ACTING FUNDAMENTALS (THEA 1050.002)

Schedule: Mon/Wed 8:00AM – 9:40AM

Location: RFTP 130

Instructor: Jake Blakeman

Email: jacob.blakeman@unt.edu

Office Hours: Tue/Thurs 9:30AM – 10:30AM | DATH 103G

(by appointment; other times available by request)

Email Policy

You may contact me via Canvas or my UNT email. I will respond within 24 hours (or by Monday if the message is sent after 3:00 PM on Friday).

When emailing, include your course and section number in the subject line. Please only use your UNT email or Canvas. Messages from other email accounts will not be answered.

Prerequisites

For **THEA 3050 – Acting: Realism I**, students must complete the following courses:

- THEA 1050 – Acting: Fundamentals
- THEA 2051 – Theatre Voice I
- THEA 2351 – Theatre Movement I

Students who earn a “C” or lower in any prerequisite (including transfer credits) must audition to be considered for enrollment in THEA 3050. Auditions are held the Monday before the first week of classes and require two contrasting one-minute monologues.

If a student earns a “C” or lower twice in THEA 3050, they will be dismissed from the Acting Concentration.

Course Hours: 3;1

Course Description

Acting Fundamentals introduces students to the foundational skills and practices of acting. Through theatre games, improvisation, physical and vocal exercises, contextless scenes, monologues, and introductory scene work, students will explore imagination, curiosity, presence, and truthful behavior within imaginary circumstances.

The course emphasizes acting as **doing**. Students will be introduced to given circumstances, relationships, goals, obstacles, actions, tactics, and beats as tools for understanding and approaching a role. Students will also explore listening and responding, embodied action, nonverbal communication, and clarity of speech.

The goal of the course is to provide students with a foundational acting vocabulary and process that can be developed through future coursework in acting and performance.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

1. **Use theatre games and improvisation** to explore imagination, spontaneity, focus, and ensemble collaboration.
2. **Explore truthful and believable behavior** within imaginary circumstances through listening and responding.
3. **Identify basic given circumstances** including character, relationship, environment, and situation.
4. **Identify a character's goal and obstacles** and begin applying these ideas to performance choices.
5. **Explore actions and tactics** as ways of pursuing a goal and affecting a scene partner.
6. **Identify basic beats and shifts** within a monologue or scene.
7. **Explore embodied action and nonverbal communication** through movement, gesture, physical behavior, and spatial relationships.
8. **Practice clear and expressive speech** through introductory work with breath, projection, and articulation.
9. **Apply introductory acting concepts** to improvisation, contextless scene work, monologues, and basic scene study.
10. **Develop beginning rehearsal habits** including preparation, memorization, collaboration, experimentation, and responding to feedback.

Core Acting Concepts

Throughout the semester, students will be introduced to:

- Play and imagination
- Focus and presence
- Truth and believability
- Given circumstances
- Listening and responding
- Relationship
- Goal / Objective
- Obstacles
- Expectations
- Action
- Tactics
- Beats
- Embodied action
- Nonverbal communication
- Vocal clarity
- Rehearsal and preparation

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

This policy is consistent with all Department of Theatre acting courses:

- Maximum of **3 absences** allowed per semester.
- **4th absence = automatic F** for the course.
- **Tardy = arriving less than 30 minutes late** (Four tardies = one absence).
- **30+ minutes late or leaving early = absence.**

Attendance Procedures

- Sign in at the start of class.
- No sign-in allowed after 30 minutes.
- Daily Work grade will be impacted by tardiness/absence.
- Students may check their attendance record on Canvas at any time.

Dress Code

Acting is physical work, and much of our class will take place on our feet. Students should wear clothing and footwear that allows them to **move freely, safely, and comfortably** during warm-ups, theatre games, improvisation, and scene work.

Clothing should allow for a full range of movement without limiting participation. Athletic wear, dance attire, sweatpants, loose-fitting pants or jeans, T-shirts, and similar clothing are appropriate. Shoes should be secure and suitable for movement. Avoid clothing or footwear that restricts movement or creates a safety concern.

