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## THTR 120A.02: Introduction to Acting I

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**THTR 120A.2, 3 Credits**  
**INTRODUCTION TO ACTING I**  
**Fall 2013**

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**Aim**

The purpose of this course is to help broaden your communication, presentation and personal skills. The course will also help you develop a more articulate, responsive, and expressive identity. These goals are achieved by studying the craft of acting. At the end of the semester, I hope you leave with an extended understanding of yourself, your peers, and your world.

**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 performance;
- a basic understanding of the nature of theatre and the craft of acting;
- an understanding of, and respect for, performance, including audience etiquette;
- and an understanding of the importance and contribution theatre makes to our world.

**Production Attendance**

Part of your grade for this class requires that you attend three of the School of Theatre & Dance's performances this semester. Missing one production will drop your grade one full letter. Missing two productions will drop your grade two full letters. If you do not attend any of the productions, you will not be able to pass the class. In other words, production attendance is a part of this class and there will be quizzes on the productions.

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 between 10 AM and 6 PM Monday-Friday. 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 120 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: **2**

Your instructor's name is: **COHEN AMBROSE**

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.***

### **Required Productions**

***Avenue Q*** – Music and Lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, Book by Jeff Whitty

Montana Theater  
October 1-5, 8-12 at 7:30pm

***Distracted*** – by Lisa Loomer  
Masquer Theater  
October 22-26, 29-30; November 1-2 at 7:30pm

***Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*** – by Tony Kushner  
Montana Theater  
November 19-23; December 3-7 at 7:30pm

### **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. You will be given a grade for your attendance and after \_\_\_\_ absences your grade will begin to be effected. Generally speaking after \_\_\_\_ absences your grade will be lowered one increment.

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 three instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will equate to one absence. Every acting teacher reserves the right to declare a “no lateness” policy, should the need arise. Briefly put, this means that if the door to the class is shut

and you are not inside by the time class begins, you are absent. No exceptions. If you have excessive absences or lateness please speak to me.

### Cell Phones

Please turn off your cell phone in class. 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 HUMANLY POSSIBLE. Don't be embarrassed ... just turn it off and all will be forgiven. Having said that, anyone caught texting in class will be immediately dismissed from class, resulting in an absence for the day.

### Evaluation

Participation	25%
Assignments including final scene performance	60%
Daily grades: effort/respect/attitude	15%

### Assignments

- Quizzes
  - There will be 2 in-class quizzes on audience etiquette and theatre vocabulary. You will have access to study-guides on Moodle.
- Script readings
  - You will be required to read and have a thorough familiarity with the play from which your scene is taken as well as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. Both will be posted on Moodle as PDFs.
- Off-book
  - You will be required to have memorized your lines from the 5-minute scene in which you will perform by Thursday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Some tips for learning your lines include simply reading your lines over and over and over again; recording the lines of the *other* character leaving spaces in between where your lines would be said and practice with the recording; practicing often with your scene partner, friend, roommate, mom, sister, etc. Getting "off-book" is like putting fuel in your car: you cannot go anywhere until you have them (locked in your memory).
- Production review
  - You will write a review of one School of Theatre & Dance production of your choice (either *Avenue Q* or *Distracted*) that is no less than 350 words in length. This piece will be read aloud in class and discussed. You will upload your review to Moodle for submission no later than Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Final scene performance
  - The "final" for this course is the performance of a scene with a partner. You will apply a specific technique or techniques that you learn about in class to the development of your character.
- 10-minute play

- In the final unit, you will write a short (10 pages or so) play that explores a social “issue” in which you have a vested interest.
- Performance Journal
  - The last 5-10 minutes of almost every class meeting will be available for journaling. I will ask a question(s) and you will respond/reflect on your in-class work. Make sure to bring your journal (notebook, Word document, or whatever format you prefer) to every class meeting. You will submit this journal to me (in hard copy or via email) at the end of the semester as a part of your writing assignments. You will receive full credit for this as long as you log consistent entries.

### **Participation in Class Projects and Performances**

You will be performing on a weekly basis and will be given grades for your class work and performances in the areas of *process* and *product*. In other words, you will be graded on the finished performance and on all of the rehearsals. 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 and the progress that you make over the course of the semester.

