

PERFORMANCE IV:
THEA 4140: Acting Shakespeare
Spring 2016
3 Units

Instructor: Sally Vahle
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Course #: 4140.001
4140.301 (Lab)
RTFP 127
T/TH 9:30am-11:50am
Office Hours:
Mon./Wed 11:20-
12:00p
By Appointment

PRE-REQUISITES

Completion of:

Performance I: Introduction to Acting; Performance II: Scene Study; Movement for the Theatre; Voice and Speech for the Theatre; Play Analysis; suggested History of Costume and Decor; or the consent of the department.

Skills:

Excellent script analysis skills, ability to read and analyze complex language and concepts and the ability to access emotional truth. Superior work-ethic.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a project-based course in which we will explore the Work of William Shakespeare through the craft of acting. Exploration will focus on discovering ways to activate Shakespeare's words through the imagination, body and voice and emotional engagement. We will explore Shakespeare's dynamic and unique linguistic structure and investigate how that structure expresses the emotional life of the character. Students will engage in research and exercises in order to explore the effect on the actor of the character's word usage, rhetoric, storytelling and thought progression in a speech and dialogue. Full physical and vocal characterization with a commitment to dynamic action will be emphasized. Students will explore sonnets, monologues and scenes from Shakespeare's Canon. The final project in this course will be a scene presentation, which will demonstrate the actor's total embodiment of the character (characterization, vocal and physical choices), script analysis and performance.

EXPECTATION:

The work level and speed of this course will be senior/graduate level and will require outside research and preparation, organization, focus and professional level work ethic. If a student does not apply himself or herself accordingly, they will be advised to drop the course and consider re-taking the course at another time.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Group interaction, peer review, discussion, skill training, verbal critiques and performance simulation.

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 REQUIREMENT

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.

ATTENDANCE

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

- ☐ Attendance is mandatory.
- ☐ You are allotted 3 absences in this class for family emergencies, serious illness, or official UNT business. Students must provide the instructor with a doctor's note. For UNT business official UNT paperwork must be provided.
- ☐ Each absence beyond the 3 "freebies" will automatically reduce your grade by 1 letter (A to B, B to C, etc....)

- ☐ Tardies: 2 tardies = 1 absence.
- ☐ Leaving class early without prior arrangement, sleeping during class and reading outside material will count as an absence.
- ☐ Due to the experiential nature of the course, more than four (4) absences (including the two excused) are considered sufficient reason for failure in this course.
- ☐ Class will start at the appointed time.
- ☐ Please note that the teacher/director's roll book is the official record of absences and tardies. Ask the teacher/director to check the roll book to be sure that your attendance record is correct.

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.

GRADING

In this course, you will be graded on:

- ☐ Class participation
- ☐ Willingness to explore
- ☐ Script analysis
- ☐ Research
- ☐ In-class exercises
- ☐ Preparation and process of individual performance and scene work
- ☐ Artistic quality of final performance of assigned scenes.

Students are encouraged to make an appointment with the professor to discuss their work in greater detail than class critique time allows.

Points and Letter Grades:

A= 1155-1055 points

B= 1054-955 points

C= 954-855 points

D= 854 and below.

***SEE CLASS CALENDAR FOR SPECIFIC PROJECT POINT VALUES.**

GENERAL PARAMETERS FOR LETTER GRADES:

A grade: 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 working with their partner. Critiques generally focus on strong aspects of the work. The work shows careful preparation and commitment.

B grade: The basic fulfillment of all requirements is met with some growth. Student shows strong competence in fulfilling objectives of the assignment. 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. The objectives in this work are considered obtainable by any student at this level of training. Students generally have some difficulties with memorization; sense of staging and ability to meet self generated deadlines (rehearsals with scene partners, etc...). This 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.

***The grading standard is C= average, B= very good, **A= excellent class work, participation and attendance.** Majors must receive a "B" or better grade for degree credit.

PARTICIPATION

- ☐ It is expected that you give your undivided attention and support to your classmates during their in class 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.
- ☐ Most of your homework will require you to work with other people. You will have to organize rehearsals outside of class. You are responsible for

finding rehearsal space. You reserve space in the DTA office. Make sure that times and places are clearly decided upon. Once a plan is made, you must be there, as other people are involved. It is incredibly inconsiderate to make a rehearsal and then not show up or be grossly late. If a problem with missing rehearsals occurs, do not let your work suffer, contact the instructor immediately.

- ☐ If your behavior disrupts class, you will be asked to leave and you will be counted as absent.

