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THTR 515.01: Graduate Physical Performance Skills

Jillian Campana

University of Montana - Missoula, jillian.campana@umontana.edu

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Graduate Physical Performance THTR 515

Spring 2016 M/W: 9:40-11 McGill 125

Dr. Jillian Campana

McGill 216 243 5846 jillian.campana@umontana.edu

Office Hours: TUESDAYS 9-11 & FRIDAYS 11-12

AIM: Physical Theatre is a term used to describe a type of performance that pursues storytelling primarily through physical means. The purpose of this course is to explore the multiple ways story and character can be effectively communicated using the body.

OUTCOMES: In this workshop setting you will develop:

- **Physicality:** muscle strength; physical control; balance; breathing; taking and placing weight; use of levels and height; stamina, synchronicity
- **Vocality:** breath control; projection; vocal range; creating and physicalizing sound; use of vocal dynamics
- **Acting:** character; rhythm; dynamics; tableaux; interaction; spontaneity; improvisation; spatial awareness; timing; style
- **Physical ensemble skills:** trust; teamwork; cooperation; reliance of peers; lifting and catching; interaction
- **Dynamic quality:** speed; flow; direction; use of contrasts; emotional quality; sense of performance outside of oneself

CONTENT: This course will focus on: concentration, centering, balance, agility, strength, endurance, and collaboration. Through a series of ensemble and individual exercises, you will develop an increased ability to tell a story and to create a character through movement. The content of the course will be divided into 6 major units: 1) Laban Movement Analysis, 2) Contact Improvisation, 3) Psychological Gesture, 4) Biomechanics, 5) Rasaboxing, 6) Suzuki Method of Actor Training. In addition to studying these areas, you will be responsible for teaching the ensemble about an area of Physical Theatre you wish to know more about. You will have a full class (120 minutes) to teach the lesson, which should serve to introduce the class to the practitioner, company, technique or theory you choose to cover. Please consider teaching one of the traditions/practitioners covered in our book.

Aside from day to day performances and small devised pieces, you will work with a partner (or partners) on a scene from a published play. The scene will be explored and work-shopped both inside and outside class throughout the semester. The scene should be a new work for you, not something you have previously performed, directed, or even seen.

EXPECTATIONS: You are required to:

- Attend every class on time;

- Commit to all exercises and assignments with effort;
- Respect their body, their classmates, the environment and the process;
- Consistently work toward creating an open and safe atmosphere for everyone working;
- Take risks and support one's peers as they do the same.

EVALUATION: The final grade will be a reflection of your effort, progress and development of skills covered. It is assumed that as a graduate student you will attend classes, participate actively and commit to the work. The following areas will be evaluated:

- Self-reflection: three 2-page written reflections over the course of the semester; 20%
- Individual lesson presentations; 20%
- Scene performances: a demonstrated understanding of, and ability to apply, the techniques explored in class; 30%
- Final paper and performance: further research on one of the areas we explore in the units by finding and reading at least 4 other articles or books from or about the work and the theories. You will then create a solo or partner performance that makes use of the work as a way to share story and character. This can be a non-verbal performance, a monologue or scene, or a new devised work. You will each turn in a 10-page paper that defines the technique or work, that adds to the information we covered in class and that clearly identifies your process as you undertook the investigation to build the performance. 30%

FINAL EXAM: We will meet during finals week: Wednesday, May 11 from 10:10-12.

TEXT: *Movement for Actors* by Nicole Potter. Allworth Press, 2001.

- Other articles and chapters will be posted on Moodle.

POLICY:

- No eating or chewing gum. Bring a bottle of water. Other beverages are not acceptable.
- Actors must wear appropriate movement attire to class.
- 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 http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php.
- School of Theatre & Dance Policies: 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>.

- 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/shop/rehearsal/performance 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.
- **From the EO/AA Office:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.