

ACTING I

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Course Number: FTA 1300 Section: 002 Semester: Fall 2017

INSTRUCTOR:

Ryan M. Decker
PAC 351, Tuesdays 12:30-2:00 p.m.
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MEETINGS:

Tuesdays & Thursdays
9:30-10:45 a.m.
PAC 121 (Lab Theater)

CREDIT:

3 units toward B.A. Film & Theatre *or*
Fine Arts or Humanities requirement.
Prerequisite for FTA 2330 & FTA 2380.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

FTA 1300 is an introductory course to the craft of acting. Students will gain a theoretical understanding and practical skills in acting and apply them to exploratory exercises, script/scene work, and the presentation of a two-person theatrical scene and monologue.

COURSE OUTCOMES:

After successfully completing this course, students will:

- be aware of various methods actors utilize to define characters;
- apply techniques to bring organic life to a role through exercises and limited work from scripted material;
- be able to identify vocal and physical blockages and utilize appropriate techniques for expanded freedom;
- understand the basic principles and vocabulary of acting and its artistry.

REQUIRED TEXT:

- *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, et al.
- *Almost, Maine* (play) by John Cariani
- *Savage/Love* (play) by Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaikin (**provided on Moodle**)

ACCOMPLISHING OUTCOMES (HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED):

- **Conceptual Information & Theory (30%)**
 - ✓ Play Reading Quiz (1.25%)
 - ✓ Acting Critiques (10%)
 - ✓ Midterm Exam (6.25%)
 - ✓ Final Exam (12.5%)
- **Performance Applications (30%)**
 - ✓ Performance 1 – Elliptical Scene (5%)
 - ✓ Performance 2 – Play Scene (15%)
 - ✓ Performance 3 – Monologue (10%)
- **Class Participation & Professionalism (40%)**

GRADE GUIDELINES:

- A:** Outstanding work that is significantly above basic requirements for the assignment, shows significant personal development, and demonstrates a high level of commitment. Work surpasses that of others in class
- B:** Above average work that goes beyond basic requirements for the assignment, shows personal development, and demonstrates commitment
- C:** Work that meets basic requirements of the assignment
- D:** Work that is worthy of credit, even though it does not fully meet the basic requirements
- F:** Work fails to meet basic requirements

PLAY READING QUIZ:

5 points possible

The play reading quiz is a short answer, written evaluation to determine if and how well you have read the plays selected.

ACTING CRITIQUES:

20 points each, 40 total points possible

You are required to attend Theatre UNO productions of *Urinetown* (Sept./Oct.) and *The Royale* (Nov.) and to write an acting critique on each. You are responsible for your own admission. Your critique papers must be at least two (2) pages in length, typed in 12-point, legible font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, an MLA-style header and top left corner staple. Papers should be your evaluation of the acting in each performance, using terminology and concepts presented in class. Be honest and respectful in your papers. A summary of the play will not count toward your two-page minimum. Papers are due in class shortly following the final performance of each show (listed in Course Outline). For Theatre UNO performance information and tickets, visit www.theatre.uno.edu. ***Late critiques receive zero (0) points!***

MIDTERM EXAM:

25 points possible

The midterm exam will be a written evaluation including short answer, fill-in-the-blank, and true/false sections. The midterm will cover the six “building blocks” of acting, given circumstances, beats, objectives, and actions (tactics).

FINAL EXAM:

50 points possible

The final exam will be a written evaluation including true/false, short answer, and essay sections. The final exam will be a cumulative review of the semester’s vocabulary, theory and concepts. The essay prompt will be to explain what you have learned and found most significant to the acting craft in this course, using as many details as possible and examples from your own work and/or the work of others observed in class.

PERFORMANCE APPLICATIONS:

20 points for Elliptical Scene; 60 points for Play Scene; 40 points for Monologue: 120 total points possible

This semester, you will be presenting an Elliptical Scene, Play Scene, and Monologue. For the Elliptical Scene, you will be assigned a scene partner and given two script options. For the Play Scene, you will be assigned a scene partner and a selection from *Almost, Maine*. For the Monologue, you may select material from *Savage/Love* or an approved contemporary play.

You must turn in a “scored” copy of your script with each performance. Performances will be evaluated on the following:

- **Preparation:** Actors are off-book, clearly memorized and clearly rehearsed.
- **Voice & Movement:** Communication is clear and expressive; appropriately emotional available and invested in stakes.
- **Ensemble:** Actors use concentration and focus to collaborate seamlessly with each other; invested in the “other.”
- **Given Circumstances:** Circumstances are clearly defined and illuminated on stage.
- **Objective:** Actors pursue dynamic, strong scene objectives.
- **Actions:** Actions (tactics) are entirely active, specific, doable, other-centric, non-errand, non-state, verbs.

IF YOU MISS YOUR PERFORMANCE DATE, YOU WILL RECEIVE ZERO (0) POINTS FOR THAT PERFORMANCE. PREPARED SCENE PARTNERS WILL RECEIVE FULL POINTS.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

6 points per day; 10 points for Acting Showcase: 160 total points possible

Points are available each class for participation in either the activity/exploration taking place and/or discussion being held. This excludes days of in-class performances and exams. Students who are tardy may only earn up to three (3) points. Students who are absent, not memorized for scene work, or have not completed the assignment will earn zero (0) points. Students who noticeably interrupt in-class activities or performances will lose one week’s points (-12) per offense.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance, Tardiness & Missed Work: Attendance is required at all sessions. You are allowed two (2) unexcused absences. You will automatically drop one letter grade for each subsequent absence. Two (2) tardies constitute an absence. Paper, exam, and performance assessments will reflect your demonstration of knowledge and application of concepts, indiscriminate of what classes/concepts you may have missed. Acting is an experiential process and you are responsible for your own learning.

