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1-2014

THTR 221.01: Acting II

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Recommended Citation

DeBoer, John Kenneth, "THTR 221.01: Acting II" (2014). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 2247.
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Acting II - THTR 221 – 01
3 Credits MW 11:10 – 1:00 McGill 125
Friday Studio Rehearsals by Appointment
Prerequisite: THTR 220

Instructor – John Kenneth DeBoer
Office – McGill 212B

Email – john.deboer@umontana.edu
Office Hours – MWR 1-2 PM

Course Description

In this course we will continue the work begun in THTR 220, Acting I, developing craft through Stanislavski-based approaches to scene. We will investigate personalization, objective work and the creation of character in the context of American playwrights of the modern era.

Objectives

- To integrate presented acting techniques into studio performances
- To develop and utilize a personal methodology and vocabulary of acting
- To pursue mindful and appropriate selection, analysis, casting, rehearsal, and performance of dramatic literature
- To expand empathy and imagined possibility of ‘play’ in pursuit of building engaging characters

By the end of the semester you must...

- Demonstrate understanding and knowledge of the relationship between the actor, the literature, and the audience,
- Exhibit a developing ability to assess personal growth in performance
- Begin to develop a personal acting process and sense of artistic integrity that allows for independent and collaborative engagement with every performance you undertake

Student Responsibilities

- To attend every class period
- To participate fully in every exercise
- To practice techniques outside of class
- To regularly rehearse and perform assigned material
- To fulfill all writing and research projects as assigned

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.** 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.

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. In addition, 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 by the time class begins, 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.

Grading Scale and Breakdown

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

Participation:	30%
Writing/Research:	30%
Performances	30%
Professional Growth:	10%

Participation

In addition to the attendance policy, for each class session 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 me to discuss the problem and how it will be resolved.

Performance and Assessment

Your performance and professional growth grades are my evaluation of your technical skills and how they have developed through the course of the semester. The following rubric 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 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 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 tools for effective performance and will receive high marks. However participation is often not enough. You are expected to show some growth in craft and artistry by the semester’s conclusion and achieve the outcomes laid out at the beginning of the syllabus.

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 from class, resulting in a complete absence. **I’M NOT KIDDING.**

Performances and Writing Assignments

The main performance pieces and writing assignments for the class will be:

- Monologue Performances
- Three Scene Performances and Documentation
- Production Responses

Performances must take place on the date noted on Moodle 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. Writing assignments may be turned in late for partial credit.

All students are required to attend *Book of Days* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on the main-stage this semester and attend the "All-School Responses" which take place at 5:15 on the Monday after the show closes. Be sure to take notes. Attendance will be taken and you are expected to incorporate material from the talkback into your response paper.

Tentative Class Schedule and Important Dates

There are four phases of this class. We start with a monologue followed by scenes from different eras of American Dramatic Literature. Consider this a rough and tentative schedule for the semester.

Weeks 1-2	Topic 1: Monologues Monologues
Weeks 3-6	Topic 2: Boom, Bust, and War Scenes: 1920-1945 Feb 17 – No Classes! Presidents Day! Mar 5 – Final Performances
<i>Book of Days</i>	Talkback, March 17 Paper Due, March 19
Weeks 7-9	Topic 3: Post-War Scenes: 1945-1970
Week 10	Spring Break, No Classes April 13 – Final Performances
Weeks 12-14	Topic 4: Millennium Approaches: 1970-2000
<i>Midsummer</i>	Talkback, May 12 Paper Due, May 13 at 5 PM
Final Exam	Monday May 12, 10:10 AM–12:10 PM Final Performances

Extra Credit

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

- 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 – 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.**

Preparation for BFA Auditions

From the Handbook, Page 24: “all acting and skills courses during the third and fourth years of BFA training are considered “advanced.” This level of training is student-driven and collaborative. 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.”

Procedure/Policy

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

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.

Personal Comfort

The study of acting often requires the instructor or peers to touch each other or be in

close proximity in order to adjust and align the body and voice. 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 by the instructor, any student with such issues 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 a productive environment for our work, we will treat this space as a sacred one. Please remove your shoes upon crossing the threshold into the classroom and store your belongings neatly in the space provided. If you arrive early, use the time to reflect, warm-up, and organize any furniture scattered about. Be mindful of 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 acting. When class has ended, return any furniture to its designated area, and retrieve all of your belongings.

[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.