

# **Voice for Theatre**

## **THEA 2051**

### **Course Syllabus Fall 2019**

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

**Class Meets: T/TH: 8:00am-10:20am**  
**Location: DATH 111**

**Office Hours:**

- **M/W: 11-Noon/ T/TH. 10:30a-11:30a**
- **By Appointment**

**Required Course Text: NONE**

#### **Course Description:**

This course is an introductory class in the mechanics of the voice and the effective use of the vocal instrument for the actor. THEA 2050 is designed to provide the student actor with a basic foundation of technique for vocal preparation and performance. Students will explore their vocal instrument and vocal quality, range, resonance, energy and vocal freedom. Special attention will be paid to freeing the voice of tension and non-constructive habit and the unrestricted and constructive use of breath. The many aspects of vocal expression will be explored and developed through relaxation exercises, a solid foundation of breath-work and increased general physical awareness. Additionally, students will apply the foundational work they learn in this course as they explore a wide range of written texts.

#### **Course Objectives:**

- Student's will develop practical knowledge of the role that relaxation, breath, articulation, resonance, and vocal production play in the development of character, focus, intensity, mood, and style for performance.
- Students will also be introduced to the physiology of vocal production and we will spend time examining individual restrictive vocal habits and patterns, as well as speech habits. As the semester progresses, we will investigate the connection between breath, sound and acting impulses with relation to dramatic text and poetry. We will delve into improving cold reading skills by reading aloud all types of writing.
- Through the exercises done in and out of class students shall experience the discipline required in keeping the voice strong and pliable as required for performance.
- Students shall be able to identify and correct specific breath and vocal habits which may be impeding their own growth as a performer and acknowledge the steps that might be taken to improve them.
- Through the use of scene work, monologues and investigation of other forms of text the students shall become aware of the importance of relaxation, breath, resonance and articulation have in creating better vocal projection, diction,

deeper vocal and emotional strength, and greater personal meaning to their performance.

### **Attendance and Participation Policy:**

#### **Attendance is mandatory.**

The great majority of work for this class happens during class time. Each student is expected to be here for every class---just as you are expected to show up at a job when scheduled to work or attend every rehearsal and performance when cast in a play. The work you do in each class creates the foundation for every class that follows. Exercises, presentations, discussion, etc.. cannot be made up due to the simple fact that the class schedule is so packed full of in-class exercises, learning and presentations. The one exception to this is if an absence is due to a documented medical issue. Furthermore, I hope you will come to see that acting is a social art, requiring you to participate on a collaborative level. In order to learn the skills of collaboration, must be present to participate---to collaborate.

1. Each class day = 5 points. If you miss a class you lose 5 points.
2. The work that happens each time the class meets=5 points. ***If you attend class and are unprepared, do not fully engage and participate you risk losing some or all of your daily points.***
3. ***EACH TIME YOU MISS CLASS YOU LOSE 10 POINTS.***
4. ***Any student who misses 3 classes during UNIT 1 (the first 4 weeks of the semester) will be administratively dropped from the class.***
5. Tardiness, leaving class early without prior arrangement, sleeping during class and reading outside material will count as an absence.
6. If you are involved in any special school functions which may require you to miss a class please inform the professor ASAP.
7. Please notify me at the beginning of the semester if you will be absent due to a religious holiday.
8. In order for an absence to be “excused” a student must present written notification (a doctor’s note, etc..)

### **Consider this:**

An actor’s professional work ethic begins in the classroom. If you have trouble being accountable to yourself and showing up for *any* class, perhaps you should consider a different profession....the “independent contractor lifestyle” is probably not your thing.

## **Course Structure and Assessment Measures:**

### **Unit 1:**

**The Voice: Breath Support & Production**

**Total: 80 points**

**Attendance: 40pts**

**Exercises/Participation/Presentations: 40pts**

### **Unit 2:**

**Placement/Mechanics of Speech**

**Total: 80 points**

**Attendance: 40pts**

**Exercises/Participation/Presentations: 40pts**

### **Unit 3:**

**Integrating Voice/Communicating Text**

**Total 120 Points**

**Attendance: 60pts**

**Exercises/Participation/Presentations: 60pts**

### **Final Project:**

**Total: 20 points**

### **Written Work:**

**150 points (30@ 5 points each)**

**Observation Journal (21 entries)**

**Play Observation Papers (2)**

**Other written work (7)**

**Total: 450 points**

### **Grading Scale:**

**A= 450 – 401 points**

**B= 400-361 points**

**C= 360-324 points**

**NOTE: In order to remain a theatre major and graduate with a degree in theatre, each student must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5. Students should strive for excellence in all of their academic and artistic work.**

### **Grading Policy:**

#### **IMPORTANT!**

- **If you are scheduled to work on a given day and you are not prepared to work effectively and make good use of your in class coaching time, you will be asked to step down and we will move on to the next performer. Class time is everyone's time—coming to class unprepared, unable or unwilling to work is unfair to everyone.**
- **If you miss a class when a performance assignment is due you will receive ZERO POINTS on the assignment. The project cannot be “made up”. Only excused medical or emergency absences will be tolerated and evidence of such must be submitted in writing from the proper authorities.**

**I will observe your work in each unit of study and will assess it based on the following standards, as applicable:**

- Commitment to professional standards. (preparation, memorization, work ethic).
- Participation in class and in all exercises.
- Willingness to explore and take risks.
- Overall quality of speech adjustments and exercises.
- Overall quality and understanding of entire vocal warm-up.
- Overall improvement in cold reading, vocal expression, and vocal support and placement.
- Overall ability and willingness to integrate each unit of study as the semester progresses.
- Finally, overall ability to apply the work done over the course of the semester to dramatic text.

