

ACTING FUNDAMENTALS



Acting Fundamentals | THEA 2303 | CRN: 12083 | Fall, 2018

Tuesday/Thursday, 10:30-11:50am

Fox Fine Arts, Drama Building, D071

Instructor: Greg Beam

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-2:00pm, Location TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the building blocks of an actor's technique, employing and building on the central principles laid out by Constantin Stanislavski: Relaxation, Concentration, Imagination, Circumstances, and Action. Attention will also be paid to developing the actor's imagination, interacting fluidly and responsively with a partner, and learning to deepen the actor's connection with written material in pursuit of a vivid and truthful performance.

The first half of the semester will be devoted to a series of exercises designed to prepare and strengthen the actor's basic skills, culminating in the performance of a monologue. The second half will focus on applying these skills to the interpretation and performance of dramatic material, culminating in the performance of a scene with a partner. Using material drawn from contemporary dramatic literature, the student will practice physical release, concentration, engagement with environment and objects, commitment to the circumstances of a scene and to a character's individual point-of-view, the value of obstacle, and the importance of strong dramatic action.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To learn the fundamental elements of contemporary acting technique: circumstances, character, text analysis, behavior, action, obstacle, intention, improvisation.
- To develop the ability to work both alone and with a scene partner.
- To practice these skills until they become second nature, laying the groundwork for more advanced work in scene study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop a contemporary monologue using the techniques learned in class.
- To imbue the monologue with a rich sense of circumstances and character, strong dramatic choices, and fully integrated physical and vocal action.
- To perform the monologue before an audience in an audition format.
- To rehearse and perform a contemporary scene in collaboration with a partner, exercising effective give-and-take in developing the scene (i.e. challenging your partner without bossing them around).

DECORUM

Please be mindful that this is an introductory-level acting course. You may not know your classmates or understand their personal boundaries and comfort zones. While I encourage you to challenge one another creatively, this is not the place to push your peers physically or emotionally. That kind of work requires an investment of time and trust that goes beyond the

scope of this course. Please refrain from making any physical contact that is violent or sexual in nature. In general, you should get permission before making any contact more intrusive than a handshake.

MATERIALS

Most of the materials we use in class will be provided by me. However, I will expect you to read the play from which your final scenes will be selected (title TBA). I will arrange for at least one copy to be placed on reserve at the library.

Any props you may need for scenes or monologues, please bring from home.

You must have an active UTEP email address and check it regularly. You should also have regular access to Blackboard. These will be my primary means of communicating with you outside of class. Please note that I will not respond to emails sent from personal email accounts. If you want to contact me, use your UTEP email address.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at UTEP provides students with disabilities accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. If you are dealing with a mental, physical, emotional, or sensory disability, you are encouraged to contact them for a confidential consultation. For more information, visit <http://sa.utep.edu/cass/>.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected at all class sessions. Absences, as well as severe or consistent tardiness, will have a direct impact on your final grade. IF YOU KNOW YOU WILL NEED TO BE ABSENT, please inform me by email or in person as soon as possible. It's easier to make arrangements to make up anything you miss if advanced notice is given. But please be mindful that in-class assignments often cannot be made up. If you are running late to class, please send me an email as soon as you can safely do so. (Pull over if you're driving.)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any incident of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero on the assignment and possible disciplinary action. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Please check the UTEP Student Handbook for more information on academic dishonesty, and if you're in doubt about whether your use of a source is acceptable, don't hesitate to check with me.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The use of cell phones/smart phones/iPads/tablets is expressly forbidden, unless used for research or other class-related work, under the direct supervision of the instructor. IF YOU NEED TO USE YOUR PHONE OR TABLET TO LOOK SOMETHING UP, ASK BEFORE YOU DO IT. If you are using your phone during class, I will ask you to put it away, and it will be awkward for everyone involved.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Attendance & Participation (25%)

While attendance at all sessions is expected in any class you take, it is especially important in an acting class. Most of the work we do over the course of the semester happens in class, and it simply cannot be made up by reading the appropriate chapters from a book. I count on your presence and active participation. If you know you will need to be absent for a session, please let me know in advance.

As part of your attendance and participation grade, you are expected to attend either the UTEP Theatre & Dance production of *Bless Me, Ultima* (Oct. 3-14) or the UTEP Dinner Theatre production of *Young Frankenstein* (Oct. 12-28) and to write a brief response about the performances. You should submit your response through the Assignments folder on Blackboard by Nov. 2.

In-class Exercises (25%)

Along with the midterm monologue and final scene, there will be several other performance exercises in class (the two-line scene, the open scene, the short scene, etc.). You will not be assigned a score for your performance in any of these individual exercises—and, in fact, I don't want you to feel pressure to perform 'well' in any of them—but your commitment to and involvement in them will form a significant part of your final grade.

Midterm Monologue (25%)

You will be given a choice of monologues, which you will prepare and perform around the midpoint of the semester. A detailed explanation and grading rubric will be provided in advance of the presentation.

Final Scene (25%)

You will be assigned a scene from a contemporary play, which you will learn and rehearse with a partner and perform during the final exam period. A detailed explanation and grading rubric will be provided in advance of the presentation.

ASSIGNMENTS	POSSIBLE POINTS
Participation:	25
In-class assignments (open scene, round robin, etc.):	25
Midterm:	25
Final:	25
TOTAL:	100

Grading Scale

A = 90-100 points

B = 80-89 points

C = 70-79 points

D = 60-69 points

F = 0-59 points

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to Change)

Class Meeting	Exercises	Assignments
Week 1: Introduction Tuesday, Aug. 28 Thursday, Aug. 30	Two-line scenes	
Week 2: Circumstances Tuesday, Sept. 3 Thursday, Sept. 5	Open scenes	Memorize open scene for Thursday, Sept. 5
Week 3: Circumstances, cont'd Tuesday, Sept. 11 Thursday, Sept. 13	Open scenes, cont'd	
Week 4: Perspectives, Intentions, Obstacles, Tactics, Expectations Tuesday, Sept. 18 Thursday, Sept. 20	Open scenes, cont'd	
Week 5: Perspectives, Intentions, Obstacles, Tactics, Expectations Tuesday, Sept. 25 Thursday, Sept. 27	Open scenes, cont'd	Select open monologue by Tuesday, Sept. 25
Week 6: Personalization Tuesday, Oct. 2 Thursday, Oct. 4	Personal object exercise, open monologues	Develop circumstances for open monologue by Tuesday, Oct. 2; prepare first 'beat' of open monologue by Thursday, Oct. 4
Week 7: Personalization, cont'd Tuesday, Oct. 9 Thursday, Oct. 11	Open monologues	Memorize open monologue by Tuesday, Oct. 9

Class Meeting	Exercises	Assignments
Week 8: Personalization and Packaging Tuesday, Oct. 16 Thursday, Oct. 18	Open monologues	'Stage' monologue by Tuesday, Oct. 18; review rubric for midterm
Week 9: Monologue Performance Tuesday, Oct. 23 Thursday, Oct. 25	Open monologues	Run through monologues with feedback on Tuesday, Oct. 23; performance of monologues (midterm) on Thursday, Oct. 25
Week 10: Working with a Partner (improvisation, intention, expectation, tactics) Tuesday, Oct. 30 Thursday, Nov. 1	Improvised interview, short scene	Read short scene by Thursday, Nov. 1 * Performance response due on Blackboard Friday, Nov. 2 *
Week 11: Partner Work, cont'd Tuesday, Nov. 6 Thursday, Nov. 8	Short scene	Memorize short scene by Tuesday, Nov. 6
Week 12: Partner Work, cont'd Tuesday, Nov. 13 Thursday, Nov. 15	Short scene	Round Robin on Thursday, Nov. 15
Week 13: Scene Work (character, text, staging) Tuesday, Nov. 20 NO CLASS THURSDAY, NOV. 22 - THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	Scenes from <i>All This Intimacy</i>	

Class Meeting	Exercises	Assignments
Week 14: Scene Work, cont'd Tuesday, Nov. 27 Thursday, Nov. 29	Scenes from <i>All This Intimacy</i>	Read full play by Tuesday, Nov. 27
Week 15: Scene Work, cont'd Tuesday, Dec. 4 Thursday, Dec. 6	Scenes from <i>All This Intimacy</i>	Memorize scene by Tuesday, Dec. 4
Finals Week: Scene Performance Final: Thursday, Dec. 13, 10:00am-12:45pm		PRESENTATION OF SCENES DURING EXAM PERIOD