

ACTING FUNDAMENTALS

COURSE SYLLABUS | THEA 1050 | SPRING 2022

Instructor: Ana Hagedorn
Office Hours: Scheduled by Appointment

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Class Meets:

Course Section	Date/Time	Location
THEA 1050-003	T/TH 1-2:50	RTFP 130

Suggested Course Text: Moss, Larry; *The Intent To Live*

Required Course Materials: Notebook, Folder, .pdf handouts on Canvas, Movement Clothes

Suggested Course Materials: Recommended books at end of syllabus

Final Exam Time:

Course Section	Date	Time
THEA 1050-003	Thurs, May 12	10:30AM – 12:30PM

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 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** the actor utilizes to create and bring characters to life.
 - **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 the elements of basic **acting techniques** and terminology.
- Understand and use a working theatrical vocabulary (theatre jargon).
- Demonstrate excellence in work ethic by being on time, prepared and ready to focus and work at all class sessions.
- Identify the skills needed and demonstrate the ability to **communicate effectively** and **work cooperatively and collaboratively** with scene partners and classmates.
- Demonstrate the techniques of **constructive** evaluation of self and others in class and performances.

COURSE EXPECTATION:

Students are expected to participate fully in classroom/lab setting. THEA 1050 requires physical work, focus, observation, exploration of emotion and complex analysis. Students will work singly, in groups and with a partner(s).

Exercises and projects may involve close physical contact with other students. If this is the case, it is important for students to have a conversation with other students on consent.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

The classroom time will be divided into three primary areas:

1. Lecture and Discussion
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.

COURSE OUTLINE:

- **Unit One:** *What is acting?* –Terminology and Fundamental Principles
- **Unit Two:** *Etude Work* – Putting Principles into Practice
- **Unit Three:** *Final Scene Work* – Mastery of Embodiment

Course Calendar outlines all assignments/projects and Canvas has rubrics and guidelines.

COURSE ASSESSMENT MEASURES:

- **SEMESTER PARTICIPATION:** 5 pts x 30 classes= 150
- **REQUIRED WRITTEN WORK:**

What is Acting? Activities	50 Points
The Talks Inspiration	50 Points
Audition Unit Packet	75 Points
Etude #1 Unit Packet	100 Points
Etude #2 Unit Packet	100 Points
Final Play Scene Unit/Course Packet	200 Points

Show Response	75 Points
6 Rehearsal Report (50 pts each)	300 Points
Final Plays Quiz	50 Points

*****ALL WRITTEN WORK WILL BE SUBMITTED VIA CANVAS.
LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.*

• **REQUIRED PERFORMANCE PROJECTS:**

Monologue:	
First Pass:	25 Points
Final Pass:	75 points
Etude #1:	
First Pass	25 points
Second Pass:	50 points
Final Pass:	75 points
Etude #2:	
First Pass:	50 pts
Final Pass:	100 points
Final Play Scene:	
First Pass	50 Points
Second Pass:	50 Points
Final Pass:	250 points

Total Semester Points: 1750

GRADING SCALE:

A= 1750 – 1575 points
C= 1399 – 1225 points
F= 1049 and below

B= 1574 – 1400 points
D= 1224 - 1050 points

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:

Attendance is excellent. 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:

Attendance is excellent. 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.

**The grading standard is C= average, B= very good, A= excellent class work, dead- lines met, all written work is turned in and excellent and excellent participation and attendance.*

You will receive a grade or "points" for each in class scene presentation and the final performance. Here is a breakdown of what is expected—as applicable to each particular project—of my definition/expectation of each in class "pass" or presentation. Engaging in these "steps" as an actor, helps you cultivate work ethic and a working process.

PASS REQUIREMENTS:

"FIRST PASS" REQUIREMENTS:

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized text.
2. Script analysis ready for oral defense. Receive suggestions for future research.
3. Verbally demonstrate your text analysis in class.
4. 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 PASS" REQUIREMENTS:

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized text.
2. Demonstration of 70% performance commitment to the character, "given circumstances" and style of the text

"FINAL PASS" REQUIREMENTS:

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized text.
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.

GRADING POLICY:

IMPORTANT: 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 forfeit your work session and we will move on to the next performer. Should this occur you will be counted absent for the day and receive zero daily participation points. 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 a performance assignment is due you will be counted absent and 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 writing from the proper authorities. [see “Attendance Section” for more specifics on this].

You will be graded based on your work in these areas:

- Class participation and preparedness
- Quizzes
- Written Assignments
- Attendance and Punctuality
- Meeting Deadlines and Overall Professionalism/Work Ethic
- Adherence to Class Policies

Your WORK ETHIC and the degree to which you are applying yourself as an artist to this challenging material matters! THIS will be the main factor in the grade for this course. Grades will not be based on “talent” but on discipline, preparedness, hard work, a positive attitude, respect for others, imagination, and attention to detail.

