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Fall 9-1-2018

### THTR 220A.01: Acting I

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# ACTING I

School of Theatre & Dance – University of Montana  
THTR 220A-02 / Fall 2018 / 3 credits / CRN 73228  
M / W 12:30 – 1:50 pm; McGill 125

<u>Professor</u>	<u>Contact Info</u>	<u>Office / Office Hrs</u>
Dr. Pamyla Stiehl	Email: pamyla.stiehl@umontana.edu General Office: 406-243-4481	McGill 212C T / R 2:30-4:00 and by appointment

When asked about his own method, Konstantin Stanislavsky apparently said: *“Create your own method. Don’t depend slavishly on mine. Make up something that will work for you! But keep breaking traditions, I beg you.”*  
He also said, *“The person you are is a thousand times more interesting than the best actor you could ever hope to be.”*

**COURSE AIM:** *Acting I is for any student with a background or interest in the craft of acting, especially those considering a career in the performing arts (theatre, music, dance, film, broadcasting). This studio class is intended to cultivate the skill sets necessary to the professional actor: observation, imagination, concentration, improvisation, and character. I also encourage you to experiment with the quieter, less presentational aspects of acting: reflection, balance, listening, vulnerability, introspection, and curiosity. Through this course, you will start to fill your proverbial “actor’s toolbox” with many different tools, as well as learn how to choose those tools thoughtfully and utilize them with confidence and ease. It is a core requirement for all students majoring in theatre and introduces the art of acting as a process integral to collaboration and production both onstage, on camera, and behind the scenes.*

**COURSE OUTCOMES:** *By the end of the semester you must...*

- *Demonstrate a sense of professionalism and enthusiasm for the theatre and the craft of acting*
- *Understand the fundamentals of the actor’s process in the studio, rehearsal, and production*
- *Cultivate an understanding of the total organism involved in the acting process*
- *Explore the actor’s relationship with self, the text, the physical environment, and other performers*
- *Begin to develop an appreciation for the artistic process necessary for independent and collaborative engagement with every performance undertaken or viewed.*

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, et.al. (available for purchase in bookstore)
- *A Lonely Impulse of Delight* by John Patrick Shanley (electronic PDF text provided on Moodle)
- *The Red Coat* by John Patrick Shanley (electronic PDF text provided on Moodle)
- *Acting One* (excerpts) by Robert Cohen (electronic PDF texts provided on Moodle)
- *20<sup>th</sup> Century Actor Training* (“Stanislavsky” chapter) by Alison Hodge (electronic PDF text provided on Moodle)
- Scene excerpts for final scene work (provided online but student is required to obtain entire play for chosen scene)

**RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT:** **Yoga Mat** (you are welcome to warm up without one and the studio has mats available for use, but you may want to invest in a mat for your own future use/practice)

*Our bodies are the loci of pain, pleasure and knowing. They hold the stories of our life, death, love, and loss. They are the generative place from and about which great art is made and healing manifests.*

**LIVE PRODUCTION ATTENDANCE:** You MUST attend BOTH UM School of Theatre & Dance’s theatre productions this semester. Theatre majors are entitled to one ticket per show via their “majors card.” All declared majors will receive a “majors card” from Erin McDaniel in the first weeks of the semester. Non-majors must purchase tickets through UMArts Box Office. The materials fee you paid when you registered for this course allows you to obtain your ticket for these shows at no additional expense. You must pick up your ticket at the UMArts Box Office, located in the lobby of the PARTV Center, in person **Tuesdays – Fridays between noon and 6 PM, plus one hour before a performance.** When you go to the Box Office to obtain your ticket, you must **present your Griz Card.** Please tell the box office staff that you are a 220A student and that you are picking up your ticket. You may pick up only one ticket--your own; you cannot pick up a ticket for a classmate. 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.

