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9-2014

### THTR 220.01: Acting I

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#### Recommended Citation

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## **Acting I - THTR 220 – 01**

**3 Credits MWF\* 9:10 – 11:00 McGill 125**

**\*Friday Studio Rehearsals by Appointment Only**

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Office – McGill 212B

Office Hours – MWR 1-2 PM

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### **Aim**

Acting I is for any student with a background or interest in the theatre and the art of acting, especially those considering a career in the performing arts. This studio class deals with cultivating a specific skill set and learning to work with: voice, body, observation, imagination, concentration, improvisation, and character. It is core requirement for all students majoring in theatre and introduces the art of acting as a process critical to theatrical collaboration and production both onstage and behind the scenes.

### **By the end of the semester you must...**

- Demonstrate a sense of professionalism and enthusiasm for the theatre and the craft of acting
- Understand the fundamentals of the actor's process in the studio, rehearsal, and production
- Cultivate an understanding of the total organism involved in the acting process
- Explore the actor's relationship with himself/herself, with the text, with the physical environment, and with other performers
- Begin to develop a personal acting process and sense of artistic integrity that allows for independent and collaborative engagement with every performance you undertake
- Understand the ways in which an actor collaborates in the process of production with other artists in the field

### **Student Responsibilities**

- Attend every class period
- Participate fully in every exercise
- Practice techniques outside of class
- Rehearse and perform assigned material
- Fulfill all projects as assigned

### **Textbooks and Required Materials**

- Stanislavsky, Konstantin, and Jean Benedetti. *An Actor's Work: A Student's Diary*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print or eBook.
- Tickets to *Cyrano De Bergerac* and *A Christmas Carol* in the Montana Theater. Theatre majors are entitled to one ticket via their "majors card." All declared Majors will receive a "majors card" from Erin McDaniel in the first weeks of the semester. General Education students must purchase tickets at the UMArts Box Office in the PARTV Building. Plan ahead and purchase your tickets before the night of the show.

### **Attendance and Promptness**

Acting is participatory: there is no way to learn without doing, no adequate substitute for a missing partner, and no way to “make up” missed experience. School policies will be enforced strictly. Only documented absences will be excused. **Missing more than two classes will drop your grade one-third of a letter for each successive absence.**

Acting and Design courses may include officially scheduled, unsupervised rehearsal or studio time where attendance may or may not be taken. Students enrolled in these courses are not to schedule other activities during this dedicated time for independent work and collaboration with project and scene partners.

Furthermore, besides adversely affecting your own learning, arriving late for class disrupts the learning process of your fellow students. Tardiness in excess of 10 minutes will be considered a complete absence, and every two instances of tardiness—of whatever duration—will equate to one absence for grading purposes. I reserve the right to declare a “no lateness” policy should the need arise. Briefly put, if the door to the class is shut and you are not inside you are absent: no exceptions.

Please be sure to visit the rest room before class and during breaks. Leaving class during performances for a non-emergency is very disruptive. If an illness should cause you to miss class to the point of failing, it is up to you to pursue a medical withdrawal so that the course can be attempted again once you have recovered.

### **Teaching Assistant**

We have a wonderful teaching assistant with us this semester. The TA will be present during all activities and is available to supplement instruction and feedback should the need arise. Please pay the TA the same level of attentiveness and respect that you show to me.

### **Grading Scale and Breakdown**

A	100 – 90%
B	89 – 80%
C	79 – 70 %
D	69 – 60%
F	59 and Below

Participation:	40%
Writing/Quizzes:	30%
Performances	30%

### **Participation**

In addition to the attendance policy, for each class session you will receive a grade on a scale from zero to five.

- 5            The student was actively participating in class, well prepared, and positively engaged with the material and fellow classmates.
- 4            The student was present, somewhat prepared, but not fully engaged
- 3-0        The student was unprepared, disruptive, disrespectful, or absent

A solid work ethic is expected so high marks should be the norm. Poor work will stand out. Students receiving low marks for participation should meet with me to discuss the problem and how it will be resolved.

### **Skill Assessment**

Your performance and professional growth grades are my evaluation of how your technical skills have developed over the course of the semester. The following scale will be used to assess your performances and professional growth throughout the semester:

- A            Superb Acting.** The student has transcended the level of craft they brought to the course, mastered the intellectual preparation, and has begun to play imaginatively “in the moment.”
- B            Good Skills.** The student has mastered the intellectual preparation necessary to move on to more advanced skills, made some basic advances in craft, but is not yet playing fully “in the moment.”
- C            Fair Work.** The student is prepared intellectually for the work, and is making progress with some of the skills, but it is evident that stronger choices could be made and more practice is necessary.
- D            Poor work.** The student has not or is not prepared for the work and it is painfully obvious to the both the student and the audience.
- F            Failure.** The student has not or is not prepared at all, has made no specific choices, and is wasting theirs and the audience’s time.

Hopefully you will develop the craft necessary to begin playing “in the moment.” However participation is often not enough. You are expected to show some growth in artistry by the semester’s conclusion and achieve the outcomes laid out at the beginning of the syllabus.

### **Assignments**

All assignments, quizzes, and handouts will take place on Moodle this semester. You are expected to check the web daily. All written work must be properly formatted, typed, and submitted as a PDF document by the beginning of class on the date due. I will not accept paper copies. If Moodle is down, use email as your alternate submission option.

This semester you will read selected texts by renowned acting teacher, Konstantin Stanislavski. You will take an online quiz for each reading assignment and post a reflection to Moodle. Even though this is writing in an online forum, use of professional language and university level writing is required. Points will be deducted if you do not adhere to the highest standards of composition and citation. As you read, consider the following questions:

- How do you see yourself represented in the reading?
- What works? What doesn't? Why?
- How might these techniques have helped a performance you participated in or saw?
- How might an exercise be modified to better suit your needs?