Your creative work (performance project presentations) will be assessed through verbal feedback and written assessment from the professor. Each student's creative work as assessments will be detailed and specific with special focus on feedback regarding your skills as an actor and how they are facilitating or detracting from your creative expression.

NOTE:

- In order to remain a theatre major and graduate with a degree in theatre, each student must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5.
- In order for a class in your major to count toward credit in your major you must receive a minimum grade of “C”.
- Students should strive for excellence in all of their academic and artistic work

COURSE CALENDAR NOTE:

Acting Fundamentals is a survey of information essential to an understanding of the craft of acting. As such, the course content must remain flexible if it is to address the specific needs and abilities of the students; therefore, the syllabus and course schedule are subject to change at any time. These changes are at the sole discretion of the instructor, and whenever possible will be made in writing and you will be notified via Canvas.

REHEARSAL ETIQUETTE:

Applicable to assigned acting exercise, monologues, and scene work.

You and your scene partner(s) are expected to have, **a minimum of TWO rehearsals** on your own. Two is just the minimum. I encourage to have more than two as this will help you learn the concepts and acting techniques of this course more fully.

- Presenting a scene to us that you have not rehearsed enough is disrespectful and a waste of the class's time, and will simply not be allowed. YOU will be expected to organize your own rehearsals outside of class and find your own rehearsal space.
- You may reserve rehearsal space in the Theater office. Make sure that times and places are clearly decided upon.
- Once a plan is made, you must be there, as other actors are affected by your presence. If any actor encounters problematic absence or lateness with a partner, please contact the instructor immediately. I absolutely understand that a lack of preparation may be the

fault of one actor and not the other, so **MAKE ME AWARE IMMEDIATELY** if there is a problem in this area. If you wait until the actual day of your performance, **ALL** actors in the scene will be given the deduction.

- Take responsibility for your own performance by making the professor aware of any difficulties you are experiencing. Rehearsal set pieces, costumes, and props, as needed, are **YOUR** responsibility.

SCENE STUDY/PERFORMANCE PROJECT PROCEDURES

In large acting classes, as unfortunately we must conduct; we have precious little time together. To ensure the best possible use of that time, let's clarify what we need to accomplish for each in-class rehearsal.

It is extremely difficult to coach your acting when the full play has not been read and understood or when dialogue is not memorized. Thus, it is essential that this homework be completed before coaching begins.

Also, unfortunately, because of the tight schedule of the class if you miss a class presentation no make-up date is guaranteed

If a scene is not prepared sufficiently for in class coaching and work with me we will move on to another scene instead. Your in-class work time scheduled for that particular day will be forfeited and will very likely not be rescheduled due to our limited class time.

COVID AND VIRTUAL LEARNING:

During this time of COVID necessary adjustments may be made to the structure and delivery of this course if need be. If this happens, instructor will alert students via Canvas.

Please see ***Virtual Classroom Guidelines Acting Track University of North Texas.pdf*** for more information on virtual learning.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY:

Attendance=Work Ethic= EVERYTHING.

Punctual attendance accounts for a substantial portion of the course grade. Thus, students are expected to be present and punctual for all classes.

The following policy is consistent with all acting courses in the department:

- Students are allowed no more than a total of **THREE (3)** personal absences during the semester.
- Students are considered tardy if they arrive for class no more than 30 minutes late. Arriving more than 30 minutes late for class is considered an absence.
- Students are expected to attend class for the duration of the period. Leaving before the class concludes is considered an absence.
- An occurrence of tardiness for the class **FOUR (4)** times is the equivalent or **ONE (1)** absence.
- A total of (4) absences means that the highest grade the student can earn in the class is an **F**.

Any student with an issue in the area of attendance and/or punctuality will be referred to the Acting Faculty for guidance. If a student's absences have resulted in a grade with which

they are not pleased, they may choose to withdraw from the class.

The professor's roll is the official record of absences and tardiness. At any point, students are welcome to check the grade roster on Canvas to be sure that their attendance/punctuality record is accurate.

KEEP IN MIND:

Theatre is a collaborative art, and so much of the process of learning about acting involves interacting with your peers in class. 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.

ATTENDANCE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

Special circumstances when an excused absence will be granted:

- If you are involved in any special school functions which may require you to miss a class, please inform the professor ASAP.
- *Must be turned into me a WEEK before a school functioned event. If it is not, you will be counted absent.*
- Please notify me at the beginning of the semester if you will be absent due to a religious holiday.
- Illness accompanied by a doctor's note. *The doc note must articulate WHEN you are eligible to return to class.*

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 verbal assessment/observation of their work, as well as a mid-term point total.

COMMUNICATION:

Please direct all class related correspondence via the "Inbox" on our class Canvas site.

