

Acting for Non-Majors Syllabus

RTFP 110 | MoWe 9:35AM - 11:45AM | Office Hours per request

Instructor: Prof. Nick Cutelli

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******The instructor reserves the right to change any information contained in this document, when necessary, with adequate notice given to the student.******

Prerequisites: None

Hours: 3;1

Course Description: This course introduces students to contemporary acting techniques, focusing on psychological realism. Students will explore methods to develop their physical and vocal expression, intellect, memory, and imagination. A key emphasis is placed on overcoming physical resistances and blocks to foster spontaneous and truthful reactions in creative scenarios. The course also aims to build confidence for stage performance and public speaking, as well as strengthen collaborative and problem-solving skills.

Lecture & Lab:

- **Lecture:** Each class will begin with a full-group lecture covering elements of performance history, techniques, and practical applications. These concepts will then be applied and practiced in smaller group settings.
- **Lab:** This smaller group breakout session, led by the TA, will focus on practical application. Elements from the lecture will be put into practice through improvisation activities, theatre games, and in-class rehearsal sessions.

Course Objectives:

- **Nature of Theatre**
Explore the purpose and impact of live performance.
- **Theatrical Production & Professionalism**
Develop rehearsal etiquette, preparation, memorization, and stage awareness.
- **Training the Instrument**
Strengthen creativity, voice, body, and imagination through acting exercises and improvisation.
- **Ensemble Building**
Build collaboration, trust, communication, and leadership skills through group work.
- **Script Analysis & Character Development**
Learn Stanislavski and Hagen techniques for character creation and scene analysis.
- **Elements of a Scene**
Explore objectives, obstacles, tactics, subtext, stakes, and truthful behavior in performance.

Recommended Text:

- An Actor Prepares, Building A Character and Creating A Role by Constantin Stanislavski.
- Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen
- Long Form Improv Mastering the Scene by Nick Cutelli

LAB Studio Day Guidelines:

- Wear clothing that allows full movement, stretching, and floor work.
- Wear comfortable shoes that support natural movement; tennis shoes are recommended.
- Be prepared to get dirty during physical exercises and rehearsal work.
- Come prepared to work and perform, even when not scheduled.
- Fully commit to exercises and techniques with an open mind.
- Support classmates positively as part of the ensemble.

Assignments:

1. Monologue (30 to 40 Seconds): Performance Pass workbook 1|2|3
2. 2 Person Dramatic Scene (3 pages): Performance Pass workbook 1|2|3
3. 2 Person Comedic Scene (3 pages): Performance Pass workbook 1|2|3
4. Final Solo Performance (30 to 40 Seconds): Performance Pass workbook 1|2|3
5. Journal entries must be 3-5 sentences in length and contain thoughtful responses to the question posted on canvas.
6. Class Participation & Effort - Active participation in this course encompasses both physical attendance and engaged mental presence during class discussions and rehearsals. Participation points will not be awarded if you are present but not engaged

Assignments will be graded based as follows:

- Participation (10pts x 30) 300 points
- Acting Journal (12.5pt x 12) 150 point
- 1st Pass Preparation (25pts x 4) 100 points
- 2nd Pass Preparation and Rehearsal (50pts x 4) 200 points
- Final Pass Performance (50pts x 4) 200 points
- Final Exam Performance 75 points

TOTAL 1000 POINTS

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

*You can track your grade progress at my.unt.edu.

Classroom Behavior | Expectations

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional, respectful, and collaborative manner at all times. This course requires active participation, ensemble trust, and a safe creative environment for all students. Disrespectful behavior, harassment, harmful conduct, repeated disruptions, or unprofessional treatment of classmates or the instructor/TA will not be tolerated. Students who negatively impact the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may face further disciplinary action in accordance with university policies.

