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## THTR 220.01: Acting I

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**Fall 2013 Acting 1 Drama 214**  
**Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays: 11:10-1:00**  
**SCHREIBER GYM**  
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*“Always and for ever, when you are on the stage, you must play yourself. But it will be in an infinite variety of combinations of objectives, and given circumstances which you have prepared for your part, and which have been smelted in the furnace of your emotion memory.”*

**Course Aim:**

The purpose of this course is to assist the first year acting student in developing critical acting skills and a vocabulary needed to advance in the profession. This class is for those seriously considering a career in the theatre or the performing arts.

*“Our art demands that an actor’s whole nature be actively involved, that he give himself up, both mind and body, to his part.”*

**Course Outcomes:**

*In a workshop setting the student will:*

- Demonstrate a sense of professionalism and enthusiasm for the theatre and the craft of acting;
- Understand the fundamentals of the actor’s process;
- Cultivate an understanding of the total organism involved in the acting process; and,
- Begin to explore the actor’s relationship with himself/herself, with the text, with the physical environment, and with other performers.

*“To reproduce feelings you must be able to identify them out of your own experience.”*

**Expectations/Requirements - all expectations are required to be met:**

Effort and respect are two of the most important requirements, as are class attendance and active participation. I expect that all actors respond to the assignments and performances with interest and effort. It is required that all actors respect themselves, their classmates, their classroom environment, and the acting process. Since an excellent performance hinges upon risk and devotion, all actors in this class must work together to cultivate an open and safe atmosphere that allows for commitment to actions and characters without embarrassment, remorse, or caution.

Actors must attend all classes and be on time. This is a studio class, which means that everyone must be here, ready to apply themselves all of the time. Missing class will affect your grade; two “tardies” are the equivalent of one absence. More than three

absences will lower your grade one full letter. If you do miss a class it is *YOUR* responsibility to find out what was covered from a fellow classmate, NOT from the professor.

It is required that all actors in this class attend all departmental productions.

*“Everything must be real in the imaginary life of the actor.”*

**Evaluation:**

The final semester grade will be a reflection of the student’s developed talent, effort, and progress. There will be regular evaluation of the actor’s work including, but not limited to:

- Active participation, effort and attendance;
- Self-analysis;
- Clarity and strength of performance choices;
- The ability to respond appropriately to coaching and directing notes; and,
- The ability to retain the principals and practices taught.

*“To arouse a desire to create is difficult; to kill that desire is extremely easy.”*

**Policy/Procedure:**

- We are cultivating a sense of professionalism – there is to be no eating or gum chewing in this class. You are encouraged to bring a bottle of water to class; other beverages are not acceptable.
- No weapons, drugs, or alcohol are allowed on campus or in this classroom. Failure to heed this rule will result in expulsion from this class and possibly the university.
- Wear appropriate movement attire to class.
- Regularly check the departmental call-board located in the PARTV building between the scene shop and the offices.

*“Love the art in yourself, not yourself in the art.”*

**Text:** AN ACTOR PREPARES by Stanislavski

**Content:**

There will be continuous exercise work in the principals of realistic acting: personalization, action, objective, obstacle, tactics, and moment-to-moment give and take with fellow performers. Each actor will “work shop” and perform several scenes throughout the semester, at least one scene from a published play, as well as two monologues, one at the top of the semester and one at the end. Principally however, you will be working on exercises designed to develop foundational skills, imagination, and the collaborative process.

All Drama/Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the Department of Drama/Dance Handbook. The Handbook is available online at <http://www.sfa.umt.edu/drama/index.html>.

**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: [www.umt.edu/SA/VPS/Index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPS/Index.cfm/page/1321)

Name:

Birthdate:

Places of past residence:

Major option:

1. Performance experience:

2. What is acting, AND why do YOU want to act?

3. What is your present career goal?

4. What skills and talents do you have that will help you?

## 5. What makes a good actor?

### MONOLOGUE AUDITIONS:

#### Stage presence/ease:

- Are they comfortable getting up in front of the group?
- Are they in their body?
- Are they able to make contact with the group when they introduce?

#### Preparation:

- Is the piece prepared?
- Is it memorized?
- Has it been rehearsed?
- Is the piece a monologue from a play?
- Are they able to stay in character?
- Do they know who they are speaking to?

#### Analysis:

- Do they have a grasp on the character?
- Do they have an objective?
- Is there an arc to the piece?
- Is there a sense of timing to the piece?

#### Clarity:

- Are the words of the text clear?
- Is the volume appropriate and acceptable?
- Is the timing appropriate – is performance rushed?
- Do they take direction?

#### Commitment:

- Have they made choices?
- Have they committed to their choices?
- Are the stakes high?

#### Attitude:

- Are they willing to audition?
- Are they respectful of their peers and of the class environment?
- Are they excited about the class?

