

ACTING FOR THE CAMERA

Fall 2017

THEA 4310.001 and 4310.301 (Lab)

Mondays from 2p - 5:50p

RTFP 127

3 Units

Professor Bob Hess

RTFP 222

Office Phone (940) 565-2132

Office Hours: Mondays 1:30p – 2:00p, Wednesdays 1:30p – 2:30p, and by appointment

For Class Correspondence: untcamera@aol.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Acting for the Camera is designed to prepare the advanced actor for the demands of working in television and film and other media genres.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to understand both the practical (technical) and artistic issues that must be taken into consideration when acting for the camera, such as:

- Continuity and consistency
- The ability to “hit marks” and incorporate props
- Vocal and physical choices
- Personalization of place and space
- Basic on camera acting techniques
- Marketing and self-promotion in the media industry
- Special demands of media script analysis
- Cold reading technique
- Audition technique
- Interacting with the directors on projects
- Basic industry terminology, protocol, and procedure that is specific to, and necessary for, finding work as an on camera talent
- Determining on-camera strengths and learning to accentuate them
- Creating a professional resume and exploring the process seeking agency representation, as well as other forms of self-marketing and promotion

The structure of this course is rigorous and is designed to help the student actor develop the skills needed to teach, enter the acting profession, or obtain entrance into a professional MFA Program. By the end of this course, a student will have a solid sense of what performance opportunities, *outside of the theatre*, await the actor, and what is expected of an actor in the real world of media production. The time spent on camera acting and audition technique throughout the semester typically provides the student with a more acute sense of one's acting range, an expansion of creativity, and greater level of self-confidence.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Students will be required to obtain film scripts. Most can be obtained from free online sources listed on the "Website Supplement".
- There will also be handouts from the professor, and there will be some required film/video/TV viewing outside of class

EXPECTATIONS

A major goal of this course is to prepare the advanced actor for the demands of working in a broad range of media performance. The assumption is that you have a solid understanding of acting technique and script analysis. This class will teach the student how to adapt acting technique to the size and precision dictated by the camera. A student enrolled in this course should be extremely comfortable playing psychological realism, as this is the predominant style used in most forms of media work.

I consider this to be what I call a "lab driven class." This means that the majority of the work in this class is performance driven and will happen in the classroom. We will explore a wide range of media--which may include film, episodic television, soaps, a wide variety of commercial copy, as well as, industrial film and spokesperson and host copy.

When not performing, you may be asked to assist with the technical operation of the camera and other equipment.

Outside of the classroom, students will focus on the business side of acting, engage in market research, and create a "professional road map" (resume(s), cover letters, research headshots, wardrobe, make-up, and an audition log).

Whenever possible, guest artists will visit class to provide students with different perspectives and unique opportunities for learning.

The teaching methodology will be individual and group interaction/coaching, peer review, discussion, skill training, verbal critiques, and performance simulation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance (refer to policy on following page)
- Preparation and completion of all assignments
- Participation in exercises and scene/monologue work and open discussion of all work performed in class
- Reading, analysis, and comprehension of all assigned material
- Viewing of commercials, films, and television shows

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Actors must be highly skilled, disciplined, and self-motivated. Acquiring and refining these skills requires diligent and focused work. An actor's training is as serious as that of a medical student or classical musician. Preparation of assignments and dedicated attention in class and rehearsals is essential. It is expected you are striving to develop your personal professional work ethic NOW, while you are in this training program.

Professional behavior includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Attending all classes
- Being on time for all classes
- Mental and physical preparation for all classes
- Thorough, advanced preparation for classes
- Timely completion of assignments
- Wearing proper attire
- An openness, willingness and eagerness to commit to the exercises and assignments
- Respect for co-workers, classroom, rehearsal space, and furnishings/props
- Turning off cell phones at beginning of class (no texting, no checking Facebook)
- Refraining from talking or doing other course work while someone is showing work or while I am teaching the class
- Refraining from reading during class
- Refraining from sleeping during class

ATTENDANCE

Attendance, though it does not factor into your letter grade, is mandatory for your continued enrollment in the course.

