

ACTING: REALISM II
THEA 4050
Advanced Scene Study for the Stage
Spring 2024

THEA 4050.001 and THEA 4050.301 (Lab)

Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30a – 10:50a

RTFP 130

3 Units

Professor Bob Hess

Office: RTFP 222

Office Hours Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:00a - 12:00p, and by appointment

For Class Correspondence: ActingRealism@aol.com

I. PREREQUISITES

Prerequisites for THEA 4050 Acting: Realism II include a grade of B or better in both THEA 3050 Acting: Realism I and THEA 3700 Audition for the Stage. If THEA 3700 has not been completed, submission of an audition to the professor is an option for possible enrollment upon approval.

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Follow-up course to THEA 3050 Acting: Realism I and continuation of THEA 3700 Audition for the Stage. Advanced training in the process of creating a character grounded in psychological realism, with texts from modern realism as the source material for scene work. Investigation of previously unexplored acting methodologies, including processes and exercises.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Continued application and reinforcement of both foundational and advanced concepts in the creation of a character introduced in THEA 3050, Acting: Realism I and THEA 3700 Audition for the Stage, with particular focus on:

Objective, Obstacle, and Tactic

Long-term and Short-term Circumstances

Vocal, Physical, and Emotional Life of a Character

Text and Subtext Analysis
 Active Listening and Responding
 Presence and Focus
 Finding Love, Competition, Discoveries, and Game-playing in the Scene
 The Moment Before
 A Sense of Place

- The specific study of methodologies developed by Anne Bogart (Viewpoints) and Sanford Meisner.
- The task of self-direction
- Development of the actor's personal, individual work ethic and method of preparation and rehearsal for stage performance

IV. CONTENT OF MATERIAL

Please be advised that this class contains the development of texts and actions that may be considered offensive to some. You may encounter literary points of view and language that differ from your own. If you choose to take the course, you must perform the roles in which you are cast. You are required to speak the text as written and to fulfill the actions the author describes. If there is any issue with this, please reach out to the professor privately.

V. TEACHING METHODOLOGY

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures discussing the history and content of various methods, group discussion, analysis of text, peer and instructor observations, scene performance and critique, class exercises, and written analysis of the work.

At times it may be necessary to ask the students to demonstrate or find a more appropriate physical movement or posture for a scene, to observe the instructor demonstrating a more appropriate physical movement or posture, and/or for the instructor to assist the student in developing that physical movement or posture. Students should be prepared for an appropriate degree of physical contact with other students in the context of the work for a particular scene. Any student with concerns about being touched must notify the instructor immediately following the first class meeting. A request for any sort of physical touching will always be discussed beforehand and only occur with permission and comfort.

VI. CLASS PROCEDURES

PROTOCOL

It is critical, in a class of this nature, that you give your undivided attention and support to your

classmates during exercises and presentations. Skilled observation is a key element of the course. As this is a class for the advanced actor, students are expected to honor all of the same protocols of respect and support that were established in the Realism I and Audition courses. If the student needs to review these protocols or be reminded of them, they should reach out to the professor about this.

If you prefer to TAKE NOTES on an iPad, laptop, or cell phone, this is acceptable. You must inform me in advance that you will be doing this.

COMMUNICATION

Information regarding the course will be distributed in class, via email (which is to be checked regularly—YOUR responsibility), on Canvas, or through messages from a class assistant. Again, it is YOUR responsibility to be informed. Your instructor is ALWAYS available to you through emails or scheduled appointments to discuss any specific issues or questions you may have about the class. I can promise you a swift reply (within 24 hours) to any inquiry or comment you have. Professional actors in the current state of the industry MUST stay on top of communication and reply promptly. Otherwise, the business will pass you by.

VII. TEXTS

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Esper, William and Dimarco, Damon. *The Actor's Art and Craft: William Esper Teaches the Meisner Technique*. Anchor Books.

**You will also need a notebook of some kind for recording observations and class notes.

VIII. GRADING

Your grade for the semester will be determined by your accrual of the number of points (out of 100) achieved in various aspects of PERFORMANCE SKILLS and ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

CLASS EXERCISES

Our methodologies will be accompanied by various exercises to be done in class.

SCENE STUDY

The class will complete several finished performances of scenes to be presented in class (ideally 4, unless we have to cancel classes due to inclement weather), with students doing several passes on each of these. All of these performances must be completed in order to pass the course, and students can earn a maximum of 15 POINTS for each scene, *based on the evaluation of the FINAL PASS*.

For some of these performances, I will make myself available to you for private coaching to

assist in blocking, text work, and performance skills on your scene. Students must be OFF BOOK when requested. Rehearsals with your partner are your responsibility, with an expectation of both in-class and independent rehearsals. A scene which is clearly not ready to be performed because one of both of the actors are not prepared will be stopped, with a resulting loss of points on the overall scene score.

You will be expected to organize your own rehearsals outside of class and find your own rehearsal space. Make sure that times and places are clearly decided upon. Once a rehearsal is set, you must be there, as the other actor is affected by your punctuality and presence.