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 you plan to attend to pick up a ticket.** Evening curtain times on **weekdays and Saturdays are 7:30 p.m., while Sunday matinees begin at 2:00 p.m.:**

<i>Summer and Smoke</i>	Masquer Theatre	Oct 3-7 and Oct 10-14
<i>White Christmas</i>	Montana Theatre	Nov 20, 23-25 and Nov 28-Dec 2

You are also required to attend the "All School Responses" for both productions on the following dates (the Monday after the show closes):

<i>Summer and Smoke</i>	October 15	Time/Place: 5:10 p.m.; Masquer Theatre
<i>White Christmas</i>	December 3	Time/Place: 5:10 p.m.; Masquer Theatre

Attendance will be taken at the end of the talkbacks and we will also have an in-class discussion if time permits. **YOU CANNOT PASS THIS CLASS IF YOU DO NOT ATTEND THE PRODUCTIONS.**

### **TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**

*In order to foster an appropriate environment for our work, we will treat the McGill Studio as a sacred space, respecting the facility and each other as we work on the craft of acting. Here are some reminders as to artistic and professional protocol:*

- **Arrive to class early and ready to work.** Warm up a bit on your own, getting into a focused, positive, and receptive place -- physically, emotionally, and mentally. As noted below, two late arrivals equal one absence. **We leave class only after restoring the space to its original state.**
- **WEAR EXERCISE CLOTHING** that promotes a "neutral" state of being (not flashy, controversial logo-bearing or overtly skin-revealing). Treat this class as a phys-ed course. If you need other "character" clothing for scene work, bring items that you can slip on over your exercise clothing or change during class. **We will be physically warming up with yoga. Be prepared to work barefoot and on the floor.** We will most likely be working up a sweat. **Keep hair back and out of your face.** We will also be working our voices. Bring water (in a capped container). **LEAVE ALL DIGITAL DEVICES IN BACKPACKS, with phones set to "Airplane Mode."** Phones are never to make an appearance, unless permitted by the instructor (needed for a scene). **ALL SCRIPTS NEED TO BE IN HARDCOPY FORM – NOT DIGITAL ON PHONES. No texting EVER** in class. I will grant an exception if you are Googling something related to class or using tech for a class project, but you must ask permission and/or let me know.
- Come to class with an **open and willing attitude.** Be willing to try all the exercises *before* you pass judgment on them. And then be willing to try them again.
- **Participate in discussions.** Your thoughts and observations are integral to our development in this class, and I expect you to share them. Ask questions! Challenge assumptions (and me – I have thick skin).
- **Be respectful** of your classmates: listen to them during the exercises and in the discussions and respond thoughtfully, even if you disagree with their choices or comments. Frame responses in a constructive manner. **NEVER ATTEMPT TO "DIRECT" YOUR FELLOW ACTORS.**
- Always **communicate with me about any concerns or questions** you have regarding the course, your progress, further areas of exploration, how this connects to other coursework you're doing, and so on.
- Decide to enjoy the work we do together. **If you find yourself overwhelmed, step back and practice the mantra: "I am enough for me today."** Then, do your best to dive back in and be ready to share yourself with others in a variety of playful and inquisitive ways. If you are having a **particularly rough day (physically or emotionally)**, please feel free to speak with me in private and we will discuss strategies by which you can still participate in and contribute to class that day. **If an illness should cause you to miss class to the point of failing, it is up to you to obtain a medical withdrawal** so that the course can be attempted again once you have recovered.
- **This course requires work outside of class hours.** All Acting courses include independently scheduled, unsupervised rehearsal or studio time. You will be required to coordinate with your acting partner/s to find space and time to rehearse outside of class. Failure to do so is notable in your final product.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

### 1. ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION

**Attendance:** Your prompt class attendance supports and exemplifies your level of commitment to the art and craft of acting; further, any absence has an effect upon the work of the entire class. Absences can only be excused if **formal documentation** is provided (e.g., doctor's note, court notice, obituary with travel itinerary) or if I am notified as to a religious observance conflict. **Missing more than two classes will drop your grade one-third of a letter for each successive absence.** In addition, **two tardies (arriving after attendance has been taken) will equal one unexcused absence.** If your tardiness is extreme, I reserve the right to count you as absent for the day and possibly refuse your admittance into class, out of respect for the other students and to avoid disrupting their learning process.

**Participation / Collaboration:** Participation in this class is crucial! Theatre is action! Responsible participation and collaboration also includes attentive observation -- you must respect and support your fellow classmates, keep feedback constructive, and share the floor during discussions/exercises. **Further, if you are asked questions about assigned readings and cannot respond, it will affect your participation grade.** Following is the grading rubric for participation/collaboration: (10 POINTS)

- 9-10 Actively participated, often contributed to discussions/exercises, courteous and invested in the work of others
- 8-9 Dutifully participated, semi-regularly contributed to discussions/exercises, courteous/invested
- 7-8 Seldom participated, occasionally contributed to discussions, marginally courteous/invested
- 6-7 Participated and contributed only when absolutely required, problems with courtesy and investment
- 0-6 Failed in regards to participation, contribution, courtesy, investment, and overall professional behavior

### 2. TWO (2) LIVE PRODUCTION ATTENDANCES & REFLECTIONS:

**Summer and Smoke.** Attend live UM production; send me informal email reflecting on the acting component of the production. You must specifically address enough material to convince me that you attended the production. You must also attend "All School Response/Talkback" session. (5 PTS EMAIL REFLECTION / 5 PTS TALKBACK -- 10 PTS TOTAL) **RESPONSE EMAIL DEADLINE = SUNDAY OCT 14 / TALKBACK = MONDAY, OCT 15**

**White Christmas.** Attend live UM production; send me informal email reflecting on the acting component of the production. You must specifically address enough material to convince me that you attended the production. You must also attend "All School Response/Talkback" session. (5 PTS EMAIL REFLECTION / 5 PTS TALKBACK -- 10 PTS TOTAL) **RESPONSE EMAIL DEADLINE = SUNDAY DEC 2 / TALKBACK = MONDAY, DEC 3**

### 3. QUIZZES OVER ASSIGNED READINGS:

All reading assignments are due by the date specified in the syllabus so that we may discuss them in class. To facilitate this, there will be **four short-answer quizzes** given periodically regarding the reading assignment/s completed to date. (EACH QUIZ = 5 POINTS -- 20 POSSIBLE TOTAL POINTS)

### 4. GRADED ACTING EXERCISES / PERFORMANCES:

This class will be divided into 3 sections: WEEKS 1-5 – "The Possibilities of Play"; WEEKS 6-10 – "The Actor in Production"; WEEKS 10-15 – "An Actor's Work." Following are the graded, memorized acting/performance assignments associated with and reflecting progress in the course sections:

Open Scene Performance – 10 POINTS

Random Scene Performance – 10 POINTS

*Red Coat or Lonely Delight* Scene Exercise – 10 POINTS

Stranger Physicality Exercise – 10 POINTS

30-second/1-minute Monologue Performance (10 PTS) with Score/Analysis (10 PTS) – 20 POINTS TOTAL

3-Minute Scene Performance (10 PTS) with Score/Analysis (10 PTS) & Reflection (10 PTS) – 30 POINTS TOTAL

### 5. FINAL: Performed Scenes and Monologues with Final Class Reflection

The class final is a showcase of your **polished** 2-person scenes (3 minutes) and monologues (30-second/1-minute each). Each duo will get 5 minutes to perform all pieces for an invited audience. You must also submit a final written reflection of

your overall work in the class, personally addressing points in regard to process, progress, challenges, victories, outcomes, etc. Scene Performance / 10 POINTS; Monologue Performance / 10 POINTS; Class Reflection / 10 POINTS = 30 POINTS

## GRADING RUBRIC for SKILL ASSESSMENT – ACTING EXERCISES / PERFORMANCES

Your performance and technical growth grades are based on my evaluation of how your acting skills have developed over the course of the semester. The following scale will be used to assess your acting exercises / performances, indicative of your growth in the class:

9 - 10	<b>Superb Acting.</b> The student has transcended the level of craft they brought to the course, mastered the intellectual preparation, demonstrated elementary technical prowess, and has begun to play imaginatively "in the moment."
8 – 8.9	<b>Good Skills.</b> 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."
7 – 7.9	<b>Fair Work.</b> 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.
6 – 6.9	<b>Poor Work.</b> The student has not or is not prepared for the work and it is painfully obvious to the both the student and the audience.
Below 6	<b>Failure.</b> The student has not or is not prepared at all, has made no specific choices, and is wasting theirs and the audience's time.

**NOTE: NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

### OVERALL CLASS Grading Breakdown:

Participation (10 pt scale)	10 pts
Live Production Acting Reflection – <i>Summer and Smoke</i> (Email 5 pts / Talkback 5 pts)	10 pts
Live Production Acting Reflection – <i>White Christmas</i> (Email 5 pts / Talkback 5 pts)	10 pts
Four (4) Quizzes over Reading Assignments (5 pt grade scale each)	20 pts
Open Scene Performance	10 pts
Random Scene Performance	10 pts
<i>Red Coat / Lonely Impulse</i> Scene Exercise	10 pts
Stranger Physicality Exercise	10 pts
30-second/1-Minute Monologue Performance (Perf 10 pts / Score 10 pts)	20 pts
3-Minute Scene Performance (Perf 10 pts / Score 10 pts / Reflection 10 pts)	30 pts
FINAL (Scene 10 pts perf / Monologue 10 pts perf / Class Reflection 10 pts)	30 pts

**Total Course Points Possible = 170 pts**

**\*\*\* Attendance can further affect final grade \*\*\***

# OTHER CRITICAL COURSE POLICIES & PROTOCOL

## 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://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student\\_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php).

## SCHOOL OF THEATRE & DANCE:

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/theatredance/about/handbook>.

**Risk:** There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop, 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.

**Class Etiquette:** There is **no eating, drinking, or gum chewing** during the 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. **Hair must be kept out of face and appropriate attire worn.** When class has ended, please return space to its original condition (in other words, **clean up** after yourselves). Lastly, **electronic devices are to be stowed away** during class unless permission has been given to access them.

**Guests:** 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.

## DISABILITY SERVICES:

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.

## BEYOND ACTING I . . .

Acting I is a required course of all Theatre majors. It is the first preparatory acting class for students interested in pursuing the Bachelors of Fine Arts with a specialization in Acting – a professional training program for aspiring actors. If you decide to pursue this degree (admittance via audition in a student's 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study and upon completion of the degree's foundational courses), please be aware of the following criteria in 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."

## Course Grade % Scale :

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>		<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	
A	94-100	4.0	C+	77-79	2.3
A-	90-93	3.7	C	73-76	2.0
B+	87-89	3.3	C-	70-72	1.7
B	83-86	3.0	D+	67-69	1.3
B-	80-82	2.7	D	60-66	1.0
			F	0-59	0.0

## CLASS SCHEDULE:

Remember to check **Moodle** throughout the week for announcements, materials, and grades. I will also be emailing you regularly with updates, reminders, "ticket to class" links to supplemental video clips, PDFs and general information. Feel free to email me regularly as well with questions, concerns, or to simply touch base and/or further discuss a topic. I will do my best to answer within 24 hours.

Reading assignments are due by the start of class on the date by which they are listed. Please **BRING SCHEDULED READING ASSIGNMENTS and TEXTBOOK TO CLASS.**

I have a "NO LATE ASSIGNMENT" policy – no exceptions . . . . I also have a "NO MAKE UP" and "NO ADDITIONAL / EXCEPTIONAL ASSIGNMENTS" policy. The syllabus, required assignments, and grading rubric/s are set in stone. After-the-fact requests for extra credit, alternate/additional assignments or grading reconsiderations will not receive a response, as you have been duly informed that your grade is solely determined by the assignments and criteria set forth in this syllabus.

