



THEA 1303/27332
Acting Fundamentals
Spring 2021 Syllabus

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**Professor: Ms. Jillian K. Waters, MFA**

**Contact: [Jkwaters@Utep.edu](mailto:Jkwaters@Utep.edu), Blackboard Messages or  
[Jilliankwaters@gmail.com](mailto:Jilliankwaters@gmail.com)**

**Class: T/TH- 9:00 AM MST - 10:20 AM MST**

**Virtual Office Hours: Zoom (Use the class link)**

**Office hours are Mondays 12:00-1:00 PM MST or by appointment**

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Course Description:

Welcome to Acting Fundamentals 27332 *online*! This virtual class will be taught remotely from New York City, and we will be using Mountain Standard Time for all classes and assignments. Acting Fundamentals aims to reconnect students to their innate sense of curiosity, discovery and play. Students will gain knowledge and learn how to approach a script, analyze it and create a character. Students will learn to identify and apply common techniques and terms used in the industry in order to confidently participate in rehearsal and in the professional world. By the end of the course students will be able to interpret written text, detail and plan three-dimensional characters, and demonstrate application of the techniques learned in class.

Course Overview:

Over the semester and by the end of the course students will have developed an understanding in the application of sensory work as a method for personalizing the work and creating the given circumstances. Students will study and practice technique in improvisation, repetition, and animal work. Students will have the wonderful opportunity of studying Archetypal Gestures and Psychological Gestures with guest lecturer and UTEP Lecturer Rafa Pérez. Students will learn how to address the actor's obligation to the text through script analysis, which includes investigation of the given circumstances, characterization, beats, actions, objectives and needs.



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Course Objectives:

- Nurture and develop the ability to work with grounded technique and a relaxed, open, supported and resonate vocal and physical instrument free of any tension
- Develop a sense of trust and play as we build an ensemble
- Cultivate and support a safe and respectful creative space
- Recognize and describe Constantin Stanislavski's method
- Dissect a script and determine character's given circumstances, characterization, beats, actions, objectives, needs and obstacles
- Rehearsals: two rehearsals of at least 45 minutes are required before presenting in class
- Employ rehearsal techniques on their own as taught or discussed in class
- Proficiency in the practice of Relaxation, Sensory, Improvisation, Repetition and Table Work
- Read material assigned on Blackboard and in class
- Attend the UTEP Department of Theatre and Dance virtual performance of Love Song By John Kolvenbach **and** submit Patron of the Arts response on Blackboard in Patron of the Arts folder
- To learn and be proficient in application of diverse acting techniques in each "performance"

Text/Materials:

We will be using excerpts from many brilliant texts for this course which I will be providing you on Blackboard. I will post all literature to complete each assignment in the "Readings" folder on Blackboard. You will not be required to purchase any texts for this class, however these are the texts we will be reading excerpts from:

- An Actor Prepares by Constantin Stanislavski
- Dream of Passion by Lee Strasberg



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- Freeing the Natural Voice by Kristin Linklater
- On Method Acting by Dwight Easty
- Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen
- A Natural History of the Senses by Diane Ackerman
- Body Learning by Michael J. Gelb
- Freeing Shakespeare's Voice by Kristin Linklater
- Backwards and Forwards by David Ball
- Acting: The First Six Lessons by Richard Boleslavsky
- The Viewpoints Book by Anne Bogart & Tina Landau
- Acting Fundamentals Notebook: This notebook will be used to record notes from class and from your own private practice. The student will practice their relaxation and sensory work on their own at **least** twice a week. Record your questions, discoveries, observations, etc. The notebook will be checked periodically.
- Computer or smart device with webcam, microphone and internet access.
- Active Blackboard Ultra.
- A yoga mat and a 6 Ft x 6Ft safe and soft space for you to explore the work in class safely

Requirements of the Course:

- Students are required to attend **all** classes online Tuesday and Thursday 9:00-10:20 am MST. Per standard policy you may miss **2** classes without penalty. After the 2nd class is missed, each subsequent missed class will lower your final class grade by a full letter grade. i.e If you miss 3 classes an A becomes a B, if you miss 4 classes an A becomes a C, if you miss 5 classes you fail the class. **The last day to drop or withdraw from class is April 1st.**
- Students are asked to demonstrate the ability to personalize the work.



