

ACTING: REALISM

Fall 2017

THEA 3050.001/301 3 Units

Class Meets: T-TH 9:30a – 11:50a

Classroom: RTFP 127

Professor: Sally Vahle Office: 221 Cell Phone: 214-597-2140

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2pm to 3pm or by appointment

**Email Address: For All Class Correspondence:
untactingrealism@gmail.com**

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Bartlett, Mike. *An Intervention*. London: Paines Plough, 2014.
ISBN# 978-1-84842-383-1

Bartow, Arthur, ed. *Training of the American Actor*.
New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006. ISBN# 1-55936-268-5.
This textbook is on reserve through the UNT library as an ebook and is accessible to any student enrolled in this course.

PREREQUISITES

The department requires successful completion of Acting Fundamentals, Voice I, and Movement I (or an equivalent which has been approved by the University) before students may enroll in this course.

IMPORTANT

In order to major in theater, you must maintain a MINIMUM CUMULATIVE GPA of 2.5. Additionally, students must maintain a MINIMUM CUMULATIVE GPA of 2.0 in order to be eligible to graduate from UNT.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The standards for this course are pre-professional and the course content is designed to develop the skills you need to teach, to enter a MFA Acting program or to act professionally.

The major focus of Acting Realism is transforming oneself into a character or “the other” utilizing contemporary text through exercises, monologue work and contemporary scene study. The actor will learn how to transform intuitive creativity into performative excellence.

Basic Expectations:

- You are expected to “bring together” the foundational principles and skills you learned in the Acting Fundamentals, Voice and Movement courses to more fully use yourself as an actor to build character through relationship, language and behavior.
- There will be special emphasis on evolving critical thinking and imagination applied specifically to text work, allowing for a more fully developed experience in the imaginary world of the play. The expectation is that this will lead to more advanced characterization and script analysis work advancing your ability to sculpt a character from textual clues.
- You will heighten your observation skills. This will evolve your ability to empathize and invest in the “magic if”.**
- You will be expected to take risks in your work as an actor and deepen your emotional vulnerability, accessibility and, ultimately, availability.
- You will be expected to create a working “process” for yourself, as an actor.

** Konstantin Stanislavski. Stanislavski's "**Magic If**" describes an ability to imagine oneself in a set of fictional circumstances and to envision **the** consequences of finding oneself facing that situation in terms of action.

Acting Realism Essential Skills Outcomes:

Students will develop skills in effective script and character analysis. *Students will show skill development in acting through text analysis and research encompassing the physical, social, and psychological dimensions of the characters.*

Students will learn how to consider and fine-tune their vocal and physical skills. This will contribute to their ability to perform sculpted, honest characters within contemporary dramatic literature.

Students will reflect upon, analyze and evaluate the work of self and others by evaluating the actor's choices about a character's objectives and motivations based on what is seen, heard, and known to explain character's behavior.

Students will achieve a more advanced and evolved understanding of how to:

- attain emotional availability.
- focus and listen to your partner(s) on stage.
- engage in honest, spontaneous communication.
- be present in the world of the play.
- to cultivate an enriched relationship with text.
- engage technical proficiency and clarity

CLASS GOALS

It is the intent of the class to empower the actor with a sampling of techniques for creating truth in his or her acting technique, thus allowing the actor to choose from different options what methods are most effective for him or her, and possibly explore others. Using and understanding this information, the actor can leave the class with tools for engaging in a process for creating realism for the stage. You will have a greater sense of what constitutes an actor's homework, rehearsal technique, playing actions, characterization skills, emotional memory and the ability to use your life observations and personal life experiences in the creation of characters. The class also seeks to empower the actor with the ability to look at a script from the perspective of an actor.

POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE MATERIAL

Please be advised that this class contains the development of text and actions that may be considered offensive to some. You may encounter literary and directorial points of view 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. In theatre, 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.

COMMUNICATION

All information regarding class will be distributed in class, via email: **untactingrealism@gmail.com** (which is to be checked regularly), or by text message. It is your responsibility to be informed. I am always available to you through emails or scheduled appointments to discuss any specific issues or questions you may have about the class. You are welcome to contact me via my cell at 214-597-2140. Calling/texting me is always the best way for you to reach me with important information (vs. emailing me).