- You will receive zero (0) participation points for days on which you are absent. (6 available per day.)
- You will receive zero (0) points for performances missed. (Prepared scene partners will receive full points.)
- You will receive zero (0) points for late acting critiques.
- You will receive zero (0) points for missed exams; no late exams or retakes will be administered.
- Exceptions may only be made in the most serious circumstances with official documentation provided in advance.

Focus and Participation: Each person learns from others and contributes to others' learning. Any student who is inattentive, disruptive, or disrespectful can expect a very low grade, and may be told to leave class. If you are told to leave, you will be marked absent for the day.

Be Willing to Learn: Acting, especially movement and voice work, is very personal – it's work on the Self. Taking in feedback can sometimes be uncomfortable. Do your best to remain open to feedback and criticism and avoid putting up defenses. If you successfully deflect or argue against criticism, you have successfully avoided an opportunity to grow. Emotion comes up in our work – you may become sad or angry during class, you will sometimes be frustrated. You may feel overwhelming joy. Allowing these emotions to be present while you continue to focus and work is how you develop emotional range as an actor. Therefore, you must not leave the room if you feel upset. If you leave the room, you will be marked absent.

Our Room: Our classroom is our creative home; please treat it with respect. No wet shoes are allowed on this floor (to keep it clean). No food other than bottled water is allowed in class. Help put away mats and rehearsal furniture at the end of class when necessary. If we need to clean the mats or floor, everyone will be expected to help. No gum in class. Leave the classroom in a better state than you found it.

Clothing: Wear comfortable clothing in which you can move for every class. Avoid low-cut tops or pants – if you have to tug at your clothing to stay decent and comfortable, it is not appropriate for our purposes in class. Flip flops and sandals are not allowed.

Touch: From time to time I will use touch to guide you in an exercise or to bring your attention more clearly to what you are doing. If you have any concerns or hesitancy about being touched, it is your responsibility to speak with me immediately so that we find options with which you are comfortable.

Self-care, Professionalism, and Awareness: You have chosen a field where professionals frequently work with injuries, illness, agonized mental states, emotional distress, and all sorts of discomfort. Welcome. Develop the ability to recognize when you are truly unable to work, and when you have discomfort which will not prevent you from working. As a rule of thumb, ask yourself “will it get worse if I work?” For instance, if you have a tension headache, participating in class may not feel good, but it won't actually make your headache worse. If you have a dislocated shoulder, many movements *will* make it worse. See a health care professional and only do what is safe for you in class. Never skip class because you have a scratchy throat or “are losing” your voice (unless you have a severe contagious illness). Honoring your restrictions can often bring new discoveries to light. There is a huge difference between emotional risk and physical carelessness. You are responsible for your own safety. It is your right and *responsibility* to care for yourself.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

COURSE OUTLINE:

17 Aug, Thurs	Syllabus (What is Acting?)
22 Aug, Tues	Concentration; Imagination
24 Aug, Thurs	Listening; Emotional Availability; <i>HW: Citrus Object</i>
29 Aug, Tues	Observation; Relaxation; <i>HW: Memorize Elliptical Scene</i>
31 Aug, Thurs	Given Circumstances; Objectives & Obstacles
5 Sept, Tues	Actions/Tactics & Beats
7 Sept, Thurs	Neutral Mask Evaluation
12 Sept, Tues	Neutral Mask Evaluation; <i>HW: Character Observation</i>
14 Sept, Thurs	Observed Characters; <i>Midterm Review and/or Performance #1 Work</i>
19 Sept, Tues	<i>Midterm Review and/or Performance #1 Work</i>
21 Sept, Thurs	PERFORMANCE #1 – Elliptical Scenes (Everyone)
26 Sept, Tues	MIDTERM EXAM ; Dramatic Action (Stakes/Conflict) & Revelations
28 Sept, Thurs	Play Scene: First Reads (Groups 1-4)
3 Oct, Tues	Play Scene: First Reads (Groups 5-8)
5 Oct, Thurs	Characterization & Relationship; Learning Lines
10 Oct, Tues	Characterization & Relationship; Creating a Character
12 Oct, Thurs	OFF – MID-SEMESTER BREAK
17 Oct, Tues	Play Scene: In-Progress Performances (Everyone); FIRST CRITIQUE PAPER DUE (<i>Urinetown</i>)
19 Oct, Thurs	Play Scene: Working Rehearsal (Groups 1 & 2)
24 Oct, Tues	Play Scene: Working Rehearsal (Groups 3 & 4)
26 Oct, Thurs	Play Scene: Working Rehearsal (Groups 5 & 6)
31 Oct, Tues	Play Scene: Working Rehearsal (Groups 7 & 8); MONOLOGUE SELECTIONS DUE
2 Nov, Thurs	PERFORMANCE #2 – Play Scenes (Everyone)
7 Nov, Tues	Monologue: Working Rehearsal (1-4)
9 Nov, Thurs	Monologue: Working Rehearsal (5-8)
14 Nov, Tues	Monologue: Working Rehearsal (9-12)
16 Nov, Thurs	Monologue: Working Rehearsal (13-16)
21 Nov, Tues	Monologue: Run-Thru Rehearsal (Everyone); SECOND CRITIQUE PAPER DUE (<i>The Royale</i>)
23 Nov, Thurs	OFF – THANKSGIVING BREAK
28 Nov, Tues	PERFORMANCE #3 – Monologues (Everyone)
30 Nov, Thurs	FINAL EXAM
5 Dec, Tues	ACTING SHOWCASE @ 6:30 PM (Attendance is required; 10 participation points)
7 Dec, Thurs	OFF – TRADITIONAL FINAL EXAM DAY