

Acting: Fundamentals

THEA 1050 003

Course Syllabus Fall 2015

Instructor: Julie Brinker

Office: RTFP 222

Class Meets: In RTFP 130: M/W: 2:30-3:50 pm

Email: Julie.Brinker@unt.edu

Office Hours:

M/W 10:30-11 am; 12:30-1 pm, and by
appointment

Required Course Text: Bruder: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*

NOTE: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Course Description

Acting Fundamentals (THEA 1050):

Introduces students to fundamental principles, theories, and techniques of acting. Through the use of theatre games, exercises, and character/script analysis students will experience and begin to build a foundation of the physical, vocal, emotional, and technical preparation required of one who is seriously considering acting as a profession or becoming a teacher of acting. In this course, students will become familiar with basic theatre terminology and protocol. Working in groups, with partners, or singly; students will explore their dramatic and theatrical potential through study and application of basic acting techniques as put forth by Constantin Stanislavski and other major performance theorists and will use reputed theatre texts, to gain working knowledge of the research and analysis required in preparation for a performance.

Course Expectation:

Students are expected to participate fully in classroom/lab setting. THEA 1050 requires much physical work, focus, observation and at times, exploration of emotion and complex analysis. Students will work singly, in groups and with a partner(s)—at times, exercises and projects will involve close physical contact with other students.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Understand and explain the **essence of theatre**: what theatre is, what its elements and conventions are, and what qualities are needed to make good theatre.
- Demonstrate basic **physical, vocal, and mental skills** needed to be a successful actor on the stage.
 - **PHYSICAL SKILLS**: develop physical flexibility, strength and expressiveness; relaxation techniques and exercises; learn to begin to take physical risks as an actor — to free the body and get rid of “stiff” movements on stage—to connect the body to action.
 - **VOCAL SKILLS**: to cultivate an understanding of a healthy vocal instrument through relaxation and breathing techniques; to improve articulation and pronunciation habits; to cultivate a basic ability to connect the voice to action and emotion and communication.
 - **MENTAL SKILLS**: develop ability to concentrate and maintain focus, further explore and develop imagination, creativity, sensory awareness, and spontaneity as they apply to acting. Connection of impulse to action.
- Demonstrate an understanding of **basic acting technique** and terminology.
- Demonstrate knowledge of effective **improvisational techniques**.
- Understand and use a working theatrical vocabulary (theatre jargon) so that we all may speak the same language as those in “the business.”
- Demonstrate a basic **commitment to theatre** by being present, on time, and giving full attention, energy, and creative input at all class sessions.
- Identify the skills needed and demonstrate the ability to **communicate effectively** and **work cooperatively** with an ensemble.
- Demonstrate the techniques of **constructive evaluation** of self and others in class and performances.

Course Structure: The classroom time will be divided into three areas:

1. **Lecture**
2. **Acting Exercises.** The acting exercises, exploring various acting techniques, will be done in class. Certain exercises will require preparation outside of class. Exercises will be discussed and critiqued in class.
3. **Performance Projects.** The performance projects will be derived from dramatic text and assigned to students. These projects will require work outside of class. Performance projects will be discussed and critiqued in class.

Evaluation:

Grade Breakdown:

Possible Points

Class Participation/Attendance:.....	500 points (~20 points per class)
Performance Projects:.....	250 points
Written Work:.....	250 points
• Scored Scenes	
• Observation Responses	
• Character Analysis	
Play Critiques (2):	100 points

Points/Letter Grade

1200-1080:	A
1079-960:	B
959-840:	C
839-720:	D

Grading Criteria:

The grading in this class is, unavoidably, somewhat subjective. Your grades for each individual unit of study as well as specific assignments within each unit will be based on both how much concentrated effort you have devoted to the process of your learning and your work and what you have ultimately achieved. There are concrete goals that the student can strive to meet in pursuing a particular grade.

Important Information Related to Evaluation:

- All written work will be submitted to me on specified due dates via Blackboard
- Please note that the major portion of your overall grade in this course is participation. This means attend every class and participate fully!
- If it is thought that students' are not reading material in a timely manner the professor may choose to give pop quizzes and/or assign essays.
- Performance Projects will each have a number of components that will be covered in graded homework assignments. This grading, when applicable to the project, will cover
 - Paperwork, Script Analysis, Character Preparation, Knowledge of Material, Memorization, Justification of Choices, Use of Techniques Learned in Class, Effort, Focus, Concentration, Cooperation with Scene Partner, and Ethics.

- If you are scheduled to work on a given day and you are not prepared to work effectively and make good use of your in class coaching time, you will be asked to step down and we will move on to the next performer. Class time is everyone's time—coming to class unprepared, unable or unwilling to work is unfair to everyone.
- If you miss a class when you are scheduled to perform you will receive ZERO POINTS on the assignment. The project cannot be “made up”. Only excused medical or emergency absences will be tolerated and evidence of such must be submitted in order to have the opportunity to make up the missed work.

GENERAL PARAMETERS FOR LETTER GRADES:

Please note that the “descriptions” listed below are extremely general and designed only to be a basic guide to help students understand the expectations of the instructor when assessing work in class. Hopefully this little bit of context will help you set personal goals to work toward over the course of the semester.

‘A’ grade: Work is committed, focused and sustained, with obvious growth. All assignments and deadlines satisfactorily completed on time. Student shows clear excellence in mastering the objectives of the assignment, both individually and in partner work. Instructor's critiques generally focus on strong aspects of the work. The work shows careful preparation and commitment.

‘B’ grade: The basic fulfillment of all requirements is met with some growth. Student shows strong competence in fulfilling objectives of the assignment. Instructor's critiques generally focus primarily on strong areas of work, with several specific areas of improvement suggested for subsequent work. The work is strong, has been well prepared and shows good potential for improvement.

*****‘C’ grade:** Student satisfies the requirements of the assignment. Critiques generally focus on weaker areas of work, with stronger aspects identified and reinforced. Any student at this level of training considers the objectives in this work obtainable. Student generally has consistent difficulties with memorization; sense of staging and ability to meet self-generated deadlines (rehearsals with scene partners, etc...). Instructor's critique acknowledges that student's work generally needs further preparation and attention.

‘D’ grade: Student produces minimum requirements for project, which generally includes presentation of work. Critiques focus on lack of preparation, lack of understanding of assignment and unwillingness to give maximum effort. This work may have significant memorization problems, poor attitude displayed in class resulting in a below average performance. This work needs much more preparation and commitment.

Here is a breakdown of what is expected of you as you present your scenework—as applicable to each particular project. Engaging in these “steps” as an actor, helps you cultivate work ethic and a working process.

FIRST ROUND:

1. Script analysis ready for oral defense. Receive suggestions for future research.
2. Verbally demonstrate your play/scene analysis in class.
3. Give an informed and impassioned reading. You are expected to show:
 - a. beginning character analysis,
 - b. beginning physical and vocal characterization,
 - c. knowledge of all words and meaning of phrases,
 - d. use of the language,
 - e. ability to mean what you say,
 - f. awareness of builds, topping and cutbacks and
 - g. emotional commitment to the actions and objectives.

SECOND ROUND:

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized script.
2. Demonstration of 70% performance commitment to the character, “given circumstances” and style of the play.

“FINAL PASS” REQUIREMENTS:

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized script.
2. Demonstration of performance level physical and vocal characterization.
3. Demonstration of performance level emotional commitment to the situation
4. Demonstration of performance level playing of actions and bold choices.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory.

The great majority of work for this class happens during class time. Each student is expected to be here for every class---just as you are expected to show up at a job when scheduled to work or attend every rehearsal and performance when cast in a play. The work you do in each class creates the foundation for every class that follows. Exercises, presentations, discussion, cannot be made up due to the simple fact that the class schedule is so packed full of graded activities and the amount of work that is to be accomplished in a semester's time. The one exception to this is if an absence is due to a documented medical issue. Furthermore, I hope you will come to see that acting is a social art, requiring you to participate collaboratively. In order to learn the skills of collaboration, you've got to be here.

Tardy/Attendance Policy Details

Tardy Policy:

One of the "golden rules" of the theatre and a basic expectation of behavior for everyone involved in production is that all participants are ready to work **ON TIME**. This is also an expectation in this class. **Three tardies equal one absence**, which means you receive 0/20 points for every third time you are absent. A tardy of more than fifteen minutes will be considered the same as an absence.

Absence Policy:

- You may receive three excused absences for official UNT related business, family emergencies, or illness. If you are ill, you must have a note from the doctor stating which days you were not allowed to attend any classes.
- If you are involved in any special school function which may require you to miss a class please inform the professor ASAP.
- Absence for a religious holiday is permitted with at least one weeks notice.
- After accumulating two unexcused absences the professor may exercise the option to administratively drop a student from the class.
- You will lose 20 points for each class you miss. Do the math.

