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THTR 120A.03: Introduction to Acting I

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INTRODUCTION TO ACTING I

THTR 120A Section 03 / CRN 30367

Spring 2017 – 3 Credits

Class meeting times: T / R 9:30-10:50 a.m. / McGill 125

Instructor: Dr. Pamyla Stiehl

Email: pamyla.stiehl@umontana.edu / Office: McGill 212C / Phone: 406-243-4481

Office Hours: M / W 2:00-3:30 and by appointment

AIM: This course is designed to help you broaden your communication, presentation, and social skills. By studying the craft of acting you will come to develop a more articulate, responsive, and expressive identity and begin to view your everyday actions and interactions as performances. By the end of the semester, it is expected that you leave with an extended understanding of yourself and of other people and that you will have a stronger sense of public presentation skills leading to better social and professional interactions. I hope that you enjoy the experience, have fun, and make friends with your classmates.

OUTCOMES: In this setting you will achieve:

- A demonstrated confidence in the presentation of your self—socially and professionally;
- An ability to further articulate both your personal character and the character of those you take on in dramatic performance;
- An understanding of, and appreciation for, the craft of acting, the skills that actor's employ, and ways non-actors can also use acting skills;
- An understanding of, and respect for, performers and audiences.

CONTENT: This course is divided into 4 sequential units.

Unit 1: WHAT IS ACTING AND WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?

- An introduction to the history and theory of acting, vocabulary, and audience etiquette. You will create performances and learn how to see yourself as an actor.

Unit 2: DEVELOPING ACTING SKILLS

- Building skills through group exercises, including warm-ups, games, and acting exercises. You will learn how to use specific acting skills in your everyday life.

Unit 3: PERFORMING A CHARACTER

- Rehearsing and performing short scenes with a partner, creating new and original characters, and analysing characters and scripts. You will learn how to use the skills you have developed in the service of a role.

Unit 4: GAINING INFORMATION FROM REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE

- Techniques for learning more about your world through performance. You will learn more about other people through role-play and improvisation.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Campana, Jillian. *ACTING SUCCESSFUL using performance skills in everyday life*. Cognella Press, 2014. Available in the UM Bookstore.

The text is also available in paperback and digitally through the publisher's website: universityreaders.com. That website will prompt you to create a password in the student's store section. You will need to identify the institution (University of Montana) as well as the class (THTR

120A). The text is also available on amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. The prices are the same at all locations. The Bookstore is definitely the easiest and most convenient way to purchase the text and costs no more than other sellers. ***YOU WILL NEED TO BRING YOUR TEXTBOOK TO CLASS EVERY DAY.***

EVALUATION / GRADING BREAKDOWN

Participation: projects, exercises, and performances (see rubric below)	20 PTS
Effort/respect/attitude	10 PTS
Reading & Writing assignments (textbook worksheets)	20 PTS
Production attendance (3 productions w/email response; 10 PTS ea)	30 PTS*
<i>* If you do not attend any of the productions, you will automatically fail this class.</i>	
Scored exercises/performances (6 at 5 PTS ea)	30 PTS
Final class scene	10 PTS
TOTAL CLASS POINTS	120 PTS

****** Attendance can further affect final grade ******

- **Participation in Class Projects and Performances:** You will be participating in exercises and informally performing on a weekly basis and will be given an overall course rating in regard to your level of participation, contribution, process, application, and progress throughout the semester. Please note that your attendance grade will also affect this score, as you cannot actively participate if you are not present. **The 20-point rubric is as follows:**

- 18-20 Actively participated in and collaboratively contributed to all class exercises and performances; often contributed to discussions; demonstrated high level of understanding of processes and applied knowledge whenever possible; demonstrated personal progress throughout course
- 16-18 Dutifully participated and semi-collaboratively contributed to class exercises; semi-regularly contributed to discussions; moderate degree of process understanding and application; moderate degree of personal progress
- 14-16 Inconsistent in terms of participation, collaboration and contribution; occasionally contributed to discussions; marginal degree of process understanding and application; marginal degree of personal progress
- 12-14 Participated, collaborated and contributed only when absolutely required; minimal contribution to discussions; minimal degree of process understanding and application, minimal degree of personal progress
- 0-12 Failed in regards to participation, contribution, collaboration, process, application and personal progress

- **Effort/Respect/Attitude:** Effort and respect are two very important requirements and are another aspect of your class participation. You are expected to respond to assignments and performances with effort and enthusiasm. You are expected to show respect for yourself, your classmates, your instructor, and your classroom environment. An excellent performance hinges upon taking risks, which is impossible to do if the environment is uncomfortable or uninviting. It is expected that when you participate in classroom activities, your peers will encourage you to

commit to your actions and characters without embarrassment, remorse, or caution. This class requires openness and a willingness to take risks. Once that happens, the fun begins. **10 class points are rewarded (or adjusted)** for your full demonstration of and investment in these attributes.

