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THTR 120A.90: Introduction to Acting

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Introduction to Acting – THTR 120A – 90 - 3 Credits

McGill 125, MTWRF 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Instructor – John Kenneth DeBoer
Office – McGill 212B

Email – john.deboer@umontana.edu
Office Hours – MTWRF 12-1 PM

Aim

The purpose of this course is to broaden your communication, presentation, and personal skills. The course will help you develop a more articulate, responsive, and expressive identity. These goals are achieved by studying the craft of acting through studio participation and analysis of live performances in the School of Theatre & Dance and the Montana Repertory Theatre. At the end of the semester you will complete the course with an increased understanding of yourselves, your peers, and the world.

Outcomes

In this setting you will achieve:

- An understanding of the nature of theatre and craft of acting
- An understanding of, and respect for, performance including audience etiquette
- An understanding of the importance and contribution theatre makes to our world
- 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
- An ability to identify and respond critically to specific techniques evident in both studio improvisation and acting undertaken by your peers and production work observed in the theatre.

Grading Scale and Breakdown

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

Your grades for this semester will be weighted in the following manner:

Writing Assignments, Quizzes, Homework	40%
Attendance, Participation, Effort, Attitude, and Respect	30%
Acting Exercises, Performances	30%

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 one week of class will drop your grade one-third of a letter grade for each successive absence.**

Furthermore, besides adversely affecting your own learning, arriving late for class 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 equate to one absence for grading purposes.** I reserve the right to declare a “no lateness” policy should the need arise. 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.

All class sessions during this winter session will be divided into two eighty-five minute blocks: **9:00-10:25 and 10:35-12:00.** Each winter session class covers one “week” of material and each block represents one “day.” So if you oversleep and miss part of the first block (day), **do not write off the whole class (week).** Come as soon as you can and you will be counted absent for only the first half of class. We will have a ten-minute break every day. Please be sure to visit the rest room before class and during breaks. Leaving class during performances for a non-emergency is very disruptive.

Participation

You will perform daily and earn grades for in the areas of *process* and *product*. This means you will be graded on both the rehearsal process and finished performance. Your *process* grade is not based on the natural talent you bring to the class; rather it is a reflection of your *developed* talent and the progress that you make over the course of the session. In addition to the class attendance policy stated earlier, for each class you will receive a grade for the day on a scale from zero to five.

- 5** The student was actively participating in class, obviously 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 in this class so high marks should be the norm. Poor work will stand out. Students receiving low marks for participation should meet with the instructor to discuss the problem and how it will be resolved.

Effort/Respect/Attitude

Passing this class requires openness and a willingness to take risks. Effort and respect are two very important components of risk-taking. It is expected that you will respond to all assignments and performances with effort and enthusiasm. It is expected that you respect 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.

Performances

Performance or *product* grades will be evaluated based on the following scale and where you are in your artistic development. While this *product* grade goes hand in hand with the *process* grade, it is also my subjective evaluation of how your technical skills have developed over 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 has somewhat 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.

Remember, you are expected to show some growth in technical skill by the semester’s conclusion, but you will each be evaluated based on personal growth as individuals rather than in comparison to other students in the class.

Writing Assignments

There are four major writing assignments this session. Although these assignments are generally reflective and creative in nature, they must be representative of university writing. You will be graded for your imagination and creativity as well as for the quality of your writing. Details on individual writing assignments will be placed on Moodle as they are assigned. All written work must be formatted based on the assignment guidelines, typed, and uploaded to Moodle.

Tentative Schedule

This course is divided into sequential units.

Unit 1: What is Theatre? What is Acting? An overview of the art of Acting.

Unit 2: Ensemble. Building physical and vocal skills through group exercises including warm-ups and theatre games.

Unit 3: Exploration, Play, and Spontaneity. Cultivation of trust of impulse, instinct, and risk.

Unit 4: Scene Work with a Partner. The rehearsal and performance process.

Unit 5: The application of acting in your life: How empathy, tactics, objectives, and influence relate in the world and on the stage.

Electronic Resources

In this class we will embrace twenty-first century technology as the incredible resource that it is. Therefore, email is the required method of communication for the course. Please check your email and Moodle frequently throughout the day. Due to its unreliability, refrain from messaging me on Moodle using the IM feature. **I will always contact you using the primary email stored in Moodle and Cyberbear so be sure that your information is up to date.**

If you have course materials stored on your phone, tablet, laptop, or equivalent device, please set it to “Airplane Mode” so that the functionality is limited to stored data retrieval for class participation. Please 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 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 text messaging or frivolously surfing the web will be dismissed immediately, resulting in a complete absence. **I’M NOT KIDDING.**

Production Attendance

As this a winter session course, you will not be able to see the upcoming spring semester performances by the School of Theatre & Dance. We will substitute several filmed performances for this component of your grade. However, the class fee you have paid still allows you one ticket for each of the spring shows at no extra expense.

You may pick up your tickets at the PARTV box office located in the lobby between 11:30 AM and 5:30 PM, Monday –Friday after the start of the Spring 2014 semester. You

must present your GRIZ CARD to pick up your tickets and you must identify which class you are in, therefore you must know your section number and instructors name.

You are in section: **90**

Your instructor's name is: **John Kenneth DeBoer**

The Miracle Worker – Montana Theater

Book of Days – Masquer Theater

A Midsummer Night's Dream – Montana Theater

Visit umtheatredance.org for dates and times of the performances. 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, therefore do not wait until the evening of the performance to pick up a ticket.

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.

Extra Credit

Making the choice to live a life in the theatre requires service to community by volunteering time and goods. This semester you can earn up to a maximum of **fifty extra credit** points towards your participation grade.

10 Points Attend performances during winter session and present me with a program from the event with your name written clearly on the front. (I am happy to return these mementos to you after recording them in the grade book if requested).

5 Points Donate Ginger Ale, or a sleeve of fancy 8-ounce clear plastic party cups for opening night toasts of *Book of Days*, the Spring Dance Concert, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. These items should be brought to me after class or during my office hours.

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 of Theatre & Dance 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. 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 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 and 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 contact me in the first week of the semester and **provide notification of the specific accommodations you require**. 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.