

THE BUSINESS OF ACTING

THEA 4700

Capstone Course

B.A. in Theatre with a Concentration in Acting

University of North Texas

Fall 2024

THEA 4700.001

Mondays and Wednesdays 9:00a – 10:50a

Auditorium Building 218

3 Units

Professor Bob Hess

Office: RTFP 222

Office Hours Mondays - Thursdays 11:00a - 12:00p (by appointment, please)

Email: *actingrealism@aol.com*

PREREQUISITES:

- THEA 3050 ACTING: REALISM I with a grade of B or higher
- THEA 3700 AUDITION FOR THE STAGE with a grade of B or higher
- Student must have completed 90 hours of college-level courses and be within the final two semesters of completion of a ***B.A. in Theatre with a Concentration in Acting***. Other Theatre Majors and Minors may request enrollment in the course, but only with special approval from the professor.

HOURS: 3;2

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is the capstone experience for graduating Theatre Majors with a Concentration in Acting. In this course, the student will focus on strategies for a career in professional acting. Students will explore their personal professional goals, individual life choices, and artistic process. Essential to this is that each student analyze and synthesize their knowledge and skills in preparation for helping to ensure that the future they envision in their chosen profession becomes a reality. Class structure will include lecture, experiential learning, research, analysis, discussion, presentations, and guest artist appearances.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through practice, research, and application, students will:

- Cultivate and expand their professional awareness and aesthetic understanding of how to transition from college to the profession in order to be competitive as a professional actor.
- Leverage their personal/professional accomplishments to prepare relevant professional materials to support their career choices by developing an effective resume, professional marketing materials, a website, interaction skills with clients, and other current, relevant business strategies.
- Through interactions with practicing artists and educators, as well as through active investigation of professional resources, explore networking and develop connections essential for career opportunities.
- Learn about and investigate the actor unions, the process of securing agency representation, and the relationships with myriad other professionals they will encounter as actors, such as directors, casting agents, and managers--and how all of these contribute to the actor's professional life.

TEXT

In lieu of a textbook, students will utilize materials supplied by the professor from a variety of sources, along with others they must provide themselves.

MATERIALS

- Laptop computer
- Equipment for the recording and submission of video and audio auditions (including software for editing). Details of the specifics of this will be covered in class.
- Spiral notebook

Students will also be creating a personal website for this course, which will require the selection of a domain name and possibly an internet server.

CLASS PROCEDURES

PROTOCOL

There will be many occasions during the class when there will be presentations by Guest Artists, as well as your classmates. It is critical that you give your undivided attention during these. You are to turn OFF your phones, iPads, and laptops before class begins (unless you have been given permission to take notes on them or asked to use them for a particular assignment). **Remove headphones.** If you turn devices on at break, you must turn them off again before we resume. It is very distracting and disrespectful if a student's cell phone rings or vibrates during class; or if a student sends, receives a notification of (or reads) texts and messages; or if a student studies for other class work. Let's set a tone for the level of respect and focus in the class.

If you prefer to TAKE NOTES on an iPad, laptop, or cell phone, this is acceptable. You must inform me in advance and understand that you may forfeit that privilege if I observe you sneaking alternate uses of the device in between the note taking.

COMMUNICATION

Information regarding the course will be distributed in class and through the class email address at actingrealism@aol.com. You will also be submitting assignments to this email address.

It is YOUR responsibility to be informed and keep up with the numerous assignments and deadlines you will face this semester. 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. A student in the class will be asked to take on the role of Communication Liaison for the class and will serve as a line of direct, immediate communication between the professor and the students.

ATMOSPHERE OF SUPPORT & RESPECT

Our class requires a safe, non-threatening, nonjudgmental environment of sensitivity, honesty, support, and openness. Each student is at a different place in their journey and career as an artist. Consequently, the instructor will always phrase observations in an appropriate light for where YOU are in your growth as an artist. Likewise, every student is expected to show exactly the same respect in their own observations. Only in building this atmosphere of complete artistic empathy, safety, and trust can we grow. We must act as a supportive company of aspiring professionals to maximize our success and growth.

GRADING

Your grade for the semester will be determined by the number of points (out of 100) achieved from the various course assignments as follows:

READINGS ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to complete 8 reading assignments connected with the course. You will be given prompts that you are to complete regarding the reading and submit these via email by a designated deadline. These are worth TWO points each, for a total of **16 POINTS**.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH AND ASSIGNMENTS

You will be tasked with nine smaller independent assignments that range from the assembly of your career support team to research of effective headshots to an analysis of your own spending habits. You will be required to submit these via email by a designated deadline, and, in some cases present your work in class. These are worth FOUR points each for a total of **36 POINTS**. If you present the assignment in class without submitting it beforehand on Canvas, the assignment will be worth half credit.

MAJOR PROJECTS

You will complete six major projects (including presentations), each valued at 8 points for a total of 48 points. These include the creation of your resume, a template of your website, taped auditions for Film/TV & Theatre, a Wildness Project, and a preview of your SOUTA audition materials. Some of these will involve a submission via email in advance of your presentation. These will comprise a total of **48 POINTS**.

