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Winter 1-1-2017

THTR 120A.90: Introduction to Acting

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Recommended Citation
McDaniel, Matthew T., "THTR 120A.90: Introduction to Acting" (2017). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 8841.
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THTR120A Section 60 :: 3 Credits
INTRODUCTION TO ACTING :: Winter Session 2017

Class meeting times: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Fridays 9:00AM- 12:00PM
Instructor: Matthew McDaniel
Email: matthew.mcdaniel@umconnect.umt.edu
Office: McGill 125
Phone: 406-243-4481
Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 12-12:30PM *and by appointment*

AIM:
This course is designed to help you broaden your communication, presentation, and social skills. By studying the craft of acting you will come to develop a more articulate, responsive, and expressive identity and begin to view your everyday actions and interactions as performances. By the end of the semester, it is expected that you leave with an extended understanding of yourself and of other people and that you will have a stronger sense of public presentation skills leading to better social and professional interactions. I hope that you enjoy the experience, have fun, and make friends with your classmates.

OUTCOMES:
In this setting you will achieve:

- A demonstrated confidence in the presentation of yourself—socially and professionally;
- An ability to further articulate both your personal character and the character of those you take on in dramatic performance;
- An understanding of, and appreciation for, the craft of acting, the skills that actor's employ, and ways non-actors can also use acting skills;
- An understanding of, and respect for, performers and audiences.

CONTENT: This course is divided into 4 sequential units.

Unit 1: WHAT IS ACTING AND WHAT IS PERFORMANCE?
An introduction to the history and theory of acting, vocabulary, and audience etiquette. You will create performances and learn how to see yourself as an actor.
Unit 2: DEVELOPING ACTING SKILLS
Building skills through group exercises, including warm-ups, games, and acting exercises. You will learn how to use specific acting skills in your everyday life.
Unit 3: PERFORMING A CHARACTER
Rehearsing and performing short scenes with a partner, creating new and original characters, and analyzing characters and scripts. You will learn how to use the skills you have developed in the service of a role.
Unit 4: GAINING INFORMATION FROM REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE
Techniques for learning more about your world through performance. You will learn more about other people through role-play and improvisation.

REQUIRED TEXT:
All My Sons by Arthur Miller
Publisher: Dramatists Play Service, Inc. (October 1, 1948)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0822200163
ISBN-13: 978-0822200161

EVALUATION:

Workshop Attendance: 20%
Exercises, Quizzes & Homework: 10%
Preparation & Rehearsals: 20%
Writing & Reflections 25%
Performance Presentations: 25%

Participation in Class Projects and Performances You will be performing on a weekly basis and will be given grades for your class work and performances in the areas of *process* and *product*. In other words, you will be graded on the finished performance and also on all of the rehearsals. Your grade in this area is not based on the natural talent you bring to the class; rather, it will be a reflection of your *developed* talent and the progress that you make over the course of the semester. You will receive a weekly grade in this area.

Effort/Respect/Attitude Effort and respect are two very important requirements. You are expected to respond to assignments and performances with effort and enthusiasm. You are expected to show respect for yourself, your classmates, your instructor, and your classroom environment. An excellent performance hinges upon taking risks, which is impossible to do if the environment is uncomfortable or uninviting. It is expected that when you participate in classroom activities, your peers will encourage you to commit to your actions and characters without embarrassment, remorse, or caution. This class requires openness and a willingness to take risks. Once that happens, the fun begins. You will receive a weekly grade in this area.

Writing Assignments There are several worksheets in our text that you will be asked to fill out and discuss with the groups well as an in depth character analysis, also referred to in the text. There will also be another writing assignment, approximately 3⁄4 of the way through the class which will be creative in nature.

Attendance and Promptness is also considered in your final grade: Attendance is compulsory because acting is participatory. There is no way to learn without doing, no adequate substitute for a missing partner, and no way to "make up" a missed experience.

Winter Session Addendum Attendance for this course will be taken twice daily. Once at 9:00AM and again at 10:30AM. Due to the length of the course session you will receive a 10 minute break at 10:20AM each day. Please treat each session as if it were two class sessions. You will receive separate attendance and participation grades each day for each section of the course you attend. *You should make preparations to attend for the entire 3 hour course period.*

After 1 week of absences (2 classes for T/TH and 3 classes for M/W/F), your grade will begin to be effected. Generally speaking after a week of absences your grade will be lowered an increment. Arriving late adversely affects your own learning and 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. If you have excessive absences or lateness please speak to me.

POLICIES: You are expected to abide by the following School of Theatre & Dance regulations.

- Eating, drinking, or gum chewing during the class are not permitted. Please let me know in writing if you have a medical exception to this policy. Water in a capped container is acceptable.
- No smoking in class. Ever.
- Absolutely no weapons, real or fake, are allowed in the classroom.
- Late work is not accepted; this includes late or unprepared performances.

- There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they can be physical in nature. Please proceed through class and rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others.
- 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 the
- instructor's consent. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

Movement Clothes:
Please wear clothing to class that does not restrict movement: tight-fitting and restrictive clothing and anything too revealing is not be acceptable. Hooded sweatshirts, hats, and hair that cover the face make it hard for others to see you, so remove them before work commences. Please clean your shoes appropriately before you enter the building to keep our floors as clean as possible. You may be asked to work in bare feet.

Personal Comfort:
The study of acting often requires the instructor or peers to touch each other or be in close proximity. We all have bad days when we do not want such contact. Feel free to bow out of a particular exercise if you are in pain. However, frequent sitting out is a sign that you are having a difficult time with the class material.

Cell Phones:
Please turn off your cell phone in class. My phone will be set to vibrate in case an emergency text message should be sent by the University. If your phone rings during class, please silence it as quickly as possible. Anyone caught texting in class will be immediately dismissed from class, resulting in an absence for the day.

School of Theatre & Dance Handbook:
For 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.

UM 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.

DSS: 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.