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THTR 120A.90: Introduction to Acting

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

McGill 125, Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Instructor – John Kenneth DeBoer
Office – McGill 212B

Email – john.deboer@umontana.edu
Office Hours – Everyday, 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 or recorded performances. At the end of the semester you will complete the course with an increased understanding of yourselves, your peers, and the world.

Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course you will:

- Understand of the fundamental concepts of the craft of acting
- Demonstrate confidence in the presentation of your self—socially and professionally
- Articulate the circumstances, objectives, and tactics behind your personal actions in life and those of the characters you take on in performance
- Understand the important contribution the art of theatre makes to the world
- Engage with performances with an attentive, critical eye while upholding respectful audience etiquette
- Respond critically to the acting undertaken by your peers and professionals in the theatre and popular media.

Grading Breakdown

Your grades for this semester will carry the following weight:

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

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 experiences. Only documented absences will be excused. **Missing more than two classes will drop your grade one-third of a letter for each successive absence.**

This courses includes officially scheduled, unsupervised rehearsal time where attendance may or may not be taken. Students are not to schedule other activities during this

dedicated independent 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**.

Each day of winter session covers *one week* of material. All class sessions this winter will be divided into eighty-five minute blocks and each block represents *one day*: 9:00-10:25 and 10:35-12:00. 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 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 in the areas of *process* and *product*. This means you will be graded on both the rehearsal process and finished performances. Your process grade is a reflection of your developed talent and the effort that you make. You will receive a participation grade for each block 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.

Effort/Respect/Attitude

Passing this class requires openness and a willingness to take risks. An excellent performance hinges upon taking risks, which is impossible to do if the environment is uncomfortable or uninviting. 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. It is also expected that when you participate in classroom activities your peers will encourage you to commit to your actions and characters without judgment, remorse, or caution.

Performances

Performances will be evaluated based on the following scale. 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 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 craft by the semester’s conclusion and achieve the outcomes laid out.

Writing Assignments

The writing assignments for this course are critical, reflective, and creative in nature and 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 and uploaded to Moodle.

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, resulting in a complete absence for the day. **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 semester. You must present your GRIZ CARD to pick up your tickets and identify which class you are in.

- *Hot n’ Throbbin’* – Masquer Theater
- *All in the Timing* – Masquer Theater
- *Dance in Concert* – Montana Theater
- *Romeo and Juliet* – Montana Theater

Visit [Griztix](#) 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

There is no extra credit available for this course. Please take this under consideration as you complete your work this session.

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.

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.

Beyond Introduction to Acting

This course is a stepping-stone to further participation in the School of Theatre & Dance courses. If you are interested in more theatre or acting training please consider the following courses offered in Spring 2016:

THTR 101LY - 50	Introduction to Theatre	32004	Online
THTR 101LY - 51	Introduction to Theatre	35306	Online
THTR 102A - 50	Introduction to Theatre Design	33947	Online
THTR 235L - 01	Dramatic Literature	32385	11:10AM-12:30PM

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 must to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code located at the link above.