DEADLINES

PLEASE NOTE THAT ASSIGNMENTS WILL HAVE VERY SPECIFIC DEADLINES THAT WILL NOT BE EXTENDED. AS YOU WILL OBSERVE IN THE BUSINESS THAT YOU ARE PURSUING, MISSING A DEADLINE IS THE EQUIVALENT OF LETTING AN OPPORTUNITY GO. UNDERSTANDING THE REALITY OF THAT IS A COURSE OBJECTIVE. IT IS WISE FOR YOU TO GET USED TO THIS SO THAT YOU CAN BEGIN TO MANAGE TIME WISELY AND TAKE DEADLINES SERIOUSLY. BE VERY MINDFUL OF ANY "OPPORTUNITIES YOU MAY HAVE LET GO," AS THEY DIRECTLY AFFECT YOUR COURSE GRADE. THE INTERNET GIVES A VERY DEFINITE TIME STAMP ON WHEN YOU SUBMITTED AN ASSIGNMENT.

IF YOU MISS A DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF AN EXERCISE BUT STILL WISH TO DO THE PRESENTATION OF THAT EXERCISE IN THE SUCCEEDING CLASS (WHICH IS RECOMMENDED, AS OPPOSED TO FORFEITING ALL OF THE POINTS), THE WORK WILL BE VAUED AT HALF CREDIT. FOR EXAMPLE, AN ASSIGNMENT WITH AN 8-POINT VALUE WOULD NOW CARRY A VALUE OF 4 POINTS.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO MISS A DEADLINE FOR AN ASSIGNMENT AND ALSO FOREGO THE REQUIRED PRESENTATION ATTACHED TO THAT ASSIGNMENT, YOU WILL FORFEIT THE ENTIRE POINT VALUE OF THAT ASSIGNMENT.

GRADING FORMULA

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

- Readings w/reactions (16 points: 8 readings @ 2 points each)
- USP and USP Research (**w/presentation**) (4 points)
- Effective Materials from Agency Websites (4 points)
- Resume (**w/presentation**) (8 points)
- Cover Letter (**w/presentation**) (4 points)
- Website Template (**w/presentation**) (8 points)
- Your Support Team/Alumni Interview (4 points)
- Monthly Finance Assignment (4 points)
- Market Research (4 points)
- Taped Film/TV Audition (**w/presentation**) (8 points)
- Taped Theatre Audition (**w/presentation**) (8 points)
- Taped Voice Audition (**w/presentation**) (4 points)
- Wildness Project (**w/presentation**) (8 points)
- Branding & Marketing (**w/presentation**) (4 points)
- FINAL EXAM:
 - SOUTA Audition Preview (8 points)
 - WRITTEN: Semester Self-Evaluation (4 points)

TOTAL

100 POINTS

Corresponding Letter Grades:

A (90 – 100 points)

B (80 – 89 points)

C (70 – 79 points)

D (65 – 69 points)

F (below 65 points)

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 Concentration courses that meet twice per week 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 of **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 Concentration 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.

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 ABOUT PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE...

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). Please DO NOT ask for further leeway on this, because there is none. The leeway for these unexpected occurrences is already BUILT IN to the attendance policy. Do not ask me if there is any extra credit you can do to make up for excessive absence.

Changing the policy for you means that it must, in the interest of fairness and consistency, be changed for students in

The Business of Acting THEA 4700 FALL 2024

all acting classes. There is NO NEED to bring me a doctor's note when you are sick. If you tell me you were ill, I absolutely believe you, and this would count as one of the EXCUSED absences you are allowed during the semester. The attendance policy already allows for the fact that you might get sick and miss a class or two as a result and excuses those absences up to THREE times. However, there have to be limits. 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 you have to be there ON TIME, if you wish to get or keep the job. Putting it frankly, the industry will NOT accommodate your life.

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.

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 the semester 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 Department of Dance and Theatre for approval. The earliest date for the student to request an INCOMPLETE is November 11, 2023.

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 a student to elect to drop the class with a grade of “W” is November 8, 2024.

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.

LAST DAY OF CLASS/FINAL EXAM DATES

The last regular class meeting is Wednesday, December 4. The Final Exam will take place on Monday, December 9 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

The Business of Acting THEA 4700 FALL 2024

something over which I have control.

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 12 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.** As I need to make a reservation for this event, please make every effort not to cancel at the last minute.

CLASS MEETINGS OVER ZOOM

As we will have several guest artists who will be speaking to us from other cities, those meetings will take place over Zoom. You will be given plenty of notice that the class will be conducted remotely that day.

These classes are mandatory and held to the same standard as your in-person classes, with the attendance policy in full effect.

For consistency and respect of your classmates and our guests, here are the guidelines we will have in place for any class meetings conducted over Zoom:

- 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. This will still be considered an ABSENCE, though.
- 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.

STUDENT OBLIGATION TO ACADEMIC/PRODUCTION WORK

Dance & Theater 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.

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.