DRESS and PERSONAL PRESENTATION

Due to the physical and vocal demands of the course, students are expected to wear clothing and shoes that allow a great freedom of movement. Please remove all piercings and studs for class exercises. **No flip flops in class.** Please employ appropriate personal hygiene in consideration of others.

OUTSIDE WORK EXPECTATIONS:

Students are expected to spend a minimum of 10 hours per week outside of class working on their assignments in THEA 3050. This may include but is not limited to: written work, reading, analysis, viewing assignments, observation work and performance projects.

GRADING

Unit 1: Exploration and Investigation:.....10%=100 points
Monologue Assignment.....10%=100 points

Unit 2: Scene Study 1
Character Analysis.....5%=50 points
Preparation.....5%= 50 points
Final Pass.....10%=100 points

Unit 3: Scene Study 2
Character Analysis.....5%=50 points
Preparation.....5%=50 points
Final Pass.....10%=100 points

Written Reading Responses/discussions:
(8x25pts).....20%=200 points
Self-Assessments: (5x20pts).....10%=100 points
Partner Assessments: (2x 50pts).....10%=100 points

Total: 1000 points

Grading Scale:

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

COSTUMES AND PROPS

The class will require that you, from time to time, bring certain materials with you that are necessary for a scene or exercise, such as particular props or costume pieces.

Rubric: Scene Work

1. VOCAL SKILL (20 points)

The actors should be using his vocal instrument properly with well-supported sound free of tension. This also notes the degree to which the actor is able to be heard and understood, as well as the vocal quality of the actor and its consistency with the character they are playing.

2. PHYSICAL SKILL (20 points)

The actor's physical presence and movement in the scene should be truthful and completely in synch with the character they are playing, while also relaxed and free of the actor's own personal tensions and habits. The actor's physicality should reflect the character and support the intentions of the scene.

3. ACTIONS, OBJECTIVE, UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXT (20 points)

The actor must be connected to and clear in objective throughout, not only from moment to moment, but in terms of the overriding objective of the entire scene. The actor's performance of the role should reflect that they grasp the content of what their character is saying—what the words actually mean (and how they are PRONOUNCED) as spoken by the character.

4. BELIEVABILITY/EMOTIONAL TRUTH (20 points)

The actor must be connected to the emotional reality of the character on a truthful level. This is the primary goal of the entire course, and one of the most difficult—the truthful engagement of the emotional life of a character. If another character (or even the audience) is being addressed in the scene (which is even true in the performance of a monologue), the actor must make a strong connection through genuine, truthful listening and responding.

5. GROWTH/APPLICATION OF CONCEPTS (20 points)

This evaluates if the student is indeed using the concepts learned in the curriculum and applying them to his or her work. This includes how well the student has taken the direction given by the professor in rehearsals and applied it to the final performance.

Rehearsal Etiquette

Scene work and exercises will, at times, involve partner work and it is expected that students will coordinate their schedules in such a way that collaborative/group work/rehearsal outside of class is able to occur. YOU will be expected to organize your own rehearsals outside of class and find your own rehearsal space. You reserve space in the office. Make sure that times and places are clearly decided upon. Once a plan is made, you must be there, as other actors are affected by your presence.

If any actor encounters problematic absence or lateness with a partner, please contact the instructor immediately. I absolutely understand that a lack of preparation may be the fault of one actor and not the other, so MAKE ME AWARE IMMEDIATELY if there is a problem in this area. If you wait until the actual day of your performance, ALL actors in the scene will be given the deduction. Take responsibility for your own performance by making the professor aware of any difficulties you are experiencing. Rehearsal set pieces, costumes, and props, as needed, are YOUR responsibility.

Attendance Policy:

*Regular attendance in this class and every class you attend associated with your theater major is **expected**.*

Why does attending class matter?

When you enter the workforce, your success in your work- life will be wholly dependent on your ability to hold yourself accountable to “call times”, and other time sensitive deadlines----including “start of day”, a myriad of possible deadlines associated with production timelines, school day deadlines (if you are teaching) audition times, call back times, and more.