COMMUNICATION

Ongoing information regarding class will be distributed via email. CHECK YOUR EMAIL EVERY DAY! I will use this address to communicate announcements and support material to this class and will check it weekly on Monday's and Thursday's:

perf4@hotmail.com

If you need to communicate with me please use this address exclusively—do not use my UNT address. You are also always welcome to call me on 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 the UNT Department of Dance and Theatre, I will 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 do to re-shoots and clients I have ongoing contracts with.

CLASS MATERIALS

- ☐ Phone/cell-phone/voice mail and an active email account, which is checked daily.
- ☐ Rehearsal sets and props as needed.
- ☐ Appropriate wardrobe for the character.

TESTING

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

CRITIQUES

Please understand that because of the large number of people involved in any production, suggestions and critiques by directors or stage managers will be given in public. One aspect of the profession is learning to take publicly the suggestions of the director.

If you are unclear as to the meaning of your in-class critique, please make an appointment with the instructor to discuss your work.

SCENE STUDY/PERFORMANCE PROJECT PROCEDURES

In large acting classes, as unfortunately we must conduct; we have precious little time together. To insure the best possible use of that time, let's clarify what we need to accomplish for each in-class rehearsal. It is extremely difficult to coach your acting when the full play has not been read and understood or when dialogue is not memorized. 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 a class presentation no make-up date is guaranteed.

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

MEMORIZATION

Each of you knows that memorization is the first major step to characterization. It requires extensive script analysis to develop sufficient understanding so that you can hold the words in your mind. For some, classical plays are much more difficult to memorize than contemporary material. I encourage each of you to attempt to get off book as soon after receiving your scene as possible. If your trigger response (cue) is visual (off the book) rather than aural, there will be an added step to memorization, as your mind must transfer from visual to aural stimulus.

REHEARSING YOUR PROJECTS:

After your first work-through in class you should work to be off book as quickly as possible. Decide with your partner, when you will both be off book. Prior to the

date you choose you should each be able to easily recite your lines as you do an unrelated activity, i.e. wash dishes, vacuum, play basketball.

Lack of memorization, knowledge of your text or of the given circumstances of the play is sufficient cause for an "f" for that pass (in-class rehearsal).

It is expected that you will rehearse for at least four hours between each pass. Because of our busy schedules it is expected that you *will* have rehearsals at 7am or 11pm. Heavy school or work schedules are not an excuse for missing rehearsals. If any problem with arranging rehearsals develops, please contact the professor for assistance immediately.

IN CLASS PERFORMANCE AND WORK EXPECTATIONS:

You will receive a grade/point value for each in-class scene presentation and the final performance.

FIRST PASS REQUIREMENTS

1. Bring a blank copy of the scene for the teacher (not returned)
2. Read through play critiques, reviews, and criticism in books, periodicals and the web to enhance your script/text analysis skills.
3. Written script/text analysis ready for oral defense. Receive suggestions for future research.
4. Verbally demonstrate your play/scene analysis in class.
5. Give an informed and impassioned reading. This will require rehearsal with your partner. 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.

3. Updated script/scene analysis in written form ready for oral defense.
4. Wear appropriate clothing to allow you to feel and move like the character.

FINAL SHOWING 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.

TEXTBOOKS

- ☐ **See Attached**
- ☐ Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary Vol. 1 A-M, Vol. 2 N-Z
- ☐ You will also have to acquire the plays for the scene(s) you are performing.

(Check the library or recycled books).

INTERNET RESEARCH SOURCES

There is an unbelievable amount of information available to you everywhere on the Internet---be resourceful---use it! Share useful sites when you find them!

CLASS CALENDAR

Students will receive a class calendar outlining the semester work plan. It will be updated throughout the semester if illness or other circumstances change our class plan. Do not lose this calendar---it is your guidepost for the entire semester. 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 plenty of notice of changes and an updated calendar reflecting any adjustments

FINAL EXAM/PERIOD

Final scene showings will be held at the end of the semester. The Final Exam will be TBA

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.

FITNESS

This course is designed to accommodate all levels of physical ability and fitness. As with any physical training, there will be some soreness and muscular fatigue as a result of a new use of the body. This is normal and healthy. However, *you are responsible for your own health*. If you are in doubt as to whether you can perform some aspect of the exercises, please refrain from doing so until you can consult a physician. If you need to refrain from doing significant portions of the coursework due to this condition, you must get written verification from a physician and be prepared to do alternative assignments.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT NOTICE

The UNT Department of Dance and Theatre Arts does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the recruitment or admission of students. The content of this class requires each student to (a) actively participate in a safe manner and (b) spontaneously process visual and verbal cues. The student has the responsibility of informing the instructor of any disabling condition, which will require modifications in assignments or exercises. If you have a disability and feel you are unable to meet the requirements of this class without reasonable accommodations, please contact the instructor to discuss your particular disability.

