

# **ACTING FOR THE CAMERA**

## **THEA 4310.001**

### **Fall 2020**

**THEA 4310.001 and 4310.301 (Lab)**  
**Monday 2:00p - 5:50p**  
**Remote Learning**  
**3 Units**  
**Professor Bob Hess**  
**RTFP 222**  
**Office Phone (940) 369-8595**  
**Office Hours: By appointment**  
**For Class Correspondence: [untcamera@aol.com](mailto:untcamera@aol.com)**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Acting for the Camera is designed to introduce the advanced actor to the skills needed for the diverse opportunities that acting for the camera may offer professionally.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will

- Demonstrate basic on-camera acting performance techniques for a diverse range of projects
- Analyze the demands of screenplay and media script analysis and apply those observations to their performances
- Interact with and take direction from a film medium director
- Practice audition technique (including prepared auditions and taped submissions)
- Demonstrate a comprehension of basic camera and industry terminology and protocol
- Observe and discuss the lessons of existing on-camera performances from film and television and allow that to inform their own work
- Critique and offer feedback for both their own on-camera performances and those of their class colleagues
- Document information about the process of seeking agency representation, as well as other forms of marketing, promotion, and professional conduct

Specific projects will include:

- The on-camera slate
- Commercials
- Spokesperson
- Motor only shots (MOS)
- Public Service Announcements (PSA's)
- Testimonials
- Film and television scenes
- Use of a teleprompter
- Use of an ear prompter
- Student-directed film
- Taped audition submission

By the end of this course, a student will have a solid foundation in 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 will provide the student with a more acute sense of their acting range, an expansion of creativity, and greater self-confidence with both the medium and acting, in general.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Caine, Michael. *Acting in Film: An Actor's Take on Movie Making*. New York: Applause Theater Book Publishers. ISBN #0-936839-86-4.
- Film/TV viewing outside of class
- Spiral notebook

## **EXPECTATIONS**

A major goal of this course is to prepare the advanced actor for the demands of working in a broad range of media performances. The assumption is that you have a solid understanding of theatrical acting technique and script analysis. This class will teach the student how to adapt this acting technique to the size and microscopic 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 we will encounter.

The course is absolutely lab-driven. This means that the majority of the work in this class is performance-driven and will happen during class meetings and private

coaching. Your grade in the class will be determined by your attendance, preparation, participation, observation, and execution of assignments.

The teaching methodology will include individual interaction/coaching, skills training, class discussion, peer review, written work (reading quizzes and observational analyses), and audition/performance simulation.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- Attendance and Punctuality (*refer to attendance policy explained on the following page*)
- Preparation and completion of assignments
- Participation in exercises and scene/monologue work and open discussion of all work performed in class
- Reading, analysis, and comprehension of all assigned materials

## **PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Actors must be highly disciplined and self-motivated to achieve success in the course. Preparation of assignments and focused attention in class are essential. There is much to be gained through the skillful observation of the work of other students, so respect for the work of your classmates is critical. It is expected you are striving to develop your personal professional work ethic NOW, while you are in this training program.

Professional behavior includes the following:

- Attending all classes and scheduled coaching sessions
- Being on time for all classes and scheduled coaching sessions
- Responding thoroughly and promptly to all class correspondence
- Thorough, advanced preparation for classes
- Timely completion of assignments
- Wearing proper attire, meaning, that which is consistent with the material
- An openness, willingness, and eagerness to commit to the exercises and assignments
- Respect for colleagues
  - Cell phones may not be used while class is in session. They may, of course, be activated during breaks, but must be turned off again when class resumes. It is incredibly disrespectful to the professor, students, and the course to use your cell phone while others are working. It is also counterproductive to your need to be a skilled observer. This is a huge deal to me.
  - Please refrain from irrelevant talking, reading, sleeping, or doing other course work while class is in session. Students who are repeatedly called

out for this, yet continue to violate the policy, may be subject to dismissal from the course. This is also a huge deal to me.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Punctual attendance accounts for over a third of your class grade! Thus, students are expected to be present and punctual for all classes and scheduled coaching. An early departure from class is counted toward your attendance grade, as well.

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

- Our class only has a total of only 14 full class meetings before our final exam. You are allowed no more than two (2) absences this semester. The reason for the absences can range from illness to family emergencies to traffic to car trouble to oversleeping. I understand that “stuff happens.” There is NO need to show me a doctor’s note or substantiate the cause of the absence. I absolutely believe you. Again, you are allowed two excused absences. A third absence means that the highest grade you can earn in the class is an F. You may wish, should this third absence occur, to drop the course. It is up to you.
- The professor’s roll is the official record of absences and tardiness. At any point, you are welcome to check the roll to be sure that your attendance/punctuality record is accurate and how you have scored on various course assignments.

Also, unfortunately, because of the tight schedule of the class, if you miss the work done on any particular assignment in class because of an absence, we will attempt to make this up during another class meeting, but, because we have such a full curriculum, your particular assignment may be forfeited.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Ongoing information regarding class will be distributed via email. In the same the way your agent would operate, you will be getting scripts for upcoming class work via email. Students will be notified via text to check emails. I will be employing the use of a class assistant to communicate directly with you via text and make copies of your in-class work available to you for personal observation and feedback. I will use the following email address to communicate information and send a considerable amount of material:

***untcamera@aol.com***

If you need to communicate with me, please use the email address above exclusively (or text the class assistant). DO NOT text me directly, 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. I would prefer you NOT use the UNT address

(*bob.hess@unt.edu*) to avoid your email getting overlooked amid the deluge of university emails that I receive.