### IMPROVISATION:

- Do they actively participate?
- Do they work well with their peers?
- Do they listen?
- Do they take risks?
- Do they understand story?
- Are they present in the moment?
- Are they imaginative?
- Are they able to apply character and objective to improve work?

**Mon Aug 27:**

Class introduction – whole group

Monologue auditions Friday Aug 31: 1, 1 minute monologue

Orientation to the program

Virtual Tour – majors meeting

Fill out questionnaire in class

**Mon Sept 10**

Physical Exercises:

Walking around the room. Where do you lead from? What part of your body arrives first? Why? Lead with that. Exaggerate it. How does it feel to exaggerate it? What does this exaggeration do to your emotional state? Choose a different part of your body to lead with? Try that. Exaggerate it. How does this make you feel. Explore your pace. How do you feel when you move faster than is typical? How do you feel when you move slower than usual? Put all the energy into your right leg, move around the space like that. Put all your energy into your stomach, what is that like?

Discuss exercise: What was that like? What did you discover? What does this have to do with acting? What is acting?

Call out some of the words they used. Walk around space and when hear the word grab a partner and create a frozen image of the word. Try four different words.

Go over syllabus

Assignment:

In pairs share: a moment of physical pain, a moment of happiness, of moment of fear, a moment of sadness, a moment of rage, a moment of anxiety, a moment of surprise, a moment of regret, a moment of frustration.

Each tell a story about this from your life. Choose one and both rehearse it and tell it to class on Wednesday as if it were your story. The goal is to personalize. 2-3 minutes.

Empty space.

One person enters and investigates the space.

Another person enters and acknowledges the first person without speaking to him or her.

The second person begins to do something on his or her own – a task that involves no one else).

The first person stops exploring the space and watches the second person.

A third person enters and watches.

**Friday Sept 22:**

Roll down and shake lips out shake out on sound. Shake out with siren. Siren with sound

I'll be asking, like I do, for observations at the end of this exercise. So I want you to be aware of yourself in this exercise and be ready to share something in the discussion.

Walking around the room. I call out words and you think about what they mean to you. I count 1-5 and by the time I get to 5 you are in a frozen statue that codifies the word.

Excited  
Angry  
Motivated  
Worried

Same thing now we'll add vocalizations. I count to 5 you come to frozen image. I count to five again and you let a sound come out from you.

Depressed  
Shy  
Upset  
Unattractive  
Boring

Compassionate  
Caring  
Attentive  
Self aware  
Confident

Passionate  
Energetic  
Attractive  
Exhilarated  
Fulfilled

What are your observations? What did you notice?

Talk about how physicalizations and vocalizations brought about change – feeling became real and stayed with you. Positions brought about the feeling. This is called working from the inside out (lots of times this is compared to bad acting because actors REPLACE the feeling with a gesture or movement or sound. They must be brought together.

Now let's work backwards.



I'll call out the word and you keep walking. Really feel it. Let it reside in your being. Connect it to yourself and to people you know and incidents in your life. Notice what this does to your body. Allow it to affect your body.

**Friday, September 29:**

Discuss Uta Hagen with their performances.

**The SIX STEPS:**

Answer the six steps in writing. Be specific. Introduce and answer more questions in response to WHO AM I?

Bring in a 2-3 minute performance for Monday in which you are in pursuit of a simple task. Watch your behavior over the weekend. Observe yourself. Actually do the task. Recreate it in rehearsal. Re-create it for us on Monday. Bring in the necessary props and costumes.

**HOMEWORK:**

With your assigned partner, choose a fictitious relationship in which depicts either:

- siblings;
- parent/child;
- best friends; or,
- partners.

Meet outside of class:

1. Decide upon the specifications of the relationship.
  - Using your imagination, create a realistic and feasible background for each character.
  - Use the Uta Hagen questions 1-4 (page 134) in tandem with each other.
  - Go beyond what she asks in question 1.
  - WRITE OUT your answers and be ready to share them with the class on Friday.
2. Decide upon a setting they might likely be in together – it can be private or public- a simple task each character might be doing in that setting. The setting should be a setting you can actually go to and the task something that you can actually perform - (in a kitchen doing the dishes, in a restaurant eating or reading the newspaper, driving in a car to make an appointment, taking a walk or going on a run by the river, in a living-room watching a television program, etc).
3. At another time before Friday, go to that setting in character – you may arrive together or separate. Engage in the simple task and just be with each other as the characters for a minimum of 15 minutes. DO NOT feel the need to talk or

especially to initiate conflict. Just be together in pursuit of individual specific tasks.

**Friday, October 13:**

Hear monologues – perform for the first time in 3 weeks.

Quiz on Uta

Discuss

1. Draw your own self

2. Observing someone in the class - they are assigned a peer in the class to observe.

(Boal exercise where half the class sits out and the rest moves around the space – each

observer is assigned someone to observe, then they perform them simultaneously 3.