Consider this:

An actor's professional work ethic begins in the classroom. If you have trouble being accountable to yourself and showing up for *any* class, perhaps you should consider a different profession....the "independent contractor lifestyle" is probably not your thing.

Being on time is being 5 minutes early.

Other Relevant Class Information:

Mid-Semester Meetings:

At the mid-point of the semester, I will meet with each student individually to discuss class progress and other pertinent information. Each student will receive a mid-semester written assessment/observation of their work, as well as a mid-term point total.

COMMUNICATION:

Please direct all electronic correspondence with me to this address_
Julie.Brinker@unt.edu.

PLEASE!

Get in the habit of checking your email everyday either the night before or morning of class for last minute communication from me.

A few things I'd like you to consider:

- Be supportive of your classmates. Remember you are part of an ensemble. The energy and perspective you bring to each class will impact "the whole". Each day we meet, consider how you are contributing to the class.
- Reject jadedness and cynicism.
- Beginners are on a quest. There are no stupid questions. Ask anything.
- Do not expect perfection---embrace the concept of process.
- If you are feeling fear or an unusual physical/emotional sensation allow I to resonate and breathe. This work will challenge you in these ways and ask you to go places you maybe never have.
- Consider this class the perfect environment to take chances and risks....dive in! If you don't get to the place you shoot for, go for it again.
- Be inquisitive.

General Class Information:

Wear comfortable clothing that allows you to:

- Fully stretch and move your whole body.
- Comfortably lie on the floor.

- Breathe without restriction.
- To walk naturally. (I.e. no flip-flops, high heels, cowboy boots, bulky heels, etc...).
- It's unavoidable---at times the floor in 127 gets dusty and dirty. Don't wear clothes that you're concerned about keeping especially clean. This may mean you bring your clothes "for the day" with you and wear warm-ups to class.
- I encourage you to bring a sweatshirt or sweater with you----the temperature in the theater building fluctuates.

Other:

- Please turn off cell phones when you get to class.
- Do not engage in other course work when you are in this class.
- All students are expected to come to class prepared and to be focused on the day's work---even on days you are not scheduled to perform/work!
- Please use common sense when it comes to hair, jewelry and piercings. Make sure your hair is out of your way. When it comes to jewelry, less is more in this class and if you have a piercing that could get ripped out or hurt a partner, take it out. If your tongue is pierced, please remove the tongue jewelry while in this class....it affects your speech and will be in your way in this class.

Departmental Policy:

Open flame of any sort (smoking, candles, lighting matches or lighters) in scenes, monologues, improvisations or productions is not allowed. Any action of this sort must be pantomimed or cut.

Withdrawing from this course:

Should you choose to drop this course, you must initiate the drop and acquire all of the proper signatures and paperwork. If that process is not completed, you will be subject to a WF or an F at the close of the semester

American with Disabilities Act Notice

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by

appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at [940.565.4323](tel:940.565.4323).

Student Obligations to Academic/Production Work

D/T students are expected to budget and organize their time and efforts in order to meet both their academic and production commitments satisfactorily and on time. The faculty and staff recognize that the academic and production assignments within the Department, as well as outside employment and other obligations, sometimes impose conflicting pressures on DT students. One of the principal responsibilities of each student is to carefully identify and monitor the commitments that comprise his/her departmental assignments and outside obligations. It is also important to keep in mind that production work and outside obligations do not constitute an excused absence from DT classes or from the completion of any required class assignments.

SETE

The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SETE to be an important part of your participation in this class. The spring administration of the SETE, will remain open through the week of finals.

Departmental Theatrical Productions Fall 2015:

Each student is required to see all Theatre Division productions performed this semester. We will discuss productions as a class. You are also encouraged to see as many productions in the Dallas Metroplex as possible. Observation is a powerful teacher. You get a free ticket to each departmental production. It is your responsibility to reserve your ticket through the Theater Box Office.

Fefu and Her Friends by Maria Irene Fornes

Performances: Sept 24-Oct. 4 in Studio Theater

The Philadelphia Story by Philip Barry

Performances: Nov. 5-8 in University Theater

More info at <http://danceandtheatre.unt.edu/productions-ticket-purchasing>

Calendar: TBA