Attendance Policy - Theatre is a collaborative art. Since so much of the process of learning about acting involves interacting with your peers, attendance is MANDATORY. As such, absences will greatly affect your ability to pass this course. Per the UNT Student Attendance and Authorized Absences Policy, an absence may be excused for the following reasons: religious holy day, including travel for that purpose:

- active military service, including travel for that purpose;
- participation in an official university function;
- illness or other extenuating circumstances;
- pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and
- when the University is officially closed by the President.

WRITTEN PROOF IS REQUIRED FOR ALL EXCUSED ABSENCES/TARDIES.

Students are allowed **three unexcused absences** during the semester. After the third unexcused absence, each additional unexcused absence will result in the student's final course grade being lowered by one full letter grade.

Arriving more than 30 minutes late to class or leaving more than 30 minutes early without prior approval will result in a tardy. Two tardies will equal one unexcused absence.

Office of Disability Access Accommodations: 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 Access (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, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

COVID-19 DISCLOSURE: If you are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

UNT Course Safety Procedures: Students enrolled in Acting are required to use proper safety procedures and guidelines as outlined in UNT Policy [06.038](#) Safety in Instructional Activities. While working in laboratory sessions, students are expected and required to identify and use proper safety guidelines in all activities requiring lifting, climbing, walking on slippery surfaces, using equipment and tools, handling chemical solutions and hot and cold products. Students should be aware that the UNT is not liable for injuries incurred while students are participating in class activities. All students are encouraged to secure adequate insurance coverage in the event of accidental injury. Students who do not have insurance coverage should consider Standard Syllabus Statements Related Policy [06.049](#) Course Syllabi Requirements obtaining Student Health Insurance. Brochures for student insurance are available in the UNT Student Health and Wellness Center. Students who are injured during class activities may seek medical attention at the Student Health and Wellness Center at rates that are reduced compared to other medical facilities. If students have an insurance plan other than Student Health Insurance at UNT, they should be sure that the plan covers treatment at this facility. If students choose not to go to the UNT Student Health and Wellness Center, they may be transported to an emergency room at a local hospital. Students are responsible for expenses incurred there.

Safety in this Course: Acting is equally physical, vocal, and mental. You will be learning to have greater control through the use of the body, voice, and mind. Therefore, you must be aware of and protect each of those things in and out of class. You will learn physical and vocal warm-ups. After learning them, you are expected to be warmed up before class begins. A little pushing will assist in growth. However, if something hurts or is uncomfortable, let me know during the exercise, so I can make an adjustment. If you are struggling emotionally, understand that this can also be part of the acting and growth process, and please know that you can visit this website for information on services offered by the university within the Student Affairs Counseling and Testing Services.

Physical Contact: Acting will require physical contact at some point. Any physical contact that occurs must be at the consent of the acting partner, discussed with me, and choreographed by me. This includes handshakes, pats on the back, shoving, kissing, etc. Any sort of contact not approved by me is inappropriate and should be reported. If you feel uncomfortable with any blocking I give you, please let me know, and I will adjust it. This is for everyone's safety and comfort.

Sexual Assault Prevention: UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648.

Sensitive Subject Matter: In this course sensitive subject matters may be discussed in this class. Everyone is expected to treat these moments with the sensitivity and respect they deserve. Racist, misogynistic, homophobic, or any other form of hateful language/action is disruptive and will not be tolerated. Anyone who finds it difficult to act respectfully toward their classmates and the subject matter will be asked to leave the class and will forfeit the participation points for the day.

Emergency Notification & Procedures: UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Student Academic Integrity: The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence. Please visit the Student Academic Integrity Center.

Important Dates: NOT SUBJECT TO CHANGE (as scheduled by UNT). Weekly Schedule of Class Assignments - Assignment dates are SUBJECT TO CHANGE:

WEEK #1:

- **August 17th Day 1 (Lecture):**
 - Class information and expectations.
 - Introduction to the course work.
 - Helpful tips for finding age-appropriate monologues from published plays.
- **August 19th Day 2 (Lab):**
 - Small group breakout sessions.
 - "Get to know you" theatre games.
 - Introduction to improvisation.
- **Homework:**
 - Find and cut a one-minute monologue from an actual play.
 - The monologue should not have been performed by you previously.
 - Selections must reveal the character's internal workings, not just a narrative. Monologues must be age and type appropriate.
 - Write Journal #1 (Prompt: What makes an actor good?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK # 2:

- **August 24th Day 3 (Lecture):**
 - This session will focus on the historical context of Stanislavsky and the rise of realistic acting.
 - Students will learn foundational techniques for character development and script analysis, including breaking down scenes into units and beats to inform acting choices.
- **August 26th Day 4 (Lab):**
 - Small group breakout sessions.
 - Students will participate in small group breakout sessions dedicated to character and play analysis.
 - Activities will include improvisation exercises for deeper character connection and individualized assistance with monologue breakdown and cutting.
- **Homework:**
 - Students should be ready to discuss the monologues' context within the larger story.
 - Students should be able to identify their characters' objectives throughout the play.
 - Write Journal #2 (Prompt: What does your character want more than anything?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #3:

- **August 31st Day 5 (Lecture):**
 - We will continue our discussion of Stanislavsky and explore contemporary acting of the human element aka what would you do?
 - Continue to work, beat work and action into character.
 - Connect yourself with the character for more impactful moments.
- **Sept 2nd Day 6 (Lab):**
 - Small group breakout sessions.
 - First pass for contemporary monologues is due: individual readings of approved monologues.
- **Homework:**
 - Memorize and work monologues, as discussed during the first pass. Read "Stanislavski and His System" handout.
 - Write Journal #3 (Prompt: What stood out to you most about Stanislavski's system?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #4: LABOR DAY WEEK

- **Sept 7th Day 7 (Lecture):**
 - NO CLASS – Work on monologues
- **Sept 9th Day 8 (Lab):**
 - Small group breakout sessions “where am I” improv?
 - Begin to embody your monologue by adding details by understanding self and the society your character lives in.
 - Perform the **second pass** (50 points) of monologues, now with enhanced comprehension and integrated sensory work.
- **Homework:**
 - Refine monologues based on feedback from the second pass.
 - Read "The Methods of Physical Actions" via Canvas.
 - Write Journal #4 (Prompt: What are some physical actions that you perform in your monologue?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #5: Monologue performances.

- **Sept 14th Day 9 (Lecture): PASS 3 Monologue performance**
- **Sept 16th Day 10 (Lab):**
 - Monologue performance re-cap group discussion
 - Scene Partner Assigned and choose a two person dramatic scene from a play.
- **Homework:**
 - Turn in Pass 1-3 monologue completed worksheet through the canvas. Find a Dramatic 2 person scene with your assigned scene partner.

WEEK #6:

- **Sept 21st Day 11 (Lecture):**
 - What makes someone a believable actor?
 - Excerpt on believable acting by Uta Hagen.
 - Elinor Fuchs Visit to a Small Planet
 - Arthur Miller and his dramatic character creations
- **Sept 23rd Day 12 (Lab):**
 - Small group breakout sessions.
 - Conduct an initial **1st pass** (25 Points) of your 2 person Dramatic Scene.
- **Homework:**
 - Memorize and rehearse scenes. Additionally, read "Elements of an Action" available on Canvas.
 - Write Journal #5 (Prompt: What did you notice about how Arthur Miller writes dramatic characters name a character we see on the modern stage or media that have these traits?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #7:

- **Sept 28th Day 13 (Lecture):**
 - Discuss assigned reading. The Chicago Annoyance Theater method of “take care of yourself first” and “Secret objectives” to drive a scene.
- **Sept 30th Day 14 (Lab):**
 - Conduct a second pass (50 Points) rehearsal of dramatic scenes.
- **Homework:**
 - Rehearse 2 person dramatic scene
 - Write Journal #6 (Prompt: What obstacles does your character face, and are they successful in overcoming them?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #8: PERFORMANCE DAY – 2 Person Dramatic Scenes

- **Oct 5th Day 15 (Lecture):**
 - Perform 2 Person Dramatic Scenes (50 Points)
- **Oct 7th Day 16 (Lab):**
 - Students will recap scenes and discuss
 - Assign scene partners for 2 person comedic scene
- **Homework:**
 - Work with your scene partner to select a 2 person comedic scene from a play.

WEEK #9:

- **Oct 12th Day 17 (Lecture):**
 - The elements of comedic theatre and it's reflection/commentary of society aka what makes something funny?
- **Oct 14th Day 18 (Lab):**
 - Read through for 1st pass (25 Points) of 2 person comedic scene.
- **Homework:**
 - Memorize and rehearse 2 person comedic scenes.
 - Write Journal #7 (Prompt: What is a comedy play or media that stands out to you and why?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #10:

- **Oct 19th Day 19 (Lecture):**
 - Watch clips from “The Naked Gun” followed by a discussion on the believability of behavior in comedy, the theory that it could really happen. Don't try to be funny. What makes you stand outside the society norm?
- **Oct 21th Day 20 (Lab):**
 - For the **second pass (50 Points)**, conduct a rehearsal of comedic scenes, incorporating feedback from both peers and the instructor/TA.
- **Homework:**
 - Work on comedic scenes and read The Actors Physical Apparatus through Canvas.
 - Write Journal #8 (Prompt: What makes your character interesting that it is comedic to the society norm?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #11: PERFORMANCE DAY COMEDIC SCENES

- **Oct 26th Day 21 (Lecture):**
 - Perform Comedic Scenes
 - Complete/Submit Performance Pass 3 (50)
- **Oct 28st Day 22 (Lab):**
 - Group recap discussion on comedic scenes.
- **Homework:**
 - Write Journal #9 (Prompt: What did you learn from your work on your comedic scene?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #12:

- **Nov 2nd Day 23 (Lecture):**
 - Long Form Improvisational Theatre history and form. From Chicago to Los Angeles
- **Nov 4th Day 24 (Lab):**
 - Improv Show Day
- **Homework:**
 - Write Journal #10 (Prompt: How does improv help our every day life?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #13:

- **Nov 9th Day 25 (Lecture):**
 - Discuss Final Project of Improvised Character Monologue Piece. Creating a strong character from a Chicago perspective and the art of improv in the creation process Second City and the Groundlings Theater.
 -
- **Nov 11th Day 26 (Lab):**
 - Perform 1st pass of Character Monologues feedback from both peers and the instructor/TA.
- **Homework:**
 - Rehearse and refine Character Monologues
 - Read The Subtext of Behavior through Canvas.
 - Write Journal #11 (Prompt: How does improvisational creation differ from traditional play writing?) and post to Canvas.

WEEK #14:

- **Nov 16th Day 26 (Lecture):**
 - Wrap up where acting has come from and discuss where it's headed in the future. Why acting is important as a historian.
- **Nov 18th Day 27 (Lab):**
 - 2nd Pass of Character Monologues feedback from both peers and the instructor/TA.
- **Homework:**
 - Rehearse independently for the final pass/semester exam.
 - Write Journal #12 (Prompt: How do you find the process of creating your own character vs developing someone else's?)

THANKSGIVING November 23rd – 27th NO CLASS

WEEK #15:

- **Nov 30th Day 26 (Lecture):**
 - Work and refine your Final performances in
- **Dec 2nd Day 27 (Lab):**
 - There will be no formal meeting. The Professor and TA's will be avail to work with you on your final if you need help. Please use this time to rehearse independently for the final pass/semester exam.
- **Homework:**
 - Rehearse independently for the final pass/semester exam.

FINALS WEEK: DEC 7th – 11th | FINAL PERFORMANCE Character Monologues 3rd Pass