PLEASE! Turn on the "Notifications" option in Canvas so you receive updates from me. I will use the "Announcements" option as a primary communication tool for class. The only way to ensure that you receive them is to "enable notifications" on your device(s).

Because I continue to work as a professional actress and am expected to do so by UNT and the UNT Department of Dance and Theatre, I may occasionally have to cancel class for projects I am cast in---sometimes on short notice. Always check your email the night before class. While I am teaching I turn down more work that I accept---teaching is my first priority. However, conflicts are sometimes unavoidable especially due to re-shoots and clients with whom I have ongoing contracts with.

IMPORTANT: I cannot stress how important communication is. If you are experiencing challenges, an emergency---anything that is keeping you from fulfilling your commitment to this class or any of your classes at UNT, please consider having a conversation with me. I do understand that things come up that are unavoidable and unexpected---that's life. There are many avenues of support at UNT. I am aware of them and can point you in a direction for support and guidance. I am always willing to work with students to help them achieve success whenever possible.

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 it 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.
- Choose to listen, respond and seek the joy of your experience.

GENERAL CLASS INFORMATION:

Wear comfortable clothing that allows you to:

- Fully stretch and move your whole body.
- Comfortably lay on the floor.
- Breathe without restriction.
- To walk naturally (IE: No flip-flops, high heels, cowboy boots, bulky heels, etc)
- It's unavoidable at times the floor 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.

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 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 does affect 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.

WITHDRAWAL:

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

COURSE INCOMPLETE:

Only under extraordinary circumstances that suddenly render the student unable to continue the classwork will an INCOMPLETE be given. Please see your instructor if you feel you may qualify for a course grade of INCOMPLETE. Circumstances have come up in the past which made this appropriate. This has usually involved a scenario where a student has completed the work in excellent standing up to a certain point and then has to suddenly leave school for some reason.

The terms for making up the INCOM- PLETE are negotiated between the student and the professor, and these terms must be signed by both parties and submitted to the departmental office for approval.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS:

Activities such as reading books or articles for other classes, studying for other classes, or any other activity which is not pertinent to this course are considered inappropriate, and will be viewed as non-participation. Please refrain from texting /cell phone use. Lap top computers are only appropriate for viewing Zoom session, note taking or relevant research pertinent to the current class.

These diversions will result in a lowered grade or dismissal from the class. Student participation is expected to contribute to a positive learning environment, and respect for others is essential. Through positive and focused participation, each student demonstrates a commitment to the art form, the profession, their peers and themselves.

RESPONSIBILITIES/TIME MANAGEMENT:

Dance and Theatre 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 Dance and Theatre 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 important to keep in mind that production work and outside obligations do not constitute an excused absence from Dance or Theatre classes or from the completion of any required class assignments.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM:

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

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT NOTICE:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking 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 an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 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 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 <https://disability.unt.edu/> or You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

SPOT:

The Student Perceptions of Teaching is the student evaluation system for UNT and 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 SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class. The SPOT evaluation will happen at the end of the semester.

THEATRE 1050: RECOMMENDED TEXTS/BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Ball, William. *A Sense of Direction*, Drama Publishers, 1984.
- Bartow, Arthur. *Training of the American Actor*. Theatre Communications Group. 2006.
- Boal, Augusto. *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, Routledge, 1992.
- Bogart, Anne and Tina Landau. *The Viewpoints Book*. TCG. 2005.
- Bruder, Melissa et al. *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, Random House, 1986. Cameron, Julia, *The Artist's Way*, Tarcher/Putnam, 1992.
- Chekhov, Michael. *On the Technique of Acting*, Harper-Collins, 1991.
- Donnellan, Declan. *The Actor and the Target*. TCG. 2005.
- Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday, 1959.
- Hagen, Uta. *Respect for Acting*. Macmillan, 1973.
- Harrop, John and Sabin Epstein. *Acting with Style*. Prentice-Hall, 1982.
- Lockett, Sharrell D. and Tia M. Shaffer. *Black Acting Methods*. Routledge. 2017.
- Moss, Larry. *The Intent to Live*. Bantam Books. 2006.
- Silverbert, Larry. *The Sanford Meisner Approach*, Smith and Kraus, 1994.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theatre*, Cemrel, 1975.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*, Routledge, 1989
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *Building a Character*, Routledge, 1989.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *Creating a Role*, Routledge, 1989.
- Wangh, Stephen. *An Acrobat of the Heart*. Vintage, 2000.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

- **The Talks:** A collection of Interviews with famous people, including actors. <https://the-talks.com/interviews/all/actor/>
- **Digital Theatre Plus:** A database of recorded professional theatre performances. Will need your EUID to access. <https://guides.library.unt.edu/az.php?a=d>
- **New Play Exchange:** A source to get new material for scenes and monologues. <https://newplayexchange.org>