You will cultivate your work ethic in preparation for the industry while you are at UNT enrolled as a Theater Major.

In Acting Realism, starting with the 3rd absence (for whatever reason), your final point total will be reduced by 1 full letter grade.

On the 4th absence, you will receive a failing grade. This is not negotiable.

- Suggested Dance and Theatre attendance policy expects that the number of allowable absences should not exceed 10% of the total class meetings for the semester. For example, if a class meets twice a week for 15 weeks, then the number of allowable absences before the student receives a failing grade (or is withdrawn) is “3.”
- 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.

Three late arrivals or "tardies" will count as one absence. I will consider you “late” if you arrive after I have completed the task of taking attendance. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class session.

Leaving class early without prior notice will result in an "absence."

Poor attendance and excessive tardiness will seriously affect your grade and ability to succeed in this class.

Extraordinary circumstances sometimes (unfortunately) occur that will result in a student missing class. What constitutes extraordinary circumstance? A death in the family, an unexpected emergency such as an auto accident, a flat tire, a traffic accident that creates a traffic issue that is completely out of your control, a bus that doesn't show up, an extended illness. If any of these issues occur, please consult with me privately and we will make adjustments, within reason, as necessary. If illness causes you to miss more than one class, you must provide me with a doctor's note.

Communicate with me.

JURY INFORMATION

ACTING REALISM JURY PROCESS

At the end of the semester students for whom the jury process applies will present their final scene to theater performance faculty. In this juried presentation, the faculty will observe and assess the work of each student in the acting scenes. The assessment of the student's work will be based on the PERFORMANCE SKILL criteria used in THEA 3050. The jury will collectively give each student's jury performance a PASS or NOT PASS evaluation.

In order to enroll in the upper level ACTING classes in the department (Shakespeare, Acting Styles, Acting for the Camera, and Musical Theater), a student must receive a PASS from the jury. If a student receives a NOT PASS from the jury, it means the performance professors feel the student needs to repeat the Realism class for reinforcement of skills before enrolling in more advanced acting classes offered by UNT Theater. A student may repeat Realism class ONE TIME only. If a student takes the class twice and does not pass the jury the second time, the department will meet with the student to discuss his best course of study from that point.

In addition to a PASS from the jury, a passing grade of C in the course is also necessary for admission to both upper level ACTING classes.

Jury results will be made available to the student within one week of the Jury presentation. If desired, a student may request a meeting with a designated representative of the performance faculty to discuss their jury results.

There are 3 reasons a student enrolled in THEA 3050 will not participate in the Jury process:

- 1. A student enrolled in THEA 3050 is governed by a catalog year prior to the institution of the jury process.**
- 2. A student is graduating and, as a result will not be taking any upper division acting classes.**
- 3. A student does not intend to enroll in any acting classes beyond THEA**

3050. A student who makes this choice will be required to sign a statement of understanding that they are forfeiting their eligibility to enroll in any upper division acting class that requires the successful completion of the jury process.

PLEASE NOTE

The jury evaluation only affects entry into upper level ACTING classes. It has NO BEARING on a student's ability to take upper level DIRECTING classes. A passing grade of C in the class alone allows entry into the upper level DIRECTING courses.

Circumstances MAY possibly lead to a situation where an uneven number of students are participating in the jury process. In this case, one student who does not need to do the jury will need to participate in assistance to another class member who IS participating. The professor will select that student, and appropriate extra credit of ONE FULL POINT in the WORK ETHIC point total will be given for the student who offers this help to their colleague, should this occur.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

All students enrolled in a theater class receive one complimentary ticket to every dance and theater production. Visit the UNT Theater Ticket Office to pick up your ticket. Visit [www. http://danceandtheatre.unt.edu](http://danceandtheatre.unt.edu) for show info and schedules.

COURSE INCOMPLETE

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. 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.

WITHDRAWING FROM THEA 3050

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 November 7. A student who is dropped from the course *by the professor* will receive a grade of "WF."

Departmental Policy

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.

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.

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.