- **Reading and Writing Assignments:** There will be a number of textbook reading assignments as well as corresponding worksheets that you will be asked to fill out and discuss. Some worksheets will be outside assignments and others will be completed during class, after specific exercises. The class schedule will detail your reading assignments due on the day of class, as well as the worksheets. I will check that the worksheets are completed on the day assigned and will then compile your textbooks at the end of the semester to read more completely your written content. **The completed textbook is worth 20 pts.**
- **Production Attendance:** Part of your grade for this class requires that you attend three of the School of Theatre & Dance's performances this semester. You will need to submit proof of attendance (a ticket stub or program) as well as email me a reflection as to your impression of the acting or performance component of the productions. **Each production attendance, with its proof of attendance and email reflection, is worth 10 pts. If you do not attend any of the productions, you will automatically receive a failing grade for the class.** In other words, production attendance is a part of this class and will critically affect your class grade.

The materials fee you paid when you registered for this course allows you to obtain your ticket for these shows at no additional expense. You must pick up your ticket at the UMArts Box Office, located in the lobby of the PARTV Center, in person **Tuesdays – Fridays between noon and 6 PM, plus one hour before a performance.** You may pick up only one ticket--your own; you cannot pick up a ticket for a classmate. If you pick up your ticket to a production and wish to change performances, you will be charged a \$2 exchange fee before the performance date printed on the ticket. If you come in to exchange your ticket after the performance date printed on the ticket (and therefore need a new ticket), you will be charged the full student ticket price.

When you go to the Box Office to obtain your ticket, you must present your Griz Card. Please tell the box office staff that you are a 120A student and that you are picking up your ticket. Tell them who your instructor is and what section you are in and you must identify which class you are taking.

You are in section: 03

Your instructor's name is: Pamyla Stiehl

Seating in the Masquer Theatre is general admission. Seating in the Montana Theatre is reserved. The fee that you have paid does not guarantee you a ticket on a particular night, nor does it guarantee that you will be able to get a ticket if the show sells out. **Do not wait until the evening of the performance you plan to attend to pick up a ticket.**

THREE Required Productions (You have free tickets to these shows!)

Barefoot in the Park: Jan 26-28, Feb 2, 4; Montana Theatre 7:30 pm, 2:00 matinee (28th)
Thinner than Water: Feb 22-26, Mar 1-5; Masquer Theatre 7:30 pm, 2:00 matinee (26th, 4th & 5th)
Noises Off: Apr 19-23, 26-30; Montana Theatre 7:30 pm, 2:00 matinee (23rd & 30th)

- **Scored Exercises/Performances:** There will be 6 performed exercises during the semester that are scored, based on *process* and *product*. In other words, you will be individually graded on the finished performance, as well as your in-class development/ rehearsal process. Your grade in this area is not based on the natural talent you bring to the class; rather, it will be a reflection of your *developed* talent, your effort (including collaboration and contribution), and the progress that you have made over the course of the semester, as well as a product that reflects thoughtful work, collaboration, attempted application of class knowledge, and preparation. **Each assignment below is worth 5 pts:**
 - **Monologue Exercise – Character / Objectives (*Red Coat*)**
 - **Musicalized Collaboration of Story/Scene**
 - **Monologue Exercise – "Magic If" / Documentary (Interview)**
 - **Designed Physical / Language Scene**
 - **Open Scene 1**
 - **Open Scene 2**
- **Class Attendance and Promptness:** Attendance is compulsory because acting is participatory. There is no way to learn without doing, no adequate substitute for a missing partner, and no way to “make up” a missed experience. **After 1 week of absences (2 classes), your grade will begin to be affected. Generally speaking after a week of absences, your grade will be lowered an increment (1/3 grade degree, e.g., a B- becomes a C+).** An additional absence will continue to lower the grade another 1/3 increment (C+ lowers to a C). Absences may be excused with official documentation (physician's note, legal documents, religious observance, etc.)

Arriving late adversely affects your own learning and disrupts the learning process of your fellow students. Therefore, **tardiness in excess of 10 minutes will be considered a complete absence, and every two instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will count as one absence.** If you have excessive absences or lateness please speak to me.
- **Final Scene:** Your class work will culminate in one memorized scene (**4-5 minutes**), rehearsed and performed with a classmate.

POLICIES

You are expected to abide by the following School of Theatre & Dance regulations.

