

Acting Fundamentals

THEA 1050-001/301: Acting Fundamentals (TRs, 11am - 12:50pm)
Office Hours Tuesdays & Thursdays 1pm - 1:50pm (by appointment only)
Class location RTFP 130

Instructor: Nathan Autrey

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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

Students majoring or minoring in Theatre who have received a grade of “C” in this course, even if they are transferring it in, will be required to audition for consideration for enrollment in THEA 3050. Any student who receives a grade BELOW a “C” will be allowed to repeat the course one more time. Should the student repeat the course and receive a grade BELOW a “C” again, the student will no longer be able to continue in the Acting Concentration.

Hours: 3;1

Course Description: The study of the art of contemporary acting, grounded in psychological realism. Exposure to a broad spectrum of acting techniques designed to develop use of the body, voice, intellect, memories, and imagination. Emphasis on removal of the body's resistances and blocks which hinder a spontaneous and truthful reaction in a creative situation. Rigorous, pre-professional curriculum - command of foundational skills required. *(added in class syllabus, but not in UNT Course Catalog, as part of Course Description)* This study has been designed to fully challenge actors through the theatrical realization of their ideas. Exercises are effectively accomplished by students of all levels and cultural backgrounds who seek to communicate with other human beings via the path of performance.

Course Objectives:

- **The Nature of Theatre -**
 - What is theatre? How is it made?
 - Students will learn the objectives of theatre. How it can influence and change society. What is the purpose?
 - Students will develop an appreciation for the art of acting.
- **How a Theatrical Production is created and what is the actor's job -**
 - Students will learn the purpose and practice of auditioning, monologues and acting resumes.
 - Students will develop a working knowledge of how to rehearse: Attendance, Etiquette, Equipment, Readiness at rehearsal, Homework, Parts of the Stage, Line memorization.
- **Training the Instrument -**

- Students will develop strength, coordination, flexibility, creative confidence and increased self-esteem via physical and vocal exercises. These exercises will utilize vocabulary and practice from Voice and Movement classes.
- Students will practice improvisational exercises to increase understanding of dramatic action and given circumstances.
- Students will expand their skills with a holistic approach to body and voice via creative problem-solving exercises.
- Students will redefine fear by understanding adrenaline and how it can support your work.
- Ensemble Building with Group Projects -
 - With the experience of group exercises, students will obtain the ability to support and lead group work.
 - Students will learn to trust other actors and work together.
- Basic Script Analysis -
 - Students will be introduced to Stanislavsky's acting method.
 - Students will learn and demonstrate the process of character creation. How to break down a script into units and beats.
 - Students will learn and demonstrate the use of Hagen's Essential Questions. How the answers can feed creativity.
- Elements of a Scene -
 - Students will be introduced to the various parts of a scene through skill demonstrations:
 - Object Exercise – Day in the Life
 - Endowment
 - Destination – Entrances and Exits
 - Life Observation
 - Communication Exercise
 - Objectives, Goal or Intention
 - Obstacles
 - Action, Tactics and Strategies
 - Magic “If”
 - Subtext
 - Moment Before
 - Event of the Scene
 - Stakes
 - Truth
- Major Projects: Students will demonstrate the ability to create a believable character and engage with an audience. The ability to memorize lines and script analysis. Demonstrate stage presence, relaxation and public solitude while focusing on their objective and the dramatic action of the scene. The goal is to cultivate creativity.
 - *Open Scene* - Partners develop an open scene and share with class. They receive suggestions for development. They go back and rehearse then present a

final time.

- o *Two Contrasting Monologues* - Choose an age-appropriate monologue that is active and not a memory or story. Present, receive suggestions for development and then after more rehearsal present again.

Course Structure (specific to COVID-19 safety measures established by UNT): This course will be taught in-person but will follow all UNT health guidelines as set down by the University. Masks are required. UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines could change based on community health conditions. Students are expected to attend classes regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for each class. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>) 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 Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

Required Text:

- (Section of reading supplied via Canvas) *A Dream of Passion* by Lee Strasberg

Recommended Text:

- *An Actor Prepares, Building A Character and Creating A Role* by Constantin Stanislavski
- *A Natural History of the Senses* by Diane Ackerman
- *The Story of The Actors Studio, A Players Place* by David Garfield

Subjects Covered: Overview - Certain aspects of performance are necessary across a variety of methodologies, particularly warming up to ensure your physical and vocal instruments are ready to use in whatever way necessary. In this course we will approach the craft of acting through a realistic acting scope that can be utilized in many different styles and genres of theatre.

Stanislavski's System - The System of Acting developed by Constantin Stanislavski broke the mold and forever changed the trajectory of acting, giving way to a more realistic style than had previously been seen. It remains the necessary foundation for any actor, regardless of which method you may use in future study and preparation. See all three recommended texts.