The university and the Department of Dance and Theatre regulate attendance. The following policy is consistent with all performance-oriented classes in the department.

Please be reminded that university policy states that any instructor who informs students in writing about the necessity of class attendance may request that the registrar drop a student from the course with a grade of WF or F upon the accumulation of the stated number of absences.

- Our class only has a total of 14 meetings before our final exam. You are allowed no more than two (2) absences this semester. The reason for the absences can range from family emergencies to illness to traffic to car trouble to oversleeping. There is NO need to show me a doctor's note or substantiate the cause of the absence. It would not make any difference. You are allowed two absences.
- You are allowed to be tardy twice. Three (3) tardies equals one absence. Simply put, don't be late. Actors cannot be late and maintain a successful career. Learn the lesson now.
- A third absence, even if generated from an accumulation of tardies, will result in removal from the course.
- Please note that the teacher/director's roll book is the official record of absences and tardies. At any point, you are welcome to check the roll book to be sure that your attendance record is correct.

COMMUNICATION

Ongoing information regarding class will be distributed via email. CHECK YOUR EMAIL EVERY DAY! I will use this address to communicate announcements and send support material to the class:

untcamera@aol.com

I will also be enlisting the assistance of a class member to communicate directly with you via text.

If you need to communicate with me, please use the email address above exclusively. Please remember that, if your email address changes during the semester, it is your responsibility to let me know. It is your responsibility to be informed.

CLASS CANCELLATION

Because I continue to work as a professional actor 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. Should this occur, you will be notified by both text and email. While I am teaching, I turn down more work than 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. If I cancel class at any point, you will each be given a “free” absence. For example, if you have accrued two absences in class, you would then have only one. The same is true if I am late for class three times. I wouldn’t count on that one, though.

CLASS MATERIALS

- A cell-phone with accessible voice mail and text capability
- An active email account, which is checked daily
- Appropriate wardrobe for the projects you are working on

TESTING

Quizzes and examinations covering the information in readings and class may be given.

IN-CLASS WORK PROCEDURES & ATMOSPHERE

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 when we work in-class. (We will discuss this more extensively on our first day of class).

As you know by now, it is extremely difficult to coach your acting when the copy has not been read and understood and/or when text is expected to be memorized and is not. 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 your work time in class no make-up date is guaranteed.

Each of you knows that memorization is the first major step to freeing the actor up to begin to make choices with copy---this is especially true of acting on camera. You will soon discover that there are plenty of things to think about in addition to your lines. Honing your ability to analyze copy quickly and get the sense of it will be a skill you will work on all semester. When applicable, I encourage each of you to attempt to memorize copy as soon as you receive it.

If your performance is not prepared sufficiently for in-class coaching and work time, we will move on to another individual instead. Your in-class work time scheduled for that particular day will be forfeited and will very likely not be re-scheduled due to our limited class time.

It is expected that you give your undivided attention and support to your classmates during their work time. You will learn a great deal from watching others work. It’s worth

noting that, if you intend to enter the professional arena, you will spend LOTS of time watching other actors work. Now is the perfect time to learn how to make time spent observing others productive for you. As noted earlier, refrain from entering or leaving the room while others are working. Treat others the way you expect to be treated while you are working.

CLASS CALENDAR

Students will receive a class calendar outlining the semester work plan. There is a lot of material to cover in this class in a very short period of time---adjustments to the original class calendar will almost certainly be made as the class progresses. Students will always receive as much notice as possible of changes and an updated calendar reflecting any adjustments.

GRADING POLICY

The grading in this class is unavoidably somewhat subjective. Grades (point values) will be based on what you have achieved in your final performances, your willingness to explore and take risks, and how much concentrated effort and rehearsal you have put into the work.