- Eating, drinking, or gum chewing during the class are not permitted. Please let me know in writing if you have a medical exception to this policy. Water in a capped container is acceptable.
- No smoking in class. Ever.
- Absolutely no weapons, real or fake, are allowed in the classroom.
- Late work is not accepted; this includes late or unprepared performances.
- There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.

- Due to safety considerations, at no point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student without the instructor's consent. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

Movement Clothes:

Please wear clothing to class that does not restrict movement: tight-fitting and restrictive clothing and anything too revealing is not acceptable. Hooded sweatshirts, hats, and hair that cover the face make it hard for others to see you, so remove them before work commences. Please clean your shoes appropriately before you enter the building to keep our floors as clean as possible. You may be asked to work in bare feet.

Personal Comfort:

The study of acting often requires the instructor or peers to touch each other or be in close proximity. We all have bad days when we do not want such contact. Feel free to bow out of a particular exercise if you are in pain. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you are having a difficult time with the class material. There will be an element of physical exertion in this class.

Cell Phones:

Please turn off your cell phone in class and place the device in your backpack. My phone will be set to vibrate in case an emergency text message should be sent by the University. If your phone rings during class, please silence it as quickly as possible. Anyone caught texting in class will be immediately dismissed from class, resulting in an absence for the day.

School of Theatre & Dance Handbook:

For in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/umarts/theatredance/About/handbook.php>.

UM Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code:

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php.

DSS:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

CLASS ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

- T 1/24 Course Intro and Orientation
***** ***Barefoot in the Park* required attendance – reserve your tickets!** *****
- R 1/26 Have read "Seeing Yourself as a Performer" (pp. 7-11)
Have read "How You Perform" (pp. 15-21)
Have completed both Worksheets (pp 13 and 23-24)
- T 1/31 Have read "A Brief History of Acting"(pp. 25-30)
Have completed Worksheet (p. 31)
- R 2/2 Have read ""Broad Abilities" (pp. 33-38)
Have completed Worksheet (pp. 39-40)
- T 2/7 Have read "The Actor's Training" (pp. 45-52)
Have completed Worksheet (p. 49)
DUE: BAREFOOT IN THE PARK Emailed Reflection (as well as proof of attendance)
- R 2/9 In-Class Exploration of "Actor Guru" Techniques
- T 2/14 Have read "The Actor's Skills" – Voice/Body (pp. 65-76)
- R 2/16 Have read "The Actor's Skills" – Observation/Imagination (pp. 81-86)
- T 2/21 Have read "The Actor's Skills" – Relaxation/Concentration/Improvisation (pp. 91-99)
***** ***Thinner than Water* opens Feb 22 – reserve your tickets!** *****
- R 2/23 Have read "The Actor's Skills" – Character (pp. 102-104)
Have read *The Red Coat* (Shanley – handout – also available on Moodle)
Introduction of GOTE (handout)
- T 2/28 Have completed Voice Worksheet (pp. 117-118)
GRADED MONOLOGUE EXERCISE – CHARACTER / OBJECTIVES (THE RED COAT)
- R 3/2 Have completed Body Worksheet (pp. 123-124)
- T 3/7 Have completed "Observation" & "Imagination" Worksheets (pp. 129-130 and 133-134)
DUE: THINNER THAN WATER Emailed Reflection (as well as proof of attendance)
- R 3/9 **GRADED MUSICALIZED COLLABORATION OF STORY/SCENE**
- T 3/14 Have completed "Relaxation/Concentration" & "Improvisation" Worksheets (pp. 137-138 & 143-144)
- R 3/16 Have completed "Character" Worksheet (pp. 149-150) & "Character" Exercise (p. 151)
- 3/20 – 3/24 ----- SPRING BREAK -----**
- T 3/28 General Studio Work
- R 3/30 **GRADED MONOLOGUE EXERCISE – "MAGIC IF" & DOCUMENTARY (INTERVIEW)**
- T 4/4 Improvisation and Physical Acting Work
- R 4/6 **GRADED DESIGNED PHYSICAL / LANGUAGE SCENE**
- T 4/11 Improvisation and Open Scene Work

R 4/13 **GRADED OPEN SCENE 1**

***** *Noises Off opens Apr 19 – reserve your tickets!* *****

T 4/18 General Studio Work & Final Scene Selection

R 4/20 **GRADED OPEN SCENE 2**

T 4/25 Scene & General Studio Work

R 4/27 Scene & General Studio Work

T 5/2 Scene & General Studio Work

DUE: NOISES OFF Emailed Reflection (as well as proof of attendance)

R 5/4 Scene & General Studio Work

**FINAL EXAM -- FRIDAY, MAY 12, 8:00-10:00 a.m.
FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS**