

## **Camera Acting**

**THEA 4310**

**Fall 2019**

**3 Credits**

Professor: Sally Vahle

Office: RTFP 221

Cell Phone: **214-597-2140**

Class meets: Monday's from 2p-5:50pm

Email: [cameraclassunt@gmail.com](mailto:cameraclassunt@gmail.com)

Office Hours: M/W 11:00a-Noon

T/TH 10:30a-11:30a

By Appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Camera Acting is designed to prepare the advanced actor for the demands of working in television and film and other media genres.

### **Course Objectives:**

Students will:

Understand both the practical (technical) and artistic issues that must be taken into consideration when acting for the camera—such as:

- Cultivating the skills of continuity and consistency.
- The ability to naturally “hit marks” and incorporate props.
- Projection and physical choices.
- Understand personalization of place and space.
- Basic on camera acting techniques.
- Understanding the role of the actor in marketing and self-promotion in the media industry.
- Develop an awareness of the special demands of media script analysis.
- Develop cold reading technique.
- Develop audition technique.
- Interact with the directors on projects.
- Students will learn the components of a set, basic industry terminology, protocol, and procedure that is specific to and necessary for finding work and continuing to work as an on camera talent
- Students will determine their on-camera strengths and learn to accentuate them.
- Students will be required to create a professional resume and explore the process seeking agency representation, as well as other forms of self-marketing and promotion.

The structure of this course is rigorous and is designed to help the student actor develop the skills needed to teach, enter the acting profession or a professional MFA Program. By the end of this course a student will have a solid sense of 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 usually provides the student with a more acute sense of one's acting range, creativity, and greater level of self-confidence.

### **Required Texts:**

- Students may be required to obtain film scripts. Most can be obtained from free online sources listed on the "Website Supplement".
- There will also be handouts from the professor and there will be some required film/video/tv viewing outside of class.

### **Additional Information:**

A primary goal in the Camera Acting class, is to prepare the advanced actor for the demands of working in a broad range of media performance. The assumption is that you have a solid understanding of acting technique and script analysis. This class will teach the student how to adapt acting technique to the size and 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. When not performing, you may be asked to assist with the technical operation of the camera and other equipment.

I consider this to be what I call a "lab driven class". This means that the majority of the work in this class is performance driven and will happen in the classroom. We will explore a wide range of media--which may include film, episodic television, soaps, a wide variety of commercial copy, as well as, industrial film and spokesperson and host copy.

Outside of the classroom, students will focus on the business side of acting, engage in market research, create a "professional road map", a professional resume(s), cover letters, research headshots, wardrobe, makeup and create an audition log.

Whenever possible, guest artists will visit class to provide students with different perspectives and unique opportunities for learning.

The teaching methodology will be individual and group interaction/coaching, peer review, discussion, skill training, verbal critiques and performance simulation.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attendance (refer to policy on following page)
2. Preparation and completion of all assignments.
3. Participation in exercises/scene/monologue work and open discussion of all work performed in class.
4. Reading, analysis, and comprehension of all assigned material.
5. Viewing of commercials, films and television shows.

## **PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Actors must be highly skilled, disciplined and self-motivated. Acquiring and refining these skills requires diligent and focused work. An actor's training is as serious as that of a medical student or classical musician. Preparation of assignments and dedicated attention in class and rehearsals is essential. It is expected you are striving to develop your personal professional work ethic NOW, while you are in this training program.

Professional behavior includes (but is not limited to) the following:

1. Attendance at all classes.
2. Being on time for all classes.
3. Mental and physical preparation for all classes.
4. Thorough, advanced preparation for classes.
5. Timely completion of assignments.
6. Wearing proper attire.
7. An openness, willingness and eagerness to commit to the exercises and assignments.
8. Respect for your colleagues, the classroom, rehearsal space and furnishings and props.
9. Please turn off cell phones at beginning of class.
10. Please do not talk or do other course work while someone is working or while I am teaching the class.
11. Please do not read during class.
12. Please do not sleep during class.
13. Do not enter or exit during any exercise and or text or engage in non-class related work during class time.

**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is mandatory. matters.

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

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

- Students will receive 10 points for each class they attend. If you miss class you will lose 10 points.
  - Students also have the opportunity to earn a total of 10 points for the work they do in each class.
  - If you miss class you will lose your 10 points for the days work.
  - For each class you do not attend---you will lose a total of 20 points.
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- Students must show written proof in order to receive an “excused absence” for family emergencies, serious illness, or official UNT business.
  - Two tardies or leaving class early equals one absence.
  - Due to the experiential nature of the course, more than three (3) absences (including excused absences) are considered sufficient reason for failure in this course and a student will be required to drop the course by the professor.
  - Please note that the teacher’s attendance record is the official record of absences and tardies. At any point you are welcome to check in to be sure that your attendance record is correct.

## **PARTICIPATION**

- It is expected that you give your undivided attention and support to your classmates during their work time. You will learn a great deal from watching others work. It's worth noting that, if you intend to enter the professional arena, you will spend LOTS of time watching other actors work. Now is the perfect time to learn how to make time spent observing others productive for you. Please do not enter or leave the room while others are working. Treat others the way you expect to be treated while you are working.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Ongoing information regarding class will be distributed via email. CHECK YOUR EMAIL EVERY DAY! I will use this address to communicate announcements and send support material to this class:

**cameraclassunt@gmail.com**

If you need to communicate with me please use the email address above exclusively—You are also always welcome to call me or text my cell: 214-597-2140.

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.

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. Please 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.

## **CLASS MATERIALS**

- Cell-phone with accessible voice mail and an email account, which is checked daily.
- Appropriate wardrobe for the projects you are working on.

## **TESTING**

Quizzes and examinations covering the information in readings and class may be given.

## **IN CLASS WORK PROCEDURES**

In large acting classes, as unfortunately we must conduct; we have precious little time together. To ensure the best possible use of that time, let's clarify what we need to accomplish when we work in-class. (We will discuss this more extensively on our first day of class).

As you know by now, it is extremely difficult to coach your acting when the copy has not been read and understood and/or when text is expected to be memorized and is not. Thus, it is essential that this homework be completed before coaching begins. Also unfortunately, because of the tight schedule of the class if you miss your work time in class no make-up date is guaranteed.

## **MEMORIZATION**

Each of you knows that memorization is the first major step to freeing the actor up to begin to make choices with copy---this is especially true of acting on camera. You will soon discover that there are plenty of things to think about in addition to your lines. Honing your ability to analyze copy quickly and get the sense of it will be a skill you will work on all semester. You will be required to memorize copy outside of class. Give yourself time to memorize it so that you are fully prepared to work.

### **NOTE:**

***If your performance is not prepared sufficiently for in-class coaching and work time we will move on to another individual instead. Your in-class work time scheduled for that particular day will be forfeited and will not be re-scheduled due to our limited class time.***

## **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 will almost certainly be made as the class progresses. Students will always receive as much notices as possible of changes and an updated calendar reflecting any adjustments.

## **GRADING POLICY**

The grading in this class is unavoidably somewhat subjective. Grades (point values) will be based on attendance, what you have achieved in your performances, your willingness to explore and take risks, written and observation assignments and how much concentrated effort and rehearsal you have put into the work--PREPARATION.

\*\*\*\*Please see the attached supplement: "Grade Parameters for Letter Grades".

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

- Work ethic and professionalism.
- Active participation in the daily class work and overall willingness to explore.
- Regular, faithful attendance.
- Thorough preparation for class. Work has been properly rehearsed, lines memorized, etc.
- Personal investment in professional standards of conduct.
- Successful completion of assignments.
- Research
- In-class exercises
- Overall improvement.

**When working with copy/text, you will be assessed on the following:**

1. Character choices/analysis (as applicable).
2. Your ability to utilize your personality on camera.
3. Beginning physical and vocal characterization (when applicable.)
4. Knowledge of all words and meaning of phrases in copy/text.
5. Use of and articulation of the language in copy/text.
6. Ability to mean what you are saying.
7. Awareness of builds, topping and cutbacks---overall analysis and ability to “bring out” the information in copy.
8. Emotional commitment to the actions and objectives in copy/text (when applicable).

**GRADING**

ATTENDANCE: 150 POINTS (15 CLASSES @ 10 POINTS EACH)

**\*\*CLASS WORK:** 150 POINTS (15 CLASSES @ 10 POINTS EACH)

- PREPARATION: If you are not prepared to work in class you may receive a deduction of up to 5 points.
- WRITTEN WORK/PRESENTATIONS: If you do not turn in your written work or are not prepared for a presentation you may receive a deduction of up to 5 points.
- EXERCISES & PERFORMANCE PRESENTATIONS: If you do not effectively participate in class exercises and performance presentations you may receive a deduction of up to 5 points.
- PARTICIPATION= (focus and attentiveness during class): If you do not display focus and professionalism in class you may receive a deduction of up to 5 points.

**Total Points Possible: 300**

**Points and Letter Grades:**

A= 300-270

B= 269-242

C= 241-217

D= 216 -195

***\*\*Any student who receives “class work point deduction(s)” will receive detailed written notification outlining the reason (or reasons) why points were deducted.***

## **Class Project Details:**

**Non-Acting Projects:** These may include script analysis assignments, journal entries, preparation of marketing materials, project research, outside readings and reading responses, performance observations, etc...

## **Commercial Copy:**

- You will “audition” for a commercial with various types of copy prepared outside of class.
- You will work with the concept of “MOS” in relation to commercial copy/concepts.
- You will do a “cold copy” commercial auditions.

## **Industrial Copy:**

- You will “audition” for an Industrial with copy prepared outside of class.
- You will do a “cold copy” Industrial audition.
- You will work with copy and a teleprompter.

## **Monologue:**

- You will perform a monologue from a play.
- You will “scale” the monologue for film.

## **Scene Work:**

- You will “audition” for a film/TV role with a reader.
- You will work with the concept of “MOS” with TV/Film copy.

## **Collaborative Film Project**

- Original film performance project in conjunction with the RTVF student director’s class. This portion of the final project is TBA.

**Final Project:** The final project: A “Self-Submission”



## **OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **FINAL EXAM/PERIOD**

Final Exam Period: Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 to 3:30

\*\*Self-Submission Project Presentation.

### **INCOMPLETES**

Only under extraordinary circumstances will an incomplete be given.

### **WITHDRAWAL**

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

### **POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE MATERIAL**

Please be advised that this class contains the development of text 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 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.

### **ORIGINAL WORK REQUIRMENT**

Homework and papers must be your original creative or scholarly work. All borrowings from other writers must be noted by quotation marks and credited with footnotes. All Internet sources must be credited with the website and author. In the artistic and academic community plagiarism (the presentation of other's words or ideas as your own) is a serious offense and will result in failure of the course.

### **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

### **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/>

### **Student Obligations to Academic/Production Work**

D/T 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 principal responsibilities of each student is to carefully identify 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.

### **SPOT:**

The Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you for completion at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to assess 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 and strive to receive 100% SPOT assessment participation.

## **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.