In this course, you will always be assessed on the following:

- Work ethic and professionalism
- Active participation in the daily class work and overall willingness to explore
- Attendance and punctuality (mandatory in order to remain enrolled in the course)
- Thorough preparation for class (see above **IN-CLASS WORK PROCEDURES AND ATMOSPHERE**)
- Personal investment in professional standards of conduct (see above **PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**)
- Successful completion of assignments
- Research
- In-class exercises
- Overall improvement

When working specifically with copy/text, you will be assessed on the following:

- Character choices/analysis
- Your ability to utilize your personality on camera
- Physical and vocal characterization
- Knowledge of all words and meaning of phrases in copy/text
- Use of and articulation of the language in copy/text
- Clarity and truthfulness

- Awareness of the flow and arc of a scene
- Emotional commitment to the actions and objectives in copy/text (when applicable)

Grading Formula:

Your final grade will be based upon the following criteria and point values:

Participation and professionalism	200
Preparation of exercises and performances	200
Non-Acting projects	100
Quality of performance projects	500
Commercials (2)	50 points each
Industrial Copy(2)	50 points each
Monologue	50 points
Scene Work (2)	50 points each
Final Project	150 points

There are a maximum of 1000 points available.

Points and Letter Grades:

A=	1000 - 900
B=	899 - 800
C=	799 - 700
D=	699 - 600

Graded Project Details:

Non-Acting Projects: These may include script analysis assignments, journal entries, preparation of marketing materials, project research, outside readings and reading responses, quizzes, performance, observations, etc...

Commercial Copy:

- You will “audition” for a commercial with copy prepared outside of class.
- You will do a “cold copy” commercial audition.

Industrial Copy:

- You will “audition” for an Industrial with copy prepared outside of class.
- You will do a “cold copy” Industrial audition.

Monologue:

- You will perform a monologue from a film or play on camera.

- You will present a “response” to a monologue.

Scene Work:

- You will “audition” for a film/TV role with a reader.
- You will present a scene with a partner from a TV/Film project.

Final Project: The final project will be comprised of a final performance project hopefully in conjunction with the RTVF student director’s class. This portion of the final project is TBA.

INCOMPLETES

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, such as illness. The terms for making up the INCOMPLETE 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. An INCOMPLETE may be requested no earlier than November 13.

WITHDRAWAL

Should you choose to drop this course, you must initiate the drop and acquire all the proper signatures and paperwork. The deadline for this, in order to be able to receive a grade of W in the class is October 6. After that date, the student who withdraws from class will receive a grade of WF for nonattendance.

FITNESS & SAFETY

This course is designed to accommodate all levels of physical ability and fitness. As with any physical training, there will be some soreness and muscular fatigue as a result of a new use of the body. This is normal and healthy. However, *you are responsible for your own health*. If you are in doubt as to whether you can perform some aspect of the exercises, please refrain from doing so until you can consult a physician. If you need to refrain from doing significant portions of the coursework due to this condition, you must get written verification from a physician and be prepared to do alternative assignments.

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.

POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE MATERIAL

Please be advised that this class contains the development of text and actions that may be considered offensive by some. You may encounter literary and directorial points of view that differ from your own. If you choose to take this course, you may be required to represent life as the author depicts it and the director interprets it. In this craft, we seek to explore all possible forms of human behavior and we may, at times, give "voice" to characters that hold different views than our own.

ORIGINAL WORK REQUIREMENT

Homework and papers must be your original creative or scholarly work. All borrowings from other writers must be noted by quotation marks and credited with footnotes. All Internet sources must be credited with the website and author. In the artistic and academic community plagiarism (the presentation of other's words or ideas as your own) is a serious offense and will result in failure of the course.

LAST DAY OF CLASS/FINAL EXAM DATES

The last day of class is Monday, December 4. FINAL PROJECTS will most likely be viewed at 1:30p on Thursday, May 11. A, informal *post mortem* discussion of the semester's work will POSSIBLY be conducted at an off campus location immediately after the viewing of final projects, but only if a minimum of twelve or more students are interested and available to attend. Attendance at this is not mandatory.

STUDENT OBLIGATION TO ACADEMIC/PRODUCTION WORK

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

ACCOMMODATION 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.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING (SPOT)

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. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

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.

XVII. 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.