

Syllabus
The Art of Acting – THEA 2311
Instructor: Jack Greenman
Southern Methodist University, J Term 2015

The Art of Acting is a beginning-level acting class designed for students who are not theatre majors but would like to learn skills of the actor. Improvisation, voice, movement, and acting exercises will be used to help the student begin to free the body and initiate a personal acting process. Basic work in acting theory, as well as techniques and applications of relaxation, concentration, and imagination, are emphasized. Students will be asked to read a short acting handbook and the play “Proof” by David Auburn. They will memorize and present a short scene from “Proof” at the end of the term.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To build an ensemble (your classmates)
2. To introduce a basic acting vocabulary and skills focused on action, objective and obstacle
3. To explore the fundamentals of preparing and rehearsing a scene
4. To engender respect for the theatre and the craft of acting
5. To learn how to better share yourself through artistic expression in performance

University Curriculum

This class fulfills the following University Curriculum (UC) Learning Outcomes:

Pillars – Creativity and Aesthetics – (Level 1)

1. Students will be able to identify methods, techniques, or languages of a particular art form, creative endeavor or craft(s) and explain how those inform the creation, performance or analysis of creative work. (Level 1)
2. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of concepts fundamental to the creative impulse through analysis, performance, or creation. (Level 1)

Proficiencies and Experiences – Oral Communication

1. Students will be able to select and use appropriate forms of evidence in a public presentation.
2. Students will be able to design verbal messages to suit particular audiences and purposes.
3. Students will be able to use visual cues (such as presentation software, staging, props, costumes, makeup, and gesture) to enhance a public presentation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: The attendance policy is simple – come to class. As the theatre is a performance art, the class is largely experiential. Therefore, attendance at all class meetings is essential to each student's growth and a minimal requirement for this course.

Materials:

1. A three-ring binder to keep all notes and assignments organized.
2. A pen and pencil.
3. PDF Printouts brought to class.
4. Memorized text.
5. Water in a sealed container. (No food or gum allowed in classroom.)
6. Rehearsal props and clothing as needed.
7. Required Texts - *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Bruder, Cohn, Olnek, Pollack, Previttio, Zigler, and D. Mamet AND *Proof* by D. Auburn.

Clothing:

Students must wear clothing that allows for unrestricted movement. We will spend much of our class time doing exercises that require the student to move freely on the floor and perform vigorous physical activities. Skirts, jeans, dresses, high heels, platform soled shoes, low hanging pants, tight fitting clothing or any clothing that may restrict the student's movement is never appropriate for this class. Examples of appropriate clothing include, but are not limited to: sweatshirts, sweat pants, warm-up or workout clothes and dance attire. In all cases, appropriate clothing allows the student full range of motion and keeps the body warm and covered. Wearing appropriate clothing is considered a crucial aspect of class preparation. At the discretion of the instructor, a student who is dressed inappropriately for class may be asked to leave and will be graded as absent for the day. Students are advised to bring layers of clothing as the temperature in the room may vary.

Assignments:

Participation

In-class exercises, experiences and discussions are an essential part of learning to be an actor. Accordingly, positive interaction with classmates and with the instructor is of paramount importance. Students of acting need to cultivate an attitude of "leaning forward" into the work regardless of whether or not they working with the instructor in the moment. Deep listening, generosity and a willingness to share oneself are all signs of a student fully engaged in the work of the class. Markers of "A" level participation include: thoughtful and respectful participation in class discussions; demonstrable outside preparation for in-class discussions on readings; adoption of the acting vocabulary introduced in class; eagerly volunteering for in-class exercises; commitment (physical and vocal) to warm-ups; and active, engaged listening to the work of your classmates.

Participation is worth (40% of your grade).

Performance Assignments

To gain experience and self-knowledge as a performer, you have to perform for an audience. We will work to establish the fundamental concepts of objective, obstacle, and action in our performances in order to discover not only the art of acting, but also the craft. You are required to read the entire play for your scene, and have a clear understanding of the given circumstances within the play that inform your character and scene.

Contentless Scene presentation: This is a scene shown by you and a partner to your classmates. You will work in class on your scene. **(10% of your grade)**

Final Scene: As your final project, you and your scene partner will perform a 5 minute long scene as assigned. This scene is a culmination of everything that you learn in this course. You must be completely off-book for the final scene. You must perform in the classroom, and should supply any props and costumes you need to play the scene successfully. You will be expected to rehearse AT LEAST once during the weekend of January 11 and 12. **(20% of your grade).**

Written Assignments

Character Analysis – You will write a simple beat-by-beat analysis of the character you are assigned from David Auburn’s “Proof”. The form of this analysis is based on the analytical form found in the required text. An additional hand-out will be provided to you in class. **(10% of your grade)**

Reflections. Developing the skill of specifically articulating your experience is essential to your development as an actor. It deepens your understanding and ownership of the material and allows you to repeat successes with greater precision. The reflection process in this class is as follows:

For both your Contentless Scene and your Final Scene, you will write at least a one-page, double-spaced reflection (due dates are below). In each reflection, you will answer the following questions: 1. What did you work on? 2. What was challenging? 3. How did you grow in your understanding of the scene? 4. How did you grow in your understanding of acting? 5. What, if anything, would you try to incorporate into your process next time that you did not incorporate this time? **(10% of your grade)**

Quizzes (10% of your grade)

Reading Quiz – “A Practical Handbook for the Actor”

Terminology Quiz – A quiz on the material covered in the “Acting Theory” lecture.

