THTR 321.02: Acting IV

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THTR 321 Acting IV-MAR 470 Advanced Acting for Film I  
Spring 2017 - The University of Montana, Missoula

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This class is designed to introduce the basic techniques involved in realistic film acting. The class will consist of scene work, exercises in class, interaction with film directors, study of film actors, and discussion of issues encountered over the course of the semester. You will also experience the collaborative process of filmmaking by performing various roles in front of the camera and crewing in-class shoots behind the scenes.

Responsibilities
Come to each class prepared to work:

- **Physically**: Lines memorized, costumes and props secured and ready, full text read and analyzed, scenes divided into beats and named.

- **Emotionally**: The world of the character and the story thoroughly studied and researched. The goals and subjectivity of the character have been personally explored in a manner that allows you to “arrive” at the scene ready to engage with your partner(s).

Outcomes
By the end of the semester you must demonstrate the ability to:

- Anticipate and navigate continuity restrictions called for by the editing process.
- Create blocking that can be repeated exactly from take-to-take—this, while keeping the “improvisational” nature of your acting work.
- Work in an uninflected, non-presentational, and emotionally available manner: Acting requires presence in each unfolding moment of time that you inhabit. It requires that you allow the camera to come to you and that you open yourself to the process. You need to be in contact with your partner on a moment-to-moment basis, approaching the scene “as if” for the first time.
- Create grounded, believable business during your performances. Truth of physical action is one of the keys to the work.
- Layer your character development with imaginative sensory details:
Goals/Objectives are important for the work, but working with the five senses is critical as well—hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting.

**Required Materials**


**Recommended Materials**
An SD card (32 GB is usually a good size) if you would like to keep your own footage.

**Crew/Support Work Criteria**
You must demonstrate the ability to:
- Show up on time and ready to work
- Stay concentrated on the scene and your role in optimizing the outcome
- Know your place in the chain of command and function within it
- Understand the script you are filming
- Understand why different shots are used
- Be competent in set up and breakdown of equipment

**Grading**
You will be graded on the following:

**Scene Work:** 60%
- Preparation 30%
- Competence in Acting: 30%

**Attendance, Collaboration, and Participation:** 40%
- Crew Assignments 15%
- Attendance: 25%

**Film Work**
- Assignment #1: Film Monologues
- Assignment #2: 5-Shot Exercise (Monologues into Scenes)
- Assignment #3: Seated Coverage Scene with Props
- Assignment #4: Integration and Continuity: *Stranger than Fiction*

**Written Work**
- Final *Acting Power* Reflection
POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Attendance
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, it is up to you to pursue a withdrawal. The course can be retaken when 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, 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. Likewise, be sure to visit the restroom before class. Leaving class during exercises or performances for a non-emergency is very disruptive.

Film acting courses may include officially scheduled, unsupervised rehearsals or shoots where attendance may or may not be taken. Students are not to schedule other activities during this dedicated time for independent work and collaboration with project and scene partners.

Advanced Training
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 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.

**Student Success and Conduct**

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.

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](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

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](http://www.umt.edu/umarts/theatredance/About/handbook.php).