## **CLASS CANCELLATION**

Because I continue to work as a professional stage and broadcast actor and am expected to do so as part of the research required in my university contract, 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, I will make the work up for that particular class at individual times outside of regular class hours.

You will also earn equivalent bonus points when I am late for class. I would not count on this happening, though.

## **CLASS MATERIALS**

- An active email account (you may choose your UNT account or a different one).
- Appropriate wardrobe for the projects on which you are working. Your appearance for various on-camera works is significant, and you should begin aggressively exploring how your persona can change from audition to audition based on wardrobe, hair, and make-up.
- A phone or video camera that will allow you to record and rehearse your class work in your private rehearsals.

## **TESTING**

Quizzes covering the information in readings and class lecture will be given. These are figured into your grade for the semester.

## **PREPARATION**

In large acting classes, we have precious little time together. Your preparation for the class assignments is critical. To ensure the best possible use of our time, let's clarify what we need to accomplish when we work in class and in coaching sessions.

A number of our assignments will force you to get very familiar with the copy you will be working with for that lesson. In most cases, you will be expected to memorize it. It is extremely difficult to coach your work when it has not been sufficiently prepared. Thus, it is essential that this preparation be completed before coaching begins.

Each of you knows that familiarity with and memorization of the text are major steps to freeing the actor and allowing for more possibilities. This is particularly true of acting on camera. You will soon discover that there are plenty of things to focus on in addition to your lines. Honing your ability to analyze copy quickly and get the sense of precisely what you are saying will be a skill on which you will work all semester.

***If any performance is not prepared sufficiently for in-class or scheduled coaching, your work session will be cut short, and we will move on to another actor. Your session will be forfeited and will not be able to be re-scheduled, due to our limited class time.***

## **POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE MATERIAL**

Please be advised that this class contains the development of text from the contemporary cinema/television 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 and choose words that we would never say personally.

## **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 may need to be made as the class progresses and unexpected circumstances arise. Students will always receive as much notice as possible of changes and an updated calendar reflecting any adjustments.

## **GRADING POLICY**

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

- Attendance
- Punctuality
- Work ethic
- Professionalism
- Preparation
- Participation
- Observations
- Written quizzes and papers

- Skills demonstrated
  - Character choices/analysis
  - Physical and vocal life
  - Comprehension of all the words and meaning of phrases in copy/text
  - Use of and articulation of the language in copy/text
  - Clarity and truthfulness in performances
  - Awareness of the flow and arc of the scene/copy
  - Emotional investment in the circumstances, actions, and objectives
  - Effective use of camera acting technique

## **GRADING FORMULA**

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

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>POINTS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance and Punctuality (3 points per class)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Tardiness or early departure of less than 30 minutes will result in the loss of half a point</li> <li>--Tardiness or early departure between 30 and 90 minutes will result in a loss of 1 point</li> <li>--Tardiness or early departure over 90 minutes will be considered an absence, with a loss of 3 points</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	42
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes (earned with a grade of B or better)</li> </ul>	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Exercises (3 points each) (Commercial, Spokesperson, Public Service Announcement, Testimonials, TV Scene, Corporate Scene, Amazing Performance Presentation)</li> </ul>	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Film Monologue</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Film Scene</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student-directed Film</li> </ul>	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Exam (Taped Submission)</li> </ul>	8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Exam (Written)</li> </ul>	4
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	100

## **Corresponding Letter Grades:**

90 – 100	A
80 – 89	B
70 – 79	C
65 – 69	D
Below 65	F

## **EXTRA CREDIT**

There is NO extra credit available in the class. Please do not inquire if there is some “additional work you can do to boost your grade.” Your grade is based on the criteria clearly set forth in this syllabus.

## **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 had completed the work in excellent standing up to a certain point and then had to leave school unexpectedly for some reason, such as illness or a personal emergency. The terms for making up the INCOMPLETE are negotiated by the student, the professor, and the Department of Dance and Theatre, and these terms must be signed by both parties and submitted to the departmental office for approval. Request for an INCOMPLETE cannot be submitted until Monday, November 9, 2020.

## **DROPPING A COURSE OR WITHDRAWAL**

Should you choose to drop this course, YOU must initiate the drop and acquire all the proper signatures and paperwork. The last day for the student to elect to drop the class (receiving a “W”) is Monday, November 2, 2020. The last day to withdraw from the university (and thus from all classes, also receiving a “W”) is Friday, November 20, 2020.

## **LAST DAY OF CLASS/FINAL EXAM DATES**

Our last official class meeting is Monday, November 30. FINAL EXAMS will take place on Monday, December 7 from 1:30p – 3:30p.



After our Final Exam presentations are screened for the class, there will follow an informal *post mortem* discussion to reflect on the semester's work. Attendance at this *post mortem* discussion 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](http://www.spot.unt.edu) or email [spot@unt.edu](mailto: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.

## **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](http://www.unt.edu/csrr).