



Acting for Majors II / III
THEA 3313 / 4307
CEL Credit Course

"I've never been a personality. I've always been a character actor."
-Frances McDormand

"I was always a character actor. I just looked like Little Red Riding Hood"
-Paul Newman

Instructor: Jay Stratton
Class: T, R 12:00-1:20
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Office Hours
D073
Anytime by appointment
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Note – This is a Community Engagement and Leadership (CEL) course, and is part of a new certificate program in the College of Liberal Arts. The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students' understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders.

There is no required text for this course. We will be reading four plays this semester. I will put PDFs on blackboard. If you prefer another format, that is up to you.

At present, this course is scheduled as a face to face course. While not preferable, it is possible this course will shift to a hybrid or entirely online format in response to coronavirus. If this occurs, the syllabus will be modified accordingly.

Course Objectives

This is a course on **Size, Courage, and Character**.

After this course it is my objective that you will feel more comfortable and confident:

1. Taking on characters substantively different from yourself
2. Making the 'big choice' seeking the highest stakes in a moment
3. Playing 'yourself' as opposed to an extreme character and feeling natural in either

Unrelated, you will also gain familiarity with at least our four semester plays.

Grading

Script Responses (15%, 3 at 5% each)

As a class, we will be reading three plays this semester: *Dance Nation*, *Ruined*, and *Chimichangas and Zoloft*. You will write a brief response to the experience of reading each play. Guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

The submission process for this will be a **word document attached to an email**.

Syllabus may change with appropriate notice

Anger and Tears Monologue as self (10%)

In the first half of the semester, you will learn, rehearse, and perform an ‘anger and tears’ monologue not longer than 2 minutes. This will be offered either live in front of the class or via zoom.

Anger and Tears Monologue with Character elements (10%)

At the end of the semester, you will do your A&T monologue a second time as one of the characters you explored during the semester.

Life Story Project (35% total combined value – see below for breakout)

This project is the CEL aspect of this course.

You will be paired with a senior citizen in the El Paso area (or beyond if necessary). You will interview this individual three times for at least 45 minutes each. You will use this information to create a character study. You will find their voice, their physicality, and more importantly, their internal life. You will also explore one crucial moment in their life. You will keep a journal of your three interviews.

This performance piece will be structured as follows:

- 1) A direct address portion introducing yourself AS your character. You will speak TO the audience as your OLLI character study and tell us the most important elements of the story of your life.
- 2) Somewhere in this event, you will do a monologue about a crucial moment in this character’s life. This monologue portion should NOT be direct address – you should return to that moment in the character’s life and live through that moment. We will discuss further in class.

Rules and guidelines for the project

- 1) Keep it anonymous and ensure your interviewees that it will be anonymous.
- 2) Minimum length 4 minutes, max length 8 minutes.
- 3) Your performance piece should be inspired by your experience interviewing your OLLI partner, but it absolutely does NOT have to be real. The characterization should be real, but the monologues may be as real or fictional as you decide.

The graded elements will be as follows:

Interview Journal (15%, 3 at 5% each)

After each of your three interviews, you will write a journal. This journal may be handwritten, typed, electronic, or hardcopy. This journal will be collected three times over the course of the semester.

Written Text of Performance Piece (5%)

Again, this should be between 5-10 minutes. This won’t exactly be ‘graded’ but you must turn it in so I can give you feedback!

Performance (15%)*

As described above, you will perform as your character in a mix of direct address to class audience and traditional monologue from a crucial moment in your character’s life.

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Rock Star (10%)

You will be performing a single lip sync song as a rock star in front of the class.

Participation (20%)

You will be graded on your focus, willing participation, supportive attitude, and individual progress in daily class work. Respect and enthusiasm for the lessons and the work of your fellow actors is a crucial part of this class work.

Lateness and unexplained absence will affect this portion of your grade.

Grading Scale

You will be assigned a letter grade on each of the above assignments. (A=4.0, B=3.0 etc.)

Your final class grade is based on a weighted average of these grades (before any modification for attendance) according to the following scale.

A	=	3.50+
B	=	2.50 - 3.49
C	=	1.50 - 2.49
D	=	0.50 - 1.49
F	=	Less than .50

Extra Credit: There will be extra credit opportunities associated with the departmental performance events this semester. More to follow.



Class Policies

Attendance: Class attendance and punctuality are mandatory, however, you absolutely should NOT come to class if you are unwell.

During the time of COVID, please use the following guidelines:

- 1) If you feel unwell, EMAIL ME and do not come to class
- 2) If you are unvaccinated and have been exposed to COVID, EMAIL ME and do not come to class
- 3) Whether vaccinated or not, if you begin showing COVID symptoms, EMAIL ME and do not come to class

The key here is COMMUNICATION.

If you contact me to let me know your health status, I respect that you are being a responsible individual who wants to protect their classmates! If you simply no-show, I have no information and will lower your participation score.

There is no limit to 'excused absences' for health reasons.

Absences do not change the due dates of assignments.

Communication: I rely heavily on email for communication. You must check your preferred email daily. You will be responsible for anything emailed the night before a class. I will also store class documents on Blackboard.

The Space: No food or drink EXCEPT WATER is allowed in the studio during class. Doors will be kept open at all times to maximize airflow. Weather permitting, we may hold class outdoors. We will also work in the studio instead of D071 at times.

Vaccines: I am vaccinated and recommend that you consider doing the same if you have not already.

Phones and Devices: Please do NOT take out your phone or laptop without first discussing with me. Please do not use devices for non class purposes. If you need to work out of a script or side, you must have paper or book version of that material. You will not be allowed to read off tablet or phone.

Attire: Please wear clothes you can move in to every class. Do not wear tight fitting jeans, flip flops, high heels, or other garments that restrict or influence your movement.

Late Work: All written work is due at the beginning of the class period in which it is due. Written work turned in after the due date will be penalized 1 full letter grade. Written work turned in more than one week late may be penalized 2 full letter grades.

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Masks: Masks are not required, but I request that you bring a mask to every class. I will be masked throughout. I ask that if you are working with a partner that prefers a mask, you put on your own mask to meet their needs. There will be no penalty if you choose not to wear a mask, but I urge you to consider it.

Academic Dishonesty: University Policy will be strictly adhered to and absolutely no academic impropriety will be tolerated. All transgressions of university policy including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, the unauthorized exchange of information for written assignments or tests, theft via the computer or infringement of the rights of other to academic freedom (i.e. disrupting class, disrespectful comments towards classmates or instructor) will result in a failing grade for this course as well as disciplinary procedures as adopted by the university and described in the current student handbook.

Disabled Student Statement: In Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation then the Office of Disabled Student Services located at UTEP need to be contacted. If you have a condition, which may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of the Disabled Student Services. You may call [915-747-5148](tel:915-747-5148) for general information about the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights that you may have as a UTEP student with a disability.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and the Disabled Student Services Office at The University of Texas at El Paso.

COVID-19 Precaution Statement: Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org.

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