### THE POSSIBILITIES OF PLAY:

M 8/27 Course Intro, Orientation and Ice Breakers

W 8/29 General Studio Work – Relaxation, Concentration, Imagination, Improvisation, Observation, Authenticity

#### **M 9/3 LABOR DAY – NO CLASS**

W 9/5 General Studio Work – Relaxation, Concentration, Imagination, Improvisation, Observation, Authenticity

- Have read "Job of Actor" thru "Physical Action" (pp. 3-18) – *Practical Handbook*

M 9/10 General Studio Work – Relaxation, Concentration, Imagination, Improvisation, Observation, Authenticity

- Have read "Objectives" *Moodle* PDF (William Ball)

W 9/12 General Studio Work & Beginning Partner Work – Open Scenes

- Have read "Analyzing a Scene" (pp. 20-39) – *Practical Handbook*

M 9/17 Beginning Partner Work – Open Scenes

- Have read "Truth of the Moment" thru "Externals" (pp. 40-54) – *Practical Handbook*
- [QUIZ 1](#) (reading assignments to date)

W 9/19 Beginning Partner Work – Open Scenes

- [DUE – Graded Open Scene Performance](#)

M 9/24 Beginning Partner Work – Random Scenes

- Have read "Preparing for a Scene" thru "Tools" (pp. 56-66) – *Practical Handbook*

W 9/26 Beginning Partner Work – Random Scenes

- Have read Part II "Pitfalls" (pp. 69-86) – *Practical Handbook*
- [DUE – Graded Random Scene Performance](#)

### THE ACTOR IN PRODUCTION:

\*\*\*\*\* [Summer and Smoke opens 10/3 – reserve your tickets!](#) \*\*\*\*\*

M 10/1 Introducing Text

- Have read *Red Coat* and *Lonely Impulse of Desire* (John Patrick Shanley – *Moodle* PDF)

W 10/3 Introducing GOTE

- Have read "GOTE" & "Preparing a Role" (Cohen Excerpt – *Moodle* PDF)
- [QUIZ 2](#) (reading assignments to date)

M 10/8 Individual Work – Relaxation, Concentration, Imagination, Improvisation, Observation, Authenticity

- [DUE – Stranger Physicality Exercise](#)
- Have read "Rehearsing" and "Staging" (Cohen Excerpt – *Moodle* PDF)

W 10/10 Beginning Monologue and Scene Work (*Red Coat / Lonely Impulse*)

**SUNDAY 10/14 – DUE *Summer and Smoke* EMAIL RESPONSE**

M 10/15 The Actor's Research (Resources / Library)

- Have read "Creating a Monologue" (Cohen Excerpt – Moodle PDF)
- [DUE \*Summer and Smoke\* Talkback Session – 5:10 p.m.](#)

W 10/17 Studio Work / Beginning Scene Work

- [DUE \*Red Coat / Lonely Impulse\* Scene Exercise](#)
- DUE – Monologue Selection Approved

M 10/22 Monologue Work/Feedback

- Have read "Evaluation and Improvement" (Cohen Excerpt – Moodle PDF)
- [QUIZ 3](#) (reading assignments to date)

W 10/24 Monologue Work/Feedback

M 10/29 Monologue Work/Feedback

**AN ACTOR'S WORK:**

W 10/31 Monologue Work/Performances (audition format)

- [DUE – Graded Monologue Performance / Score](#)

M 11/5 Studio Work / Exercises

W 11/7 The Actor in Production and Professional Environment

**M 11/12 VETERANS DAY OBSERVED – NO CLASS**

W 11/14 Studio Work / Exercises

- DUE – Class Scene Selection Approved

\*\*\*\*\* [White Christmas opens 11/20 – reserve your tickets!](#) \*\*\*\*\*

M 11/19 Scene Work / Rehearsals

- Have read "Stanislavsky" chapter (Hodges – Moodle PDF)

----- **THANKSGIVING BREAK – 11/21-11/25** -----

M 11/26 Scene Work / Rehearsals

- [QUIZ 4](#) (reading assignments to date -- "Stanislavsky")

W 11/28 Scene Work / Rehearsals

**SUNDAY 12/2 – DUE *White Christmas* EMAIL RESPONSE**

M 12/3 Scene Work / Rehearsals

- [DUE \*White Christmas\* Talkback Session – 5:10 p.m.](#)

W 12/5 Scene Work / Performances

- [DUE – Graded Class Scene Performance / Score / Reflection](#)

<p><b>FINAL EXAM -- Monday, Dec. 10, 8:00-10:00 a.m.</b> <b>FINAL ACTING SHOWCASE PERFORMANCE – SCENES AND MONOLOGUES</b></p>
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