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Fall 9-1-2017

THTR 294.01: Seminar - Professional Skills

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Recommended Citation

DeBoer, John Kenneth, "THTR 294.01: Seminar - Professional Skills" (2017). *Syllabi*. 5599.

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Seminar: Professional Skills – THTR 294 – 01 – 1 Credit
McGill 125, F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Instructor – John Kenneth DeBoer
Office – PARTV 192

Email – john.deboer@umontana.edu
Office Hours – T, 1-2 and R, 9-11

Aim

This studio class is designed specifically for the theatre student who is considering a BFA in Acting. The focus of the class is the professional life of the actor. It is designed to examine the fundamental skills required to pursue a professional career. We will explore what it takes to thrive in the competitive environment of advanced studio training.

By the end of the semester you must...

- To help you clarify and define your goals as an advanced acting student.
- To help you create a plan for establishing yourself as an actor in the BFA training program.
- To help you enhance your casting skills for production work by honing audition material as well as assembling an initial resume and headshot.

Textbooks and Required Materials

- Smith, Anna Deavere. Letters to a young artist. New York: Anchor Books, 2006.
- Readings provided as PDF documents via [Moodle](#).
- Recording equipment with the ability to save video files to youtube or other streaming services. Most phones, tablets, and computers have such capabilities.
- Professional Headshots (touch-ups encourage but not required)

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. You may present documentation for two excused absences without affecting your final grade. **Further excused absences and any unexcused (undocumented) absences will drop your final grade one-third of a letter.** If an illness should cause you to miss class to the point of failing, pursue a withdrawal so that the course can be reattempted once you have recovered.

Arriving late for class disrupts the learning process of your fellow students. Tardiness in excess of 10 minutes will be considered a complete absence. 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. Likewise, be sure to visit the rest room before class. Leaving class during exercises or

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 and Performances:	80%
Writing/Research/Homework:	10%
Professional Growth:	10%

Skill Assessment

Your performance and growth grades are my evaluation of how your skills have developed over the course of 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 skills, but 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 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 skills 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 in the syllabus.

Assignments and Performances

All readings and performances will be available on Moodle. Performances must take place on the date noted on Moodle or assigned in class by the instructor. Some classes and performances may take place online. Due to a tight schedule and limited class time, they may not be made up without prior permission from the instructor.

Major assignments:

- Headshot and Resume
- Audition Monologue Portfolio
- Professionals Weekend Audition Package
- Participation in our Audition Forum on Moodle
- Self-Assessment and Goal-setting exercise

Beyond THTR 294

Students are admitted to the BFA via an audition during the second year of study and upon completion of the following foundational courses:

THTR 211 – Voice & Speech II

THTR 221 – Acting II

THTR 294 – Seminar: Professional Skills

THTR 315 – Physical Performance I

THTR 316 – Physical Performance II

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.”

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit available in this 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.

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 the link above.

School of Theatre & Dance Student Handbook

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/umarts/theatredance/About/handbook.php>.

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.