Email and Communication Guidelines

The best way to contact me is using my SMU email, greenman@smu.edu. I will respond to email within 24 hours except between Saturday at 5pm and Monday at 8am I also will not accept chat/Skype/Facebook/LinkedIn friend requests until such time as I am no longer in a position to grade you. - See more at: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/jack-greenman/student-facebook-policy/141501899221417>

SMU Course Policies

Academic Honesty and Misconduct: You are bound by the Honor Code and the SMU Student Code of Conduct. For complete details, see:
http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_01_ToC.asp

ASSESSMENT

Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed by the instructor using the following assignments (*noted in italics*) –

1. SLO 1: To build an ensemble (your classmates) *In-class exercises*.
2. SLO 2: To introduce a basic acting vocabulary and skills. *Quizzes, In-class scene-work, Character Analysis*
3. SLO 3: To explore the fundamentals of preparing and rehearsing a scene. *In-class scene-work*
4. SLO 4: To engender respect for the theatre and the craft of acting. *Terminology Quiz, Class discussions and exercises*
5. SLO 5: To learn how to better share yourself through artistic expression in performance. *Contentless and Final Scenes*

Student Learning Outcome Rubric – IMPORTANT – On the first day of class, the Instructor will provide you with a Worksheet document with a specific articulation of the levels of assessment and standards of accomplishment established for the Student Learning Outcomes of this course. (Translation: “How will I be evaluated?” and “On what will you base the evaluation?”)

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change as needed)

Monday, Jan 6	Syllabus Review (Q&A)/Introductions/Warm-up/Games/Trust and Risk	DUE Signed Syllabus agreement, Read “A Practical Handbook for the Actor” for next class.
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Tuesday, Jan 7	Warm-up/Games/Trust and Risk/Sensory World	Quiz “A Practical Handbook for the Actor” , Terminology Lecture, <i>Assign Contentless Scenes</i>
Wednesday, Jan 8	Warm-up/Contentless Scenes	Terminology Quiz , Work on Contentless Scenes, <i>Read “Proof” for next class.</i>
Thursday, Jan 9	Warm-up/Contentless Scenes	Presentation of Contentless Scenes, DUE - Reflection for Contentless Scene,
Friday, Jan 10	Text Analysis/ Beginning to Rehearse	<i>Assign “Proof” scenes for presentation.</i> Givens of “Proof”/Work with partners
Monday, Jan 13	Text Analysis/ Work Scenes	Character Analysis Due
Tuesday, Jan 14	Work Scenes	DUE - Reflection for “Proof” Scene
Wednesday, Jan 15	Work Scenes/Present Scenes	Presentation of “Proof” Scenes, Wrap-up.

Jack Greenman is an actor, director, educator, and voice and dialect coach. As an actor, he has performed at Seattle Shakespeare Company, Strawberry Theatre Workshop, Sound Theatre Company, Insight Out, PCPA Theaterfest, GEVA Theater Center, South Coast Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Centerpoint Theatre Group and at St. Mark’s Cathedral, Seattle. He is the recipient of a Santa Barbara Independent Award for both *Oleanna* and *Someone Who’ll Watch Over Me* and Robby Awards for *Arcadia* and *The Daly News*. As a director, Jack has guided productions of *Measure for Measure*, *Assassins*, *The Laramie Project*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Fuddy Meers*, and *Picasso’s Women/Francoise*. Jack’s wide variety of experience coaching voice, text and dialects includes *A Christmas Carol*, *The Who’s Tommy*, *Marat/Sade*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Arcadia*. For the past six summers, Jack has served as one of two Voice/Text Directors at the Tony Award winning Utah Shakespeare Festival. He has guided the voice and text work for *The Tempest*, *Anything Goes*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Private Lives*, *The Secret Garden*, *Foxfire*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The School for Wives*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Great Expectations*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Music Man*, *Noises Off*, *Macbeth*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Scapin* and *Les Miserables*. In the summer of 2007, he directed the apprentice acting program at Great River Shakespeare Festival in Winona, MN and served as voice/text coach for *As You Like It*. Prior to arriving at SMU, Jack spent two years on the faculties of Cornish College of the Arts and Freehold Theatre/Studio in

Seattle and fourteen years as an Artist-in-Residence at PCPA Theaterfest in central California. This is his seventh year serving as a Professor of Voice in the Division of Theater at SMU where he has served as the TA advisor for “The Art of Acting”. Jack is married to writer, actor and design expert Sarah Greenman. They have two sons – Katie (aged 6) and Charles (aged 3).

Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

I, _____
(PLEASE PRINT FIRST AND LAST NAME LEGIBLY)

HAVE READ THIS SYLLABUS COMPLETELY; AND I FULLY UNDERSTAND ALL REQUIREMENTS, GRADING RUBRIC, AND PENALTIES STATED HEREIN. I HEREBY AGREE THAT EVALUATION OF MY PERFORMANCE IN THIS CLASS WILL BE BASED ON THE ABOVE STATED REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING RUBRIC.

I HAVE ASKED THE INSTRUCTOR ABOUT ISSUES THAT WERE UNCLEAR TO ME, AND S/HE HAS ANSWERED THEM TO MY SATISFACTION.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____