The following writing and performance assignments will assess your development as an actor:

- Studio Exercises
- Open Scene Performances
- Character Study Research
- Monologue Performances
- Reading Quizzes
- Production Responses

Assignments may be turned in late for partial credit. Performances must take place on the date noted in the schedule or assigned in class by the instructor. Due to a tight schedule and limited class time, they may not be made up without prior permission from the instructor.

### **Production Attendance**

You are required to attend all School of Theatre & Dance theatre productions and attend the "All-School Responses" on the following dates (the Monday after the show closes).

*Cyrano de Bergerac*  
*A Christmas Carol*

October 20 at 5:15 PM  
December 8 at 5:30 PM

Attendance will be taken at the talkbacks and we will have an in class discussion if time permits.

### **Tentative Class Schedule and Important Dates**

There are four phases of this class. Consider this a rough and tentative schedule for the semester.

#### **Weeks 1-5**

#### **Topic 1: The Possibilities of Play**

Improvisation, Mindfulness, and Authenticity

#### **Weeks 6-10**

#### **Topic 2: The Actor in Production**

Rehearsal and Stagecraft

**Weeks 11-15****Topic 3: An Actor's Work**

Building a Character, Monologues, and Auditions

**Final Exam****Wednesday December 10, 8-10 AM**

Final Performances

**Electronic Resources**

In this class we will embrace technology as the incredible resource that it is. Email is the required method of communication for the course. Please check your email and Moodle frequently throughout the day. **I will always initiate contact with you using your UM email.**

If you have course materials stored on your phone, tablet, laptop or equivalent device, set it to "Airplane Mode" so that the functionality is limited to stored data retrieval. Silence and stow other unneeded electronic devices. I will have my phone on vibrate in case an emergency message should be sent by the university. If accessing the web becomes necessary, inform me that you are doing so for the benefit of the entire class. Raise your hand and proclaim, "I'm Googling it!"

If one of your devices beeps or rings accidentally 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 messaging or frivolously surfing the web will be dismissed immediately from class, resulting in a complete absence for the day. **I'M NOT KIDDING.**

**Beyond Acting I**

Acting I is a required course for all Theatre majors as well as General Education elective for students across campus. It is also the first preparatory acting class for students interested in pursuing the Bachelors of Fine Arts with a specialization in Acting. The BFA is a professional training program for aspiring actors. Students are admitted to the BFA via an audition during the second year of study and upon completion of the following foundational courses:

THTR 210 – Voice &amp; Speech I

THTR 220A – Acting I

THTR 221 – Acting II

THTR 315 – Physical Performance I

THTR 320 – Acting III

THTR 321 – Acting IV

The skills learned in these courses are necessary to pursue more advanced training in Acting. From the School of Theatre & Dance Handbook, Page 24: "The successful completion of advanced courses requires that students synthesize and utilize the fundamental skills acquired during prior training outside of class time. Independent preparation and rehearsal is expected so that advanced concepts can be pursued in the studio. Students who fail to demonstrate proper preparation for advanced work or monopolize studio time addressing fundamental issues of skill will be graded accordingly and may be asked to withdraw from the course."

Instructors will address the skills necessary for completing advanced work in the studio at the beginning of each advanced course.”

### **Movement Clothes**

Please wear clothes to class that facilitate movement. It will become immediately apparent to you that jewelry (small studs are acceptable except in the tongue), hooded sweatshirts, hats, tight-fitting and restrictive clothing, anything too revealing (showing skin), and hair that covers the face make full participation in class and proper evaluation by the instructor impossible. Please remove or change out of restrictive items before work commences.

### **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 having a “Wounded Warrior” day. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you might not be ready to advance in your training. If deemed necessary, any student with such needs will be asked to meet with the head of Acting/Directing and the instructor to discuss how we might better facilitate you through the course.

### **Sacred Space**

In order to foster an appropriate environment for our work, we will treat McGill 125 as a sacred space. Please remove your shoes and socks upon crossing the threshold into the classroom and store your belongings neatly in the shelves provided. If you arrive early, use this time for reflection, stretching, sweeping the floor, and organizing any furniture scattered about. Be mindful of any rehearsal furniture designated for a School production that may be using the space and treat it with respect. If you must speak, speak only of the work we will do in this class. When class has ended, restore the room. Return any furniture to its designated area and retrieve all belongings that you brought with you to class. There is no overnight storage allowed and the safety of your belongings is not guaranteed.

### **Extra Credit**

This semester you can earn up to a maximum of **fifty extra-credit** points towards your **participation grade** for participating in the following activities:

- 10 Points – Serve on the crew—construction, stage management, board operation, and backstage run-crew—of a production that does not fulfill your required school crew assignment. Please be sure to provide a program or note from your supervisor to verify that you completed the assignment.
- 5 Points Each – A sleeve of fancy 8-ounce clear plastic party cups for opening night toasts or a two liter bottle of ginger-ale (or equivalent number of cans)

No student can earn more than 100% of his or her participation grade in the class. Be aware of this when pursuing extra credit. **There is no extra credit to make up missed assignments or performances.**

### **Procedure/Policy**

You are expected to abide by the following School regulations. There is no eating, drinking, or gum chewing during the class. Please let me know if 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.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre classes, as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class and rehearsals with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in classes, rehearsals, and performances 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 of Theatre & Dance Handbook](#)**

All students in theatre courses must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance Handbook. The Handbook is available online at the link above.

### **[Disability Services for Students \(DSS\):](#)**

If you have a disability for which accommodations are needed please provide me, in writing, your official DSS accommodation letter. Please visit the website linked above for more information.

### **[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 located at the link above.