For performance assignments, students may be asked to use a simple **rehearsal costume** that supports the character and circumstances while still allowing for safe, comfortable movement.

Expectations

- **Respect the space:** Treat the classroom as a rehearsal hall. Keep food, gum, and messy drinks out of the working area. Water bottles are encouraged.
- **Be prepared:** Arrive in movement-appropriate clothing, with notebook, texts, and materials ready to go.
- **Warm-up readiness:** Be ready to begin physical/vocal work at the scheduled start time. Use early arrival to transition out of “outside life” and into rehearsal focus.
- **Full participation:** Engage fully in all exercises, whether individual or group. Voice training requires consistent, active involvement.
- **Respect peers:** Give full attention when others are performing or sharing work. No side conversations, phones, or distractions.
- **Constructive feedback only:** Offer feedback thoughtfully and respectfully when invited.
- **Professional boundaries:** Physical contact may occur in partnered exercises. Always ask permission and respect boundaries.
- **Confidentiality:** What is shared in exercises or performances stays in the room. This ensures a safe, supportive environment.
- **No recording devices:** Unless explicitly permitted, recording of class work or performances is not allowed.
- **End-of-class responsibility:** Help return the space to order (props, chairs, music stands, etc.) before leaving.

Assignments and Grading

This course is based primarily on active participation and practical application. Students will be assessed on their preparation, willingness to explore, application of course concepts, and growth throughout the semester.

Daily Attendance & Participation — 290 Points

Acting is learned by **doing**. Each of the 29 class meetings is worth **10 points**. Students are expected to arrive on time, prepared to work, and actively participate in warm-ups, games, exercises, discussions, rehearsals, and scene work.

Contextless Scene — 100 Points

Students will work with a partner on a short scene that provides little or no information about the characters or circumstances. Students will use imagination and course concepts to establish a relationship, circumstances, and clear choices for the scene.

- Performance — 50 points
- Actor Sheet/Scene Analysis — 50 points

Monologue — 150 Points

Students will prepare and perform a memorized monologue while applying the foundational acting concepts introduced in class.

- Performance — 50 points
- Given Circumstances/Actor Sheet — 50 points
- Beats Identified — 50 points

Pop Quiz — 60 Points

Students will complete an unannounced quiz covering acting vocabulary, concepts, and techniques introduced through class discussions, exercises, and assigned materials.

Midterm — 100 Points

Students will complete a midterm assessment covering the foundational concepts, terminology, and techniques introduced during the first half of the semester.

Final Scene — 200 Points

Students will work with a partner to prepare and perform a memorized scene. This assignment asks students to bring together the foundational acting skills developed throughout the course.

- Performance — 100 points
- Given Circumstances/Actor Sheet — 50 points
- Beats Identified — 50 points

Performance Reflection Paper — 100 Points

Students will attend one approved **UNT theatre production** and complete a reflection paper connecting specific acting choices they observe to concepts explored in class. Detailed requirements and approved productions are listed below.

Grading Breakdown

Assignments	Point Value
Daily Work - (29) 10 points per class day	290
Contextless Scene	100
Monologue	150
Pop Quiz	50
Midterm	100
Final Scene	200
Final Reflection	100
Total Points Possible	**1000**

Grading Scale

A: 900–1000 points
B: 800–899 points
C: 700–799 points
D: 600–699 points
F: 0–599 points

UNT Performance Reflection Paper

Assignment Overview

This semester, you are required to attend **one UNT Theatre production** and write a critical observation paper focused primarily on the **acting and performance choices** you observe.

The purpose of this assignment is to take the concepts we explore in the classroom and begin recognizing them in live performance. You are not expected to know exactly how an actor created a particular moment or choice. Instead, I want you to practice **watching actors carefully, identifying what you observe, and connecting those observations to the vocabulary and techniques we have explored in class.**

This is not primarily a theatre review. Your job is not to tell me whether the show was "good" or "bad." Your job is to **observe the acting.**

UNT PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

First Stage Series: Antigone Now Written by: Melissa Cooper Director: Sophia Aguirre	Sep 17,18 | **7:30 PM** Sep 19 | **2:00 PM**
Les Liaison Dangereuse Written by: Chrisopher Hampton From the Novel: Choderlos De Laclos Director: Wambui Richardson	Oct 1 - 3 | **7:30 PM** Oct 3 - 4 | **2:00 PM**
First Stage Series: The Lesson & The Red House Monster Written by Eugene Lionesce Written By Rachel Bubkitz Director: Connor Clifton Director: Lexi Stavrou	Oct 15,16 | **7:30 PM** Oct 17 | **2:00 PM**
Second Stage Series: Dracula Written by: Steven Dietz Director: Ella Schrack-McPhee	Oct 29 - 31 | **7:30PM** Oct 31 - Nov 1 | **2:00 PM**

What Should I Watch For?

As you watch the performance, pay particular attention to the actors and how they communicate with one another and with the audience.

You do not need to discuss every concept below. Instead, select the concepts that are most useful for discussing the performances you observed.

- Truth & Believability

Did you believe the actor's behavior within the circumstances of the play? Were there moments that felt particularly truthful or specific? What did the actor do that made those moments believable?

- Given Circumstances

What did the actor communicate about their character's situation, environment, relationships, and history? How could you see the circumstances of the play affecting their behavior?

- Goal & Obstacles

What did a character appear to want? What prevented them from getting it? How did that conflict affect the actor's behavior?

- Actions & Tactics

What did you see an actor **doing to another person** in order to get what they wanted? Did they persuade, challenge, comfort, intimidate, impress, dismiss, charm, provoke, or use another action?

Did their approach change when something was not working?

- Listening & Responding

Did the actors appear to genuinely listen and respond to one another? Identify a moment when one actor's behavior seemed to change because of something another actor said or did.

- Embodied Action & Nonverbal Communication

Consider posture, movement, gesture, facial expression, eye contact, proximity, physical tension, and other forms of nonverbal communication.

What did an actor communicate **without speaking?**

- Clarity of Speech

Could you clearly understand the actors? Consider articulation, volume, pace, vocal variety, and how the actor's voice supported their choices.

- Beats & Changes

Could you identify moments when a character's thought, goal, action, tactic, or behavior changed? What caused the change?

Paper Expectations

Your paper should be **3–5 pages, double-spaced** and should focus on specific observations rather than general statements about the production.

You may organize the paper around one actor, compare multiple actors, examine several important moments, or organize your analysis around several acting concepts from class.

Regardless of the structure you choose, your paper should include the following:

INTRODUCTION

Identify the production you attended, including the **title, playwright, and other relevant production information**. Briefly introduce the performance and establish what aspect of the acting you will focus on.

ANALYSIS

The majority of your paper should analyze the acting you observed.

Use **specific moments from the production** as evidence.

Rather than writing: "The acting was very believable."

Explain **what the actor actually did** that made you believe them.

For example, you might discuss a change in physical behavior, a moment of listening, a shift in tactic, a particular interaction between two characters, or how an actor used their voice or body.

Connect these observations to the terminology and concepts we have explored in class.

CONCLUSION

Reflect on what you learned from watching the performance as an acting student.

Consider questions such as:

- **What did you see an actor do that you would like to incorporate into your own work?**
- **Did watching developing actors change the way you think about acting?**
- **What did you notice because of this class that you might not have noticed before?**

Formatting Requirements

- **Length:** 3–5 pages
- **Spacing:** Double-spaced
- **Font:** Standard, readable 12-point font
- **Margins:** One inch
- **Format:** MLA
- Include the title of the production and performance date
- Proofread your work before submission

If you use outside sources, quotations, or information beyond your own observations of the performance, those sources must be properly cited. **NOTE: You should cite the play that you attend in your works cited**

Due Nov 9 by 11:59PM

Grading – 100 Points

Acting Analysis — 40 Points

Demonstrates thoughtful observation of the acting and discusses specific choices or moments from the performance.

Application of Course Concepts — 25 Points

Appropriately applies terminology and ideas from Acting Fundamentals to the observed performance.

Specific Evidence — 15 Points

Uses clear, specific examples from the production rather than relying on broad statements or plot summary.

Organization & Reflection — 10 Points

Presents ideas in a clear structure and thoughtfully reflects on what was learned from observing the performance.

Writing & Formatting — 10 Points

Meets the assignment requirements and demonstrates appropriate college-level writing, proofreading, and MLA formatting.

Proof of Attendance

You must present your **physical ticket from the performance** as proof of attendance. Bring your ticket to class following the performance so that I can **initial it and record your attendance**.

Keep your ticket after attending the production. A paper submitted without verified attendance will not receive credit for the assignment.

In the instance that tickets are not provided at the First Stage Series performances then a program and or photo of you at the performance will suffice.

Academic Integrity

This assignment should represent **your own observations and analysis of the performance you attended**.

Any ideas, language, or information taken from an outside source must be appropriately credited. Plagiarism, submitting another person's work, or presenting AI-generated analysis as your own may be handled according to UNT's academic integrity policies.

Because the primary purpose of this assignment is your personal observation of a live performance, outside research should be minimal. **I am much more interested in what you noticed than in what someone else has written about the play.**

Academic & Production Commitments

Dance & Theatre students are expected to balance both academic and production responsibilities with professionalism and timeliness. While the faculty recognize that outside employment and other obligations can create pressures, it is each student's responsibility to manage their commitments effectively. Please note that neither production work nor outside obligations are considered excused absences from classes or reasons for incomplete assignments.

Accommodations for Disabilities

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation: reference Public Law 92-112—The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

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.

SPOT – Student Perceptions of Teaching

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT.

The Department of Dance and Theatre also offers face-to-face SPOT evaluations, if the student wishes. Ask your professor for details if you wish to pursue that option.

- Website: www.spot.unt.edu
- Email: spot@unt.edu

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom, and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

Acting Fundamentals Course Calendar*	
WEEK	**POINTS OF STUDY**
Week 1	Syllabus Given Circumstances Lecture
Week 2	Warm-Up / Improvisation Games Open Scenes Assigned
Week 3	Open Scene Work Week
Week 4	The Actor Sheet Lecture
Week 5	**Open Scene Presentations** Stage Terminology Lecture
Week 6	**Monologue #1 Assigned** The Parts of the Stage and Blocking Notation Lecture Monologue #1 Work
Week 7	Monologue #1 Table-Work Week
Week 8	Beat Breakdown Lecture Monologue #1 Coaching Sessions
Week 9	**Midterm** Monologue #1 Coaching Sessions
Week 10	The Fully Embodied Actor Lecture **Monologue #1 Presentations**
Week 11	**Final Scene Assigned** Final Scene Table-Work
Week 12	Final Scene Lab Day
Week 13	Final Scene Coaching Sessions **UNT Performance Reflection Paper (due Nov 9 by 11:59PM)**
Week 14	Final Scene Check-In Final Scene Coaching Sessions
Week 15	**Final Scene Presentations**

***Course Calendar Disclaimer:** The course calendar is subject to change based on the needs and progress of the class. Any changes to assignments, due dates, or scheduled activities will be communicated to students in a timely manner through class announcements and/or Canvas.

Syllabus Updates

This syllabus and course calendar are living documents and may be updated at any time at the instructor's discretion. Students will be notified of any changes through Canvas and/or class announcements.

Syllabus Acknowledgment

I, _____ (print name),
have read and understand the requirements and policies of:
THEA 1050 – Acting Fundamentals

and have a thorough, clear understanding of the course requirements, standards, and policies. This includes class assignments, the attendance/lateness policy for UNT acting classes, grading criteria for the course, and classroom protocol.

Signature: _____

Date: _____