HOMEWORK: Choose someone to observe over the weekend. Someone as distinct from YOU as possible. Can be very different age, gender, culture. Observe them for as long as you can – different settings would be helpful. Observe their physicality, observe their relationships with others, observe their private moments. Make notes on your findings. These are your given circumstances.

Extrapolate from these to answer the question:

Who am I?

Take this question and break it down into at least 20 sub categories and answer them.

Examples: how do I feel about myself?

What is my occupation?

How old am I?

Who is my closest friend?

Where do I live?

Bring into class on Monday a one minute performance of the character that you created out of this observation. The performance must include an entrance, an exit, an objective, an obstacle, and it must reveal both a public side and private side of this person.

**Wednesday, November 8:**

BFA's and BA's talk to fresh

***Lonestar* and *Laundry and Bourbon***

*Pairs watch scenes and ask the following questions:*

What do you *specifically* want? Use a verb to state this want!

What is stopping you from getting what you want?

How can you raise the stakes of the objective?

What are you willing to do to get what you want?

What is the turning point in the scene? / When do things change?

Why do they change?

How is the objective, obstacle and turning point manifest physically?

**Monday, November 20:**

Objectives and Image Theatre

Objective work: working with a partner roughly the same size as yourself - stand facing each other and grab each others forearms. Each try to get the other person to come to your side of the room.

Place a chair. See the door. Try to leave the room. Try to keep them there  
Do this without touching

Objectives. Overhearing your objectives they are not strong enough or clear enough.  
(The room – to get the room – to get the room but I don't really want it)  
I want to \_\_\_\_\_

Make it an actable very. Make it strong and make it specific.  
Read William Ball's "finding Actable verbs"

What is your objective at the top of the scene?  
When does it change? What does it change to?  
What is it at the end? What is it then?  
Three times your objective changes. Physicalize these objectives in a still image that represents the objectives. Each character has a line from the script to pair with the image.  
Perform these for the class

**Monday, November 27:**

Rehearse

OBJECTIVES:

Working the beats.

What is a beat?

The beat is to acting as a paragraph is to writing.

The best changes when the subject (textual or subtextual) changes. Mark your beats.

Use lines or brackets to clearly delineate. Why mark them? This forces us to ask what is going on before we can identify it. It helps us understand the scenes rhythm, it points out transitions, it gives us units that we can more specifically analyses. It makes it clear when the action changes. Beats strung together with different objectives and actions help to create the role.

With your partner define the first five beats in your scenes.

Mark them off and define them in the margins.

Perform the first five beats without dialogue. As we watch we should be able to clearly see the beats and beats changes.

Perform the first five beats with limited dialogue. Limit the lines to only those that directly try to achieve your objective.

Perform the first five beats.

## ACTING 1 SCENE WORK: *objective* and *obstacle* leading to *action*

You will be performing the full scenes for the class on Wed the 16 and Fri the 18.

Although you will be “work-shopping” scenes in class, you and your partner are responsible for rehearsing on your own outside of class time. Please approach the scene through *experimentation and analysis*. Work with your partner and comb through the text by reading it out-loud over and over. Each time you read through the scene discuss the characters: their objectives, their obstacles, their tactics, and their relationship.

Let your characters PURPOSEFUL ACTIONS arise out of the in depth analysis that lead you to your character’s objective (what you want). Every action on stage must have a purpose; any physical action must be linked to the circumstances of the character. Stanislavski determines purpose by asking three essential questions: What? Why? How?

An action is performed, such as opening a letter (the what). The letter is opened because someone has said that it contains extremely damaging information about the character (the why). The letter is opened anxiously, fearfully (the how), because of the calamitous effect it might have on the character.

As you analyse the characters, their situation and the scene, use Uta Hagen’s Six Steps (page 134) to guide you. Begin with – **Who Am I?** Answer her three questions and then elaborate by answering the questions below. Use the play’s **given circumstances** to inform YOUR imagination and creative thinking. Be specific and in depth with your answers. Talk through your answers with your partner.

What is your full name?

How old are you?

When is your birthday? What is your sign? Do you believe in astrological signs?

What is your work?

What is your attitude toward your work? Toward work in general?

What is your education?

Describe your politics.

Are you religious?

Do you have any hobbies?

What are your life’s ambitions or goals?

Describe your love life.

Do you have children? Are you married?

What is your relationship with your parents like?

What is your attitude toward other people?

What do you think about the other person in the scene?

How do you feel about yourself?

How would other people describe you?

What has been a major event in your life?

What has led up to this moment?

What are you doing right before the scene begins?  
What do you do immediately after the scene is over?  
How does this scene change your life?  
What happens in the scene that changes you in some way?  
When, precisely, does this happen?