Strasberg's Method - An extension of Stanislavski's work, Lee Strasberg's Method of Acting is still one of the more effective and widely-used approaches to an internally-based style of acting. See required text.

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:

- a 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.

Please let me know as quickly as possible if you would like to request one of the exceptions above. Exercises, presentations, and discussions cannot be made up, as most of them are nearly impossible to recreate for a single student. However, I can keep it from counting against your completion percentage. Please know that any absence, whether excused or not, will mean missing important information and having to catch up. It is your responsibility to communicate with your classmates about assignments or instructions you may have missed. **WRITTEN PROOF IS REQUIRED FOR ALL EXCUSED ABSENCES/TARDIES.**

You will be allowed 2 Unexcused Absences. You will be dropped from the course after 3 Unexcused Absences. **IF THE DROP PERIOD HAS PASSED, YOU WILL RECEIVE AN “F” GRADE FOR THE COURSE.** Inability to participate due to not following clothing guidelines will also be counted as an Unexcused Absence. Arriving Late and Leaving Early are unacceptable interruptions. 2 Tardies (defined as arriving after the scheduled class time) or Leaving Early (before dismissed by the instructor) will equal 1 Unexcused Absence. Any work missed during such Tardies or Unexcused Absences cannot be made up.

Attendance Syllabus Statement: Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

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.

Office of Disability Access Accommodations: UNT makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students 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. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

UNT Course Safety Procedures: Students enrolled in Acting Fundamentals 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:

<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/resources-andself-help/making-an-initial-appointment>

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 https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003.AcadIntegrity.Final_.pdf to view the university's full Student Integrity policy 06.003.

General Class Information & Guidelines - You're required to wear clothing that allows you to:

- Fully stretch and move your whole body.
- Comfortably lay on the floor.
- Breathe without restriction.

- Walk naturally and comfortably. Boots, flip-flops, etc. affect how you walk. Tennis shoes with a pliable sole are recommended.
- Get dirty. Rolling around on the floor will happen, and floors are not always as clean as they might be.
- Keep warm. Bring a layer, if needed, as the temperature in the room can fluctuate.
- Stay safe. Jewelry, piercings, and certain hairstyles can create unsafe situations for both you and your classmates.
- Come prepared to work/perform even if you are not scheduled.
 - Being prepared includes being memorized so well that you don't even have to think about it. Our work as performers mostly happens on our own and what we show in class is a reflection of our work ethics. Proper feedback can't happen unless you have done your work.
- Explore every technique fully and without reservation. You'll never know which will work if you don't give it a chance.
- Leave everything else at the door. Work from other classes, relationship issues, family disputes, etc. will always be there. Allow yourself the freedom to only focus on acting during this class.
- We are an ensemble, and you are expected to support your classmates positively in everything. You tell each other what you're doing well; leave constructive feedback to me as the professional. Please refrain from clapping. Snapping after a performance and fist bumps are highly encouraged.
- You should audition for everything you can while studying acting. If you don't get cast, find another way to be involved. If all else fails, create your own performance opportunities. Every audition is a learning experience and will make you more comfortable with a very uncomfortable process.

Grading: Acting Fundamentals is a chance for you to learn and work on the craft of acting. As such, the work is as important as the final product, if not moreso. Acting performances are also somewhat subjective. To stress the importance of the process and ensure fairness, your classwork will be graded based on your entire process, rather than a single performance of a monologue/scene, according to the following criteria:

1. Class Participation & Effort
2. Completion of Assignments
3. Professionalism
4. Preparedness
5. Improvement
6. Collaboration with other actors (when applicable)

Assignments will be graded based as follows:

- Participation (10pts x 30) 300 points

- 1st Pass Preparation (50pts x 4) 200 points
- 2nd Pass Preparation and Rehearsal (50pts x 4) 200 points
- 3rd 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.

Important Dates: NOT SUBJECT TO CHANGE (as scheduled by UNT):

<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide>

Weekly Schedule of Class Assignments - Assignment dates are SUBJECT TO CHANGE:

- **Aug 30 - Sept 1** - Class Information and Expectations. Intro to the work, from Stanislavski to Strasberg. Homework, find 2 contrasting monologues (examples, one comedic and one dramatic no more than 1 minute in length) only from actual plays and not something you've performed before. Selections must show the internal workings of a character, not narrative, must be age and type appropriate. Also, memorize The Actors Vow written by Elia Kazan.
- **Sept 6 - 8** - Warming up and the Actors Vow memorized. The beginnings of sensory work, using elements of Meisner (preparation, repetition and improvisation) and the foundation for playing objective (Stanislavski) and NEED (Strasberg). Learning the foundations for character and play analysis. Homework, read and understand the plays your contemporary monologues come from and be able to discuss the context it serves in the story as a whole. Look for your characters NEED throughout the play. Also, post current Acting resume into Canvas for review.
- **Sept 13 - 15** - The beginnings of learning to layer sensory work into character and connecting self with the character, for more impactful moments. 1st pass for contemporary monologues are due, this will consist of an individual reading of each approved monologue and discussion about the play. Homework, memorize and work monologues incorporating layered-in NEED as discussed through 1st pass. Also, read Stanislavski and the Search for His System section in A Dream of Passion.
- **Sept 20 - 22** - Move further into the work by exploring sensory exercises with the actual text of your contemporary monologue. Begin to bring your monologue to life by bridging the gap between acting and reality in a safe space. Perform 2nd pass of monologues, now with a deeper

understanding and layered-in sensory work. Homework, tweak monologues based on feedback from 2nd pass and read The American Laboratory Theatre Section in A Dream of Passion.

- **Sept 27 - 29** - Discuss reading from A Dream of Passion. Explore more sensory work that directly corresponds with your NEED in your contemporary monologue. Perform final pass of monologues. Homework, partner up and find a 2-3 person scene from any Henrik Ibsen or Anton Chekhov play of your choosing that has strong roles for the entire group. Make sure to thoroughly read the play so that you understand where your character fits into the story.

- **Oct 4 - 6** - Discuss Ibsen and Chekhov's playwriting and how it transformed what we know of as an internal acting approach to playwriting. Introduce Aristotelian Theatrical elements for future use of discussing play structure. Perform 1st pass of Ibsen/Chekhov scenes and discuss the plays. Homework, memorize and rehearse scenes. Also, read The Voyage Continues: Discoveries at the Group Theatre in A Dream of Passion.

- **Oct 11 - 13** - Discuss homework reading. More sensory work to layer-in some specific connections for chosen scenes. Perform 2nd pass of Ibsen/Chekhov scenes as a rehearsal session. Homework, group rehearsal to put together all of the feedback and sensory work for the final pass of Ibsen/Chekhov scenes.

- **Oct 18 - 20** - Discuss the growth of realism in the style of acting and its spread throughout the country. Perform final pass of Ibsen/Chekhov scenes. Homework, find a 2-4 person scene from any Arthur Miller or Tennessee Williams play that fits your group, make sure to thoroughly read and understand your selection and how your character fits into the play.

- **Oct 25 - 27** - Discuss the changing landscape of American Theatre influenced by Stanislavski and the extension of Lee Strasberg and the Group Theatre and how it paved the way for playwrights like Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Read through for 1st pass of Miller/Williams scenes. Homework, memorize and rehearse Miller/Williams scenes and read The Fruits of the Voyage: Procedures for the Actor's Training in A Dream of Passion.

- **Nov 1 - 3** - Begin to layer-in sensory work with text from your Miller/Williams scenes and Meisner work. Perform 2nd pass as a rehearsal Homework, work on feedback and notes on Miller/Williams scenes and read The Fruits of the Voyage - Procedures for the Actor's Training in A Dream of Passion. Also, find a 2-3 person contemporary scene.

- **Nov 8 - 10** - Discuss reading and how it applies to the work. Perform final pass of Miller/Williams scenes. Homework, find a contemporary scene.

- **Nov 15 - 17** - Begin to layer-in sensory work with text from your contemporary scenes and Meisner work. Read through for the 1st pass of the contemporary scene. Homework, memorize and rehearse contemporary scene.
- **Nov 22 - 24** - **Thanksgiving Break!**
- **Nov 29 - Dec 1** - Wrap up where the theatre has come from and discuss where it's headed in the future. Perform final pass of contemporary scenes. Perform 2nd pass of contemporary scenes as a rehearsal session. Homework, group rehearsal to put together all of the feedback and sensory work for the final pass of contemporary scenes.
- **Dec 6 - 8** - Rehearse final with professor at a scheduled time and meet for a scheduled Semester Check-in and rehearse on your own with your group in preparation for finals.
- **Dec 13** - Semester Exam.

THE ACTOR'S VOW:

"I will take my rightful place on stage
and I will be myself.

I am not a cosmic orphan. I have no reason to be timid.
I will respond as I feel; awkwardly, vulgarly, but respond.

I will have my throat open,
I will have my heart open,
I will be vulnerable.

I may have anything or everything
the world has to offer, but the thing
I need most, and want most,
is to be myself.

I will admit rejection, admit pain,
admit frustration, admit even pettiness,
admit shame, admit outrage,
admit anything and everything
that happens to me.

The best and most human parts of
me are those I have inhabited
and hidden from the world.

I will work on it.
I will raise my voice.
I will be heard."