The grading in this class is, unavoidably, somewhat subjective. Your grades for each individual unit of study as well as specific assignments within each unit will be based on both how much concentrated effort you have devoted to the process of your learning and your work and what you have ultimately achieved.

### **GENERAL PARAMETERS FOR LETTER GRADES:**

**Please note that the “descriptions” listed below are extremely general and designed only to be a basic guide to help students understand the expectations of the instructor when assessing work in class. Hopefully this little bit of context will help you set personal goals to work toward over the course of the semester.**

#### **‘A’ grade:**

Attendance is excellent. Work is committed, focused and sustained, with obvious growth. All assignments and deadlines satisfactorily completed on time. Student shows clear excellence in mastering the objectives of the assignment, both individually and in partner work. Instructor’s critiques generally focus on strong aspects of the work. The work shows careful preparation and commitment.

#### **‘B’ grade:**

Attendance is excellent. The basic fulfillment of all requirements is met with some growth. Student shows strong competence in fulfilling objectives of the assignment. Instructor’s critiques generally focus primarily on strong areas of work, with several specific areas of improvement suggested for subsequent work. The work is strong, has been well prepared and shows good potential for improvement.

### **'C' grade:**

Student satisfies the requirements of the assignment. Critiques generally focus on weaker areas of work, with stronger aspects identified and reinforced. Any student at this level of training considers the objectives in this work obtainable. Student generally has consistent difficulties with memorization; sense of staging and ability to meet self generated deadlines (rehearsals with scene partners, etc...). Instructor's critique acknowledges that student's work generally needs further preparation and attention.

### **'D' grade:**

Student produces minimum requirements for project, which generally includes presentation of work. Critiques focus on lack of preparation, lack of understanding of assignment and unwillingness to give maximum effort. This work may have significant memorization problems, poor attitude displayed in class resulting in a below average performance. This work needs much more preparation and commitment.

**You will receive a grade or "points" for each in class scene presentation and the final performance. Here is a breakdown of what is expected—as applicable to each particular project—of my definition/expectation of each in class "pass" or presentation. Engaging in these "steps" as an actor, helps you cultivate work ethic and a working process.**

### **"FIRST PASS" REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Script analysis ready for oral defense. Receive suggestions for future research.
2. Verbally demonstrate your play/scene analysis in class.
3. Give an informed and impassioned reading. You are expected to show:
  - a. beginning character analysis,
  - b. beginning physical and vocal characterization,
  - c. knowledge of all words and meaning of phrases,
  - d. use of the language,
  - e. ability to mean what you say,
  - f. awareness of builds, topping and cutbacks and
  - g. emotional commitment to the actions and objectives.

### **"SECOND PASS" REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized script.
2. Demonstration of 70% performance commitment to the character, "given circumstances" and style of the play.

### **C. "FINAL PASS" REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Demonstration of a fully memorized script.
2. Demonstration of performance level physical and vocal characterization.
3. Demonstration of performance level emotional commitment to the situation
4. Demonstration of performance level playing of actions and bold choices.

### **Mid-Semester Meetings:**

At the mid-point of the semester I will meet with each student individually to discuss class progress and other pertinent information. Each student will receive a mid-semester verbal assessment/observation of their work, as well as a mid-term point total.

### **COMMUNICATION:**

I have created an email address exclusively for this class---please direct all class related correspondence to this address: [voiceunt@gmail.com](mailto:voiceunt@gmail.com).

If you need to reach me concerning something urgent please call my cell phone at 214-597-2140 to speak with me, send a text or leave me message.

### **PLEASE!**

Get in the habit of checking your email everyday either the night before or morning of class for last minute communication from me.

*Because I continue to work as a professional actress 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. Always check your email the night before class. While I am teaching I turn down more work that 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 with.*

**IMPORTANT:** I cannot stress how important communication is. If you are experiencing challenges, an emergency---anything that is keeping you from fulfilling your commitment to this class or any of your classes at UNT, please consider having a conversation with me. I do understand that things come up that are unavoidable and unexpected—that's life. There are many avenues of support at UNT. I am aware of them and can point you in a direction for support and guidance. I am always willing to work with students to help them achieve success whenever possible.

### **A few things I'd like you to consider:**

- Be supportive of your classmates. Remember you are part of an ensemble. The energy and perspective you bring to each class will impact "the whole". Each day we meet, consider how you are contributing to the class.
- Reject jadedness and cynicism.
- Beginners are on a quest. There are no stupid questions. Ask anything.
- Do not expect perfection---embrace the concept of process.
- If you are feeling fear or an unusual physical/emotional sensation allow I to resonate and breathe. This work will challenge you in these ways and ask you to go places you maybe never have.

- Consider this class the perfect environment to take chances and risks....dive in! If you don't get to the place you shoot for, go for it again.
- Be inquisitive.
- Choose to listen, respond and have a good time.

### **General Class Information:**

#### **Wear comfortable clothing that allows you to:**

- Fully stretch and move your whole body.
- Comfortably lay on the floor.
- Breathe without restriction.
- To walk naturally. (I.e. no flip-flops, high heels, cowboy boots, bulky heels, etc...).
- It's unavoidable---at times the floor in the Studio Theater gets dusty and dirty. Don't wear clothes that you're concerned about keeping especially clean. This may mean you bring your clothes "for the day" with you and wear warm-ups to class.
- I encourage you to bring a sweatshirt or sweater with you----the temperature in the theater fluctuates.

#### **Other:**

- Please bring water with you to class.
- Please turn off cell phones when you get to class.
- All students are expected to come to class prepared and to be focused on the day's work---even on days you are not scheduled to perform/work!
- Please use common sense when it comes to hair, jewelry and piercings. Make sure your hair is out of your way. When it comes to jewelry, less is more in this class and if you have a piercing that could get ripped out or hurt a partner, take it out. If your tongue is pierced, please remove the tongue jewelry while in this class....it does affect your speech and will be in your way in this class.

### **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.

#### **Withdrawal:**

Should you choose to drop this course, you must initiate the drop and acquire all of the proper signatures and paperwork. If that process is not completed, you will be subject to a WF or an F at the close of the semester

## **Behavioral Expectations**

Activities such as reading books or articles for other classes, studying for other classes, or any other activity which is not pertinent to this course are considered inappropriate, and will be viewed as non-participation. Please refrain from texting /cell phone use. Laptop computers are only appropriate for note taking or relevant research pertinent to the current class.

These diversions will result in a lowered grade or dismissal from the class.

Student participation is expected to contribute to a positive learning environment, and respect for others is essential. Through positive and focused participation, each student demonstrates a commitment to the art form, the profession, their peers and themselves.

## **Responsibilities for Time Management**

Dance and 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 Dance and Theatre students. One of the principal responsibilities of each student is to carefully identify and monitor the commitments that comprise his/her departmental assignments and outside obligations. It is important to keep in mind that production work and outside obligations do not constitute an excused absence from Dance or Theatre classes or from the completion of any required class assignments.

## **Student Behavior in the Classroom:**

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

## **Americans with Disabilities Act Notice**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking 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 an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of 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 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 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. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323. <https://disability.unt.edu/>

## **SPOT**

The Student Perceptions of Teaching is the student evaluation system for UNT and is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SPOT to be an important part of your participation in this class. The SPOT evaluation will happen at the end of the semester.

## **Departmental Theatrical Productions Fall 2019:**

**SEE ATTACHED**

## **Theatre Voice I: Recommended Texts/Bibliography**

Berry, Cicely.	<u>The Actor and the Text</u> , Applause, 1992
Berry, Cicely.	<u>Voice and the Actor</u> , MacMillan, 1973
Boal, Augusto.	<u>Games for Actors and Non-Actors</u> , Routledge, 1992
Chekhov, Michael.	<u>On the Technique of Acting</u> , Harper Perennial, 1991.
Grotowski, Jerzy.	<u>Towards a Poor Theatre</u> . Simon and Shuster, 1968
Lessac, Arthur.	<u>The Use and Training of the Human Voice</u> . Mayfield, 1997

Rodenburg, Patsy.	<u>The Actor Speaks</u> , St. Martin's, 2000
	<u>The Right to Speak</u> , Routledge, 1992
	<u>The Need for Words</u> , Routledge, 1993
Stanislavski, C.	<u>An Actor Prepares</u> , Routledge, 1989
Wangh, Stephen.	<u>An Acrobat of the Heart</u> , Vintage, 2000
Wells, Lynn K.	<u>The Articulate Voice</u> , Allyn and Bacon, 1999
Zinder, David	<u>Body Voice Imagination</u> , Routledge, 2002

## **Online Resources:**

**IDEA: International Dialects of English Archive:** A repository of primary source recordings of regional and foreign accents/dialects. VERY VALUABLE SOURCE.

<http://web.ku.edu/~idea/>

**The Voice and Speech Source:** Excellent site for actors' questions and further investigation about how the voice functions, speech and phonetics.

<http://www.yorku.ca/earmstro/index.html>

**The Dictionary of American Regional English:** Audio samples of American Regional Accents.

<http://dare.wisc.edu/>

**Evan Easton's Authentic American Pronunciation:** <http://eleaston.com/pr/home.html>

Great site for audio interactive sounds of American speech work-out.