the physical body can help unlock powerful emotional life on stage.

## **Essential Questions**

- What are physical habits? How can we improve our awareness of them and change them?
- How is the body affected differently by internal (emotional life) and external (environmental) changes?
- How does movement reflect, enhance or contrast text meaning and rhythms?
- How do we approach different styles and genres through movement?

## **Specific Goals**

- *Knowledge* – Movement I students will be able to...
  - Describe the operational ideas of the Alexander Technique, including use and functioning, the whole person, primary control, inhibition, and direction.
  - Describe and discuss movement with the vocabulary of the Michael Chekhov Technique.
  - Identify personal physical habits to be addressed over the course of their actor training.
- *Skills* – Movement I students will be able to...
  - Demonstrate and apply the use of the operational ideas of the Alexander Technique to improve their physical use and alignment for performance activities.
  - Demonstrate and apply the use of the ideas of the Michael Chekhov Technique to increase physical awareness & expressiveness, and specify physical characterization choices.
  - Approach character work in textless pieces and scripted monologues with strong, believable physical choices appropriate for the style (contemporary realism or Classical Greek)
- *Dispositions* – Movement I students will...
  - Value their bodies as an essential instrument to be taken care of and improved throughout their careers as actors.
  - Appreciate the importance of expanding their individual physical potential to tell the greatest truth possible in performance.

## CLASS POLICIES

### Required Text

- McEvenue, Kelly. **The Actor and the Alexander Technique**. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Chekhov, Michael. **On the Technique of Acting**. Harper, 1991.

### Required Plays

- Euripides. **Bacchai**. Trans. by Colin Teevan

### Required Materials

- **Attire** – All students are required to wear clothing that does not restrict movement or obscure the shape of the body. Clothing should be neither too tight nor too baggy. Most athletic apparel will be just fine. No jeans, period. Please remove all jewelry/watches and pull back long hair for class. Depending on the activity, we will either be barefoot or in socks, be prepared for either (i.e. always have socks). If you are not dressed appropriately, you will not be able to participate, which negatively impacts your grade.
- **Water** – Bring a personal water bottle to stay hydrated during class.

### Required Production Attendance

- *Unnecessary Farce* – Studio Theatre – Oct. 14-16, 19-22
- *La Cage Aux Folles* – Jenkins Theatre – Nov. 4-6, 9-12
- *Afterimages* – Jenkins Theatre – Dec. 9-13

### Class Assignments & Expectations

- **Daily Participation & Attitude** – Includes, but not limited to: reading assigned plays when due and participating in discussion of texts and productions; a consistent willingness to engage, explore, and play with focus and abandonment; being off-book when due; offering positive and critical evaluations of your own work and the work of your peers in class when asked; your growth in the practice of course techniques.
- **Monologue/Character Explorations** – You will be applying first the Alexander work and then Michael Chekhov techniques to two 1-to-2 minute monologues. The first will be from contemporary Realism (your choice), and the second will be from Classical Greek (*Bacchai*).
- **Textless Pieces** – Occasionally in the semester, you will be applying the techniques explored in class to movement-based vignettes with little or no spoken text. Number of such assignments will depend on class progress.
- **Quiz(zes)** – There will be at least one written quiz to test your knowledge of the Alexander Technique's operating principles and the Michael Chekhov Technique.
- **#MasterYourMovement** – This semester, you will determine and master one entirely new physical skill of your choosing. Details forthcoming.
- **Movement Observation Paper** – You will write one brief (2-3 page) paper on your observations of the movement work in a department production. You may choose which production you'd like to write about (although, you may not write about a production in which you are cast). Details forthcoming.
- **Final Exam** – The final exam consists of the final performance of your Bacchai monologue (during the final exam period) and completion of a paper detailing your process for developing the physical characterization in the monologue. Details forthcoming.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Daily Participation & Growth.....	25%
Contemporary Monologue (Alexander) .....	5%
Contemporary Monologue (Chekhov) .....	10%
Textless Pieces.....	10%
Quiz(zes) .....	10%
#MasterYourMovement .....	5%
Movement Observation Paper.....	10%
Greek Monologue (Alexander) .....	5%
Greek Monologue (Chekhov) .....	10%
Greek Monologue Process Paper.....	10%

### **Grading Scale**

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
A	94 – 100	C+	78 – 80
A-	91 – 93	C	74 – 77
B+	88 – 90	C-	71 – 73
B	84 – 87	D+	68 – 70
B-	81 – 83	D	60 – 67

### **Grading Criteria**

**A (91 – 100%) – Excellent Work** – Student consistently demonstrates strong understanding and application of course materials and techniques. Student is consistently well-prepared for and engaged in all class activities. All assignments are completed on time with the highest degree of quality, demonstrating excellent growth.

**B (81 – 90%) – Good Work** – Student demonstrates good understanding and application of course materials and techniques, with minor issues in performance. Student is consistently well-prepared and engaged in all class activities. All assignments are completed on time with good quality, demonstrating a good level of growth.

**C (71 – 80%) – Mediocre Work** – Student demonstrates limited or inconsistent understanding and application of course materials and techniques. Student is mostly present and participates in class. All assignments are completed with enough effort to meet minimum requirements, demonstrating limited growth.

**D (60 – 70%) – Poor Work** – Student attempts to complete all assignments, but is unable to achieve many requirements. Student demonstrates the minimum level of effort, participation, understanding and growth for a passing grade.

**F (Less than 60%) – Failure** – Student does not adequately participate in class, complete assignments or adhere to assignment guidelines. No improvement evident.

### **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 not be arranged.
- 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).
- You are allowed **one** observation day – after that, observing will count as an absence. If you are observing, you must take notes.
- 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.

### **Safety & Comfort**

Take care of yourselves, and take care of each other! While some of the work in class is especially designed to encourage fearlessness and playing with abandon, please avoid doing anything that might endanger your health or safety or that of your peers or the instructor. Accept responsibility for your own safety.

Warm-ups are mandatory at the top of every class, both individual and group. Warm-ups will include stretching, cardio, core strength conditioning, and preparing “actor neutral.” If you arrive late to class, you must warm up individually before you can join the class. If you have any existing physical problems that could affect your safety within physical training, please let me know immediately so that I can be aware.

## **Safety & Comfort (cont.)**

In Movement I, 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. If you are uncomfortable with this at any point in the semester, please come speak with me privately, ASAP.

## **Emergency Response**

- In the event of a medical emergency, call 911 or use the red emergency phone located outside NFAC 278 (Jenkins HR Coat Room). Offer assistance if trained and willing to do so. Guide emergency responders to victim.
- In the event of a tornado warning, proceed to the lowest level interior room without window exposure – the restrooms next door.
- See [www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures/other/floor-plans](http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures/other/floor-plans) for floor plans showing severe weather shelters on campus. Avoid wide-span rooms and buildings.
- In the event of a fire alarm, evacuate the building in a calm manner. Meet across Portage Street in Parking Lot R. Notify instructor or emergency command personnel of any missing individuals.
- Active Shooter – Run/Escape, Hide, Fight. If trapped: hide, lock doors, turn off lights, spread out and remain quiet. Follow instructions of emergency responders.
- See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Management Plan at [www.uwsp.edu/rmgt](http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt) for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point.

## **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 USP “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 6<sup>th</sup> 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.