### **Effort/Respect/Attitude**

Effort and respect are two very important requirements. You are expected to respond to all 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. Passing this class requires openness and a willingness to take risks.

### **Writing Assignments**

There are two writing assignments and a performance journal due this semester. You will be graded for your imagination and creativity as well as for the quality of your writing. The papers (*excluding* the journal) must be typed and proofread and must meet the demands of the assignment. All written work must follow MLA format, be typed, saved as a .doc or .docx Microsoft Word document (all campus computers have MSWord), and uploaded to Moodle for submission. I will accept late writing assignments at the penalty of one letter grade per day.

### **Procedure/Policy**

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. Absolutely no weapons, real or fake, are allowed in the

classroom. Late work is not accepted; this includes late or unprepared performances. Students are encouraged to wear appropriate movement attire to class. 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 my consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

### **School Handbook**

All Theatre & Dance students must have an 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/theatredance/about/handbook>.

### **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://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student\\_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php).

### **Movement Clothes**

Please wear clothing to class that does not restrict movement: tight-fitting and restrictive clothing and anything too revealing (showing skin) will not be acceptable. No hats will be permitted in class. Hooded sweatshirts, hats, and hair that cover the face are detrimental to proper evaluation by the instructor, so remove them before work commences. Please be sure to 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 at my discretion.

### **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.

### **Course Schedule (subject to adjustment)**

This course is divided into 4 sequential units.

#### **Unit 1: Ensemble – Weeks 1 – 3**

- Building trust and skill through group exercises, including warm-ups, theatre

games, and script analysis.

- Week 1: August 26 – 30
  - T: Welcome
  - R: Theatre Games
- Week 2: September 2 – 6
  - T: Physical Warm-ups
  - R: Vocal Warm-ups, Scene assignments
- Week 3: September 9 – 13
  - T: Trust-building workshop
  - R: Introduction to Script Analysis and Dramaturgical Structure
    - DUE: Reading of *Angels in America*

## **Unit 2: Finding Your Inner Actor – Weeks 4 – 6**

- An early introduction to the history and theory of acting, vocabulary, and audience etiquette.
- Week 4: September 16 – 20
  - T: Script Presentations (telling the class about the play your scene is from) and Mini-Lecture: The Last 2,500 Years of Acting History
    - DUE: Reading of the play from which your scene is taken
  - R: Mini-Lecture (cont.): The Last 2,500 Years of Acting History
- Week 5: September 23 – 27
  - T: Stanislavsky workshop
  - R: Stanislavsky applied to your character
    - DUE: Theatre Vocabulary Quiz
- Week 6: September 30 – October 4
  - T: Brecht workshop
  - R: Brecht applied to your character
    - DUE: Off-book (lines memorized)

## **Unit 3: Scene Work with a Partner – Weeks 7 – 11**

- Rehearsing and performing short scenes with a partner, creating new and original characters.
- Week 7: October 7 – 11
  - T: Chekhov workshop
    - DUE: Audience Etiquette Quiz
  - R: Chekhov applied to your character
- Week 8: October 14 – 18
  - T: Laban workshop
  - R: Laban applied to your character
- Week 9: October 21 – 25
  - T: Viewpoints workshop
  - R: Viewpoints applied to your character
- Week 10: October 28 – November 1

- T: Share first reviews and discuss *Avenue Q*
  - DUE: Production Review
- R: In-class scene rehearsal
- Week 11: November 4 – 8
  - T: **Final Performances**
  - R: **Final Performances (cont.)**

**Unit 4: Applying Acting in Your Life – Weeks 12 – 15**

- Social-commentary theatre, playwriting, and staged readings.
- Week 12: November 11 – 15
  - T: Share first reviews and discuss *Distracted*
  - R: Review of dramaturgical structure and social-commentary playwriting
- Week 13: November 18 – 22
  - T: Social-commentary playwriting workshop
  - R: First draft readings
    - DUE: Rough draft of 10-minute play
- Week 14: November 25 – 29
  - T: Second draft readings
    - DUE: Second draft of 10-minute play
  - R: Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASS
- Week 15: December 2 – 6
  - T: Present readings of final drafts
  - R: Discuss *Angels in America*; Course evaluations and closing

**\*\*\*There will be NO meeting during finals week\*\*\***