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- Students are asked to explore a character's behavior through improvisation and the creation of a back-story.
- Students will develop an understanding of the actor's obligation to fulfill the given circumstances of the play
- Students will be expected to bring in a memorized original text and to work on this text outside of class, applying the specific exercises and techniques learned in class as appropriate in rehearsals
- Students will practice the ability to implement sensory work into their monologue and scene work; and to make sensory choices that support the text.
- Students are asked to practice their ability to listen, work moment-to-moment, and to stay present and in contact with a scene partner.
- Students will demonstrate mastery of their technique and understanding of the material by performing a scene with a fellow ensemble member for part one of the final.
- Students will focus first on experiences that are *fresh, new or interesting* when giving feedback and will refrain from valuing the work as "good or bad."
- Students will refer to what they "saw" instead of how the work made them "feel" in the moment and refrain from directorial feedback.
- Students will be expected to be on time, **PARTICIPATE** and be ready to do the work.
- Students are expected to conduct oneself in a professional manner and support one another to help cultivate an ensemble of mutual respect and positive collaboration.



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Grade Distribution:

Students can earn a total of 1000 points in the course

- Attendance & Participation - 300
- Patron of the Arts - 200
- Slice of Life: One Action/One Objective -100
- Animal Work: Private Moment -100
- Painting/Photo Monologue “performance” - 100 (rehearsal videos, taking direction and growth)
- Final Exam Part One: Scene Work Final “performance” - 100
- Final Exam Part Two: Written self reflection paper- 100

A	B	C	D	F
1000 - 900 Points	899 - 800 Points	799 - 700 Points	699 - 600 Points	599 & below

Patron of the Arts: DUE March 23rd

- Patron of the Arts is MANDATORY and is 200 points of your grade. It is an assignment aimed at creating and fostering a supportive UTEP Theatre and Dance community and audience.
- Support UTEP theatre and virtually attend Love Song By John Kolvenbach, **and** submit your written response to the prompt asked in the Patron of the Arts folder on Blackboard.
- Patron of the Arts Prompt: With a minimum of 250 words write about one moment from the show where you observed the actors using sensory work, or animal work, repetition, or relaxation work. What did you notice in the whole performance that could have been informed from any of the techniques we have



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studied so far? Any character or actor that stood out and why? Remember to stay away from labeling the work or your experiences as "good or bad." Dig deeper and explore what you thought was FRESH, NEW or INTERESTING, and why? **(Due March 23rd)**

- Love Song will have 4 showings on a virtual streaming platform, starting March 10th and running through the 13th. Each showing is at 7:30 PM MST. You have 4 opportunities to attend and watch Love Song but if for any reason you are unable to attend one of the virtual performances on March 10th-13th, **PLEASE communicate with me before March 9th** so we work together to arrange an alternate assignment.
- **EXTRA CREDIT:** Watch another UTEP show or professional production and submit a paper on your observations and experiences to receive extra credit up to 100 points. Two additional shows can make up for 1 class absence. I will accept Extra Credit till May 12th.

Course Attire:

Please wear comfortable loose clothing that allows for maximum mobility and freedom. Please do not wear any tight belts or restrictive pants or tops as you will need to be physically available to move around your space.

Communication Plan:

Please speak with me on Zoom using the class link during my office hours **Mondays 12:00-1:00 pm MST**. If that is not possible, please send me a message through Blackboard or email me at jkwaters@utep.edu or jilliankwaters@gmail.com. Please feel free to stop by my office hours or reach out and schedule an appointment. I will do my best to help you or to direct you to the appropriate student support services.

Please make sure you check announcements on Blackboard more than once a week to ensure you do not miss any key information as this will be my *primary* method of sharing all course materials and information. These times are uncertain and the calendar may shift if necessary.



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For all correspondence and communication, please refer to me as Jillian or Jill. My preferred pronouns are she/her/hers and please be sure to let me know your preferred pronouns and if you prefer to go by a name other than the one on the roster.

A Note on Class Etiquette:

Please refrain from providing any unsolicited or negative feedback to others' work. As actors, we are constantly observing humanity and I remind you to observe without any judgment. Instead maybe consider why a person would do or say such a thing. When feedback is to be given, it should be based on what can be *observed* in the scene or rehearsal, e.g.: "You were relaxed and listening to your scene partner," "I saw you find multiple ways of confessing to him in the scene," "When you entered the scene I saw you thinking about your lines but then you connected to your scene partner, or to your need," etc. We always begin feedback with what is *working*, and try to limit from labeling anything "good" or "bad". Students will refrain from being on their phones during class and no eating or drinking in class, except for water. Exceptions can be made if you communicate with me before hand.

Blackboard Ultra:

Blackboard Ultra is the official LMS (Learning Management System) of UTEP. You are expected to utilize and be familiar with Blackboard Ultra. If there are any questions regarding the use of Blackboard Ultra, please speak with your peer leader or me during office hours. For assistance with logging in or any other technical issue, you can reach the [Help Desk here](#) or by calling 915-747-HELP (4357).

Blackboard Ultra also has an app available where you can easily check the online syllabus, calendar, messages, due dates, assignments and discussions. It's a great tool to check in on things, but as with most things, the desktop web version is your best bet for compatibility, uploading and submitting assignments.



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Course Policies and Procedures

Acting Fundamentals is a physical class and to aid in that learning you are also responsible for the reading material listed in the "Readings Due" column and submitting all homework on time from the "Homework" column of the calendar each week. The readings are *extremely* helpful but also necessary to assist you in our class discourse. All dates are clearly specified on the course calendar, but should there be any issues with due dates, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance and we can discuss other arrangements if necessary. Calendar is subject to change at any point and appropriate notice will be given.

All the materials written, audio and visual shared within this course remain within this course. You can share on your social media your own materials if the only person that appears or the only author is you. If you want to share content that includes or is co-authored with other classmates, you need to write them AND the instructor to discuss the authorization.

Late Work Policy

Late work is unacceptable. Nothing in my class can be "made-up". However I understand that life happens. If you are going to miss an assignment or anticipate something preventing you from turning work in on time, or being present for a performance, please notify me *in advance* and as soon as you are aware so we can discuss.

Accommodations for Individuals Working due to COVID-19

In light of recent unemployment events due to Covid-19, I understand that families are now adjusting to new financial accommodations. Since this is an unprecedented event, I recognize and support students who must be absent due to professional obligations. The expectation and prerequisite is that the student must communicate with me in a timely manner about their schedule conflicts, *before* each Covid-19 related absence. Arrangements will be made on a case by case basis.



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UTEP Policy Regarding Safety and COVID-19

UTEP has established policies to help protect the health of our community and make our campus safe. All instructors must know and understand these policies when preparing and offering courses. The UTEP Temporary Health and Safety Policy requires all faculty, staff, and students to follow these guidelines:

- Stay at home if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test.
- Report (screening.utep.edu) if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test.
- Complete screening questions (screening.utep.edu) every day before coming to campus and follow instructions provided.
- While on campus:
 - wear face coverings when in common areas or when others are present;
 - maintain a minimum separation of six (6) feet between yourself and others when possible, and arrange spaces to make this possible in almost all circumstances;
 - adhere to room/space limitations on number of occupants; and
 - wash and/or sanitize hands frequently.

Student Responsibilities When Going On Campus

- This class is online and will be completely virtual. That being said, if you would like to rent a studio or classroom for on campus rehearsal or technique work, PLEASE DO! However please be sure to adhere to the Covid compliance safety policies and guidelines.
- Complete self-screening (screening.utep.edu) prior to every campus visit.
- Complete COVID-19 student training at [this site](#).



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- Contact instructor if temporary accommodations due to COVID-19 are needed (i.e., due to positive COVID-19 test, symptoms, or exposure).
- If unable to wear a face covering (e.g., medical reasons), the best course of action is to enroll in courses that are entirely online or to work with academic advisors, if necessary, to identify alternative courses. If this is not possible request an accommodation from the [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS) prior to coming to campus for in-person activities. Students who receive an accommodation to not wear a face covering must share this with the professor and work to minimize contact with others in the class.

A Note on Subject Matter

The performing arts have the power to stir strong emotions, or possibly touch on subjects you might not feel comfortable seeing on stage or experiencing in class. If you have concerns about viewing or discussing specific subjects or specific course work materials, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations.

UTEP and I respect your individual rights to choose what material you want to see and please always feel free to message me on Blackboard with any concerns or questions.

Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University.

Learn more by calling by visiting [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#) (CASS) or by calling 915-747-5148. Students who are considered high risk



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according to CDC guidelines and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk may contact the CASS office to discuss temporary accommodations for on-campus courses and activities.

Scholastic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Learn more here: [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#)

Netiquette

The internet allows for easy discourse among people, but many forget the golden rule when it comes to online etiquette. Please be respectful of one another. Before making any post, please take a moment to ask yourself: "Is this in response to the assignment?" "Is this constructive or conducive to educational discussion?" "Is this kind?" If the answer to any of these questions is, "No," then please do not post said response. Be sure to read through the [10 Rules of Netiquette for Students](#) if you have any doubts about whether your post is Netiquette compliant.



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Student Resources

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Familiarize yourself with the bookmarks on the right-hand side of the Blackboard student portal (visible before entering into a course) as well as the resources below.

- [UTEP Tech Support Helpdesk](#): Can assist with any technological issues, downloading of applications and making sure your technology is working as it should.
- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.

UTEP Edge Statement

The UTEP Edge is our philosophy that acknowledges the many assets our students bring to the University. We provide a variety of high-impact experiences both in and out of the classroom through work of our faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners that build on these assets and talents. Many of the assignments and discussions in this class will further develop the talents you bring to this class such as developing your communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving. Participating in experiences such as research, civic engagement, student employment, and study abroad contribute to increasing your confidence, enhancing your personal and professional skills, and equip you with a competitive advantage for when you graduate and enter the workforce or pursue a graduate degree. It is this competitive edge that will prepare you for leadership and lifelong success.