If any actor encounters problematic absence, lateness, or any other issue with a partner, you must contact me immediately. I absolutely understand that a lack of preparation may be the fault of one actor and not the other, so PLEASE MAKE ME AWARE IMMEDIATELY if there is a problem in this area. *I cannot help you if you do not let me know.* If you wait until the actual day of your performance or after the fact to inform me of a problem, it will be too late, and BOTH actors in the scene will be given the consequence. Take responsibility for your own performances by making me aware of any difficulties you are experiencing. In all sincerity—I would not expect, at this level, that these work ethic issues should be a problem. If they were, you would not be in this class.

Rehearsal set pieces, costumes, hairstyles/make-up, sound cues, and props, as needed, are also YOUR responsibility. In particular, one of the major lessons the course reinforces is that appropriate wardrobe, look, and props are critical to the truthful creation of that scene. You have already observed this repeatedly in both Realism I and Audition for the Stage.

The assessment of the FINAL PASS of your scene will be based on eight factors, each of which carry a weight toward the total point value of 15 points:

PREPARATION:

- Scenery, props, costumes, personal appearance, and possibly even minor technical effects (such as sound cues) as demanded by the scene
- Staging and lines solidly delivered *as the author wrote them*, free of paraphrasing, ad libs, hesitation, or prompting.
- **SUFFICIENT REHEARSAL** completed

VOCAL SKILL:

- Well-supported sound, free of tension
- **HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD**
- Vocal quality consistent with the character
- Shows variety in pitch, rhythm, vocal quality, and dynamics
- Effective use of the actual words

PHYSICAL SKILL:

- Physicality that is relaxed and free of the actor's own personal tensions and habits

- Physical life that is connected the destination, intentions, and responses of the character

UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF THE TEXT:

- Full understanding of the content of what the character is saying, along with a grasp of subtext
- Full understanding of what the individual words actually mean (and how they are **PRONOUNCED**)
- Observation of the structure of the text, with a key focus on how the words connect to one another (“connecting the dots”)

INTENTION & OBJECTIVE:

- Connection to objectives and tactics and how they change through the arc of the scene

BELIEVABILITY & EMOTIONAL TRUTH/INVESTMENT:

- Connection to the emotional life of the character on a truthful level
- Becoming the character as opposed to just “acting” it
- Thinking like the character
- Openness to spontaneity in performance as opposed to a rehearsed, recited, or rote performance

CONNECTION TO THE OTHER ACTOR:

- genuine, truthful listening and responding to what you are given
- sending and receiving of information
- cue pick up (and natural overlap, if requested)
- effective use of “earned pauses”

TAKING DIRECTION & APPLICATION OF CONCEPTS:

- Application of the concepts learned in the curriculum
- Taking the direction given by the professor in rehearsals and applying it to the final performance.

SELF CRITIQUES

At the completion of each scene study (except the Final Exam scene), the actor will submit via email a self-critique of honest, thoughtful reflection about the work and what they have learned from it. These are to be submitted by 5:00p on the Sunday following the final pass of the scene. These are worth FIVE POINTS each. The choice not to submit the self-critique by the deadline is a choice to forfeit these 5 points.

QUIZZES

Students are expected to complete all reading assignments connected with the course. You will frequently be quizzed about the content of the assigned reading. These quizzes are not particularly difficult, and a student who has thoughtfully read the text will usually have no

difficulty in succeeding on these. A student who receives a grade of B or better on any of these quizzes will receive THREE POINTS per quiz.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Students will complete a written Final Exam as a semester reflection on the work done in the class. This is worth TEN POINTS. If a student does not turn this in by the due date (**5:00p on Friday of Finals Week—a strict University deadline for submission of all work from the semester**), this is a choice to forfeit credit for the work.

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

Punctual attendance is critical for your success in the course. Thus, students are expected to be present and punctual for all classes.

The following policy is consistent with all acting courses in the UNT Department of Dance and Theatre:

- Students are allowed no more than a total of THREE excused (3) absences during the semester for any reason.
- 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.

If a student's absences have resulted in a grade with which they are not pleased, they may choose to withdraw from the class by the university deadline.

The policy is not negotiable, as that would constitute holding one student to a different standard than all other students in all acting classes. Any student with an issue in the area of attendance and/or punctuality should direct their concerns to the Head of the Acting Faculty, Professor Vahle.

The professor's roll is the official record of absences and tardiness. Students are also welcome to check with the professor to make sure that their attendance/punctuality record is accurate.

KEEPING IT REAL...

I am very aware that the unexpected comes up in life, and many times it is beyond your control. The attendance policy of acting classes in the Department of Dance and Theatre at UNT is set up to ALLOW for and EXCUSE those occasional issues that may come up (illnesses, deaths in the family, emergencies, traffic, car trouble, unavoidable commitments, weather, etc.). All of these things

*could occur to you during the semester (even a couple of times). Changing the policy for you means that it must, in the interest of fairness and consistency, be changed for students in all acting classes. The attendance policy already allows for the fact that you might need to miss a class or two. However, there have to be limits, particularly since your absence will very possibly have an impact on a fellow actor. If you are ill and/or absent excessively, it means you are missing the actual content of the course. You are seeking to be a young professional actor—get used to the fact that you simply have to **BE THERE (and ON TIME)** if you wish to keep the job.*

OVERVIEW OF POINT VALUES FOR COURSE WORK

READING QUIZZES	5 quizzes @ 3 points each	15 points
SCENE STUDY	3 scenes @15 points each	45 points
SELF CRITIQUES	3 self-critiques @ 5 points each	15 points
FINAL SCENE		15 points
FINAL EXAM WRITTEN		<u>10 points</u>
		100 points

ONCE YOUR POINTS EARNED FOR THE SEMESTER ARE DETERMINED, THAT NUMERICAL GRADE CORRESPONDS TO A LETTER GRADE FOR THE COURSE AS FOLLOWS:

A	90 or higher
B	80 – 89
C	70 – 79
D	60 – 69
F	59 or below

IX. 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 set forth in this syllabus.

X. 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 suddenly leave school for some personal reason, such as an illness or family emergency. 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. The earliest date for the student to request an INCOMPLETE is April 6, 2024.

XI. WITHDRAWAL

Should you choose to drop this course, YOU must initiate the drop before the deadline and acquire all proper signatures and paperwork. The last day for the student to elect to drop the class with a grade of “W” is April 5, 2024.

XII. CLASS CANCELLATION

Because I continue to work as a professional actor in the Resident Company at the Dallas Theater Center and with a broadcast agent (and am expected to do so by the UNT Department of Dance and Theatre as part of my tenure track), I may occasionally have to cancel class for projects on which I am working—sometimes on short notice. In all cases I will try to find a substitute from the UNT Acting Faculty to cover the class. If I am not able to do this and need to cancel a class meeting, 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 completely cancel class at any point *with no advance notice*, you will each be given a “free” absence. For example, if you have accrued two absences in class, you would then have only one.

XIII. LAST DAY OF CLASS/FINAL EXAM DATES

The last regular class meeting is Thursday, May 2. The Final Exam will take place on Tuesday, May 7 from 8:00a – 10:00a. I am very sorry for the early hour. This is a fixed time provided to us by the university and is not something over which I have control.

XIV. POST MORTEM

After our Final Exam, an informal *post mortem* discussion to reflect on the semester’s work will POSSIBLY be conducted at an off-campus location, but only if 75% or more of the students are interested and available to attend. Attendance at this *post mortem* is NOT mandatory and will have no effect on the student’s grade.

XV. STUDENT OBLIGATION TO ACADEMIC/PRODUCTION WORK

Dance & 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 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.

XVI. 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.

XVII. 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.

XVIII. 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.

XIX. GUIDELINES FOR THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Should online meetings of the class ever occur, it is expected that every student will practice virtual etiquette that is respectful to the class, the professor, and other students during these sessions. Adherence to appropriate virtual etiquette is factored into the student's grade. This includes the following:

- Log on at least a minute or two early; do not be surprised if you are counted late if you are not logged on to the virtual class when it starts.
- Do not attend class if you are unable to participate actively. Do not join the virtual classroom just to ignore it or walk away from it. If the instructor realizes this has occurred, your participation will be penalized, and you may be counted absent.
- Do not attend virtual class from your bed. While this is a virtual space, it is still a classroom. You will find it easier to pay attention, learn material, and complete your course work if you are seated at a table or desk.
- If you use a profile picture in virtual classroom, it should be a classroom-appropriate photo.
- Mute yourself unless you are making a presentation to the class or the instructor is seeking questions/comments from the class. For users in virtual classroom, the space bar acts as a quick unmute—press it down to speak on mic, then release the space bar to mute yourself again.
- You are expected to enable your video and remain on camera while class is in session, unless directed otherwise by the professor.
- Dress as if you are coming into a regular class.
- Make sure to illuminate your face with natural or artificial light so the instructor and others can see you clearly.
- Make sure there is nothing distracting or inappropriate in the background of your video feed.
- Try to avoid having other people enter and exit your frame to avoid distracting your classmates and instructor.

- If seeing yourself on camera distracts you, right-click on your own video feed in virtual classroom and choose HIDE SELF VIEW. This setting allows your instructor and classmates to see you, but you will not see yourself.
- Be careful when sharing your screen. You do not want your personal email, documents, or images to be displayed accidentally.
- Be aware everyone can see your messages in chat unless you have chosen to send the instructor a direct message. Private messages to other students are disabled to avoid distractions during class.
- Do not attend virtual class while operating a vehicle or doing anything else in which attending the virtual class at the same time may negatively impact your safety or the safety of others.
- Do not attend class in an unauthorized public space where others will see/hear the class. Your privacy and the privacy of your classmates is federally protected.
- If you know that you are unable to attend a class meeting, contact the instructor in advance to receive a recording of the class that you can watch later.
- Do not share the web URL for our virtual classroom class with anyone outside of class. If class is “virtual classroom bombed” because you shared the link, administration will be notified and will enact sanctions up to and including removal from the course and possible expulsion from the university.
- If the class is “bombed,” the instructor will first attempt to mute and boot the unwanted person from the meeting. If this is not possible or fails to stop the disruption, the instructor will end the meeting, create a new meeting link, and email it to you in short order.