

THTR 102-001 Acting Fundamentals

Tuesday/Thursday 11:30am-12:50pm

Kupfrian Hall, Rm 110

Instructor: Courtney Self

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Office Hours: Thursday 1-3pm or by appointment

Office: Kupfrian Hall, Room 133

Course Description

Acting Fundamentals is a foundational level acting class meant to develop acting skills in a studio environment. Students will work with a range of genres including comedy and drama. They will work on prepared material both in the form of monologues and scene study based on known contemporary and classical plays, and basic theater exercises that develop physical skills for character development and performance endurance. Emphasis on vocal skills using presentation exercises and theatrical audition techniques will be developed through the class.

Course Objective

This course endeavors to teach the student the basics of acting technique primarily for the stage—but many of these techniques overlap in the film acting technique as well. **Additionally, these techniques crossover in a myriad of other disciplines**

including public speaking, group collaboration, interpersonal skills (working with others), intrapersonal skills (understanding your own self), the practice of empathy, decision making, and improvising and pivoting in the moment.

Students will primarily be working with Stanislavsky methods and will be well-versed with concepts such as objectives, tactics, given circumstances. They will also get some basics in understanding and harnessing the expressive nature of the body and voice in addition to understanding the actor's process from audition to rehearsal to performance.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have made progress toward:

- demonstrated knowledge within a play of story structure, plot, characters, language, genre, and style
- increased knowledge of an actor's process, from auditions, through rehearsals, to production
- demystifying ideas behind what makes a 'good' or 'bad' actor by learning frameworks through which to examine the techniques

–gaining confidence in speaking in front of a group, whether with prepared and embodied material or in discussion of their work and their ideas around it
–learning how to collaborate with a group and provide constructive feedback that leads to new ideas and positive action steps

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is a vital aspect of this course. Theatre is experiential and communal; our work in this course will be no different. Lack of participation will be reflected in your grade—and there is a direct correlation between your presence in class and your ability to engage in the work. Participation makes up 37.5% of your grade, so please consider this a direct correlation to whether you are physically and mentally present in class. If you believe you have a reason that qualifies an absence as excused, a note is needed from the Dean of Students. Please note that any work that is due on those days is still due and any in-class quiz or presentation still requires attendance in class in order to fulfill that assignment.

Please make every effort to contact me before any class you have to miss. If you are feeling sick, please do not attend class in-person. Email me at least 2 hours before class and I will give you a zoom link to attend remotely. You cannot attend remotely for any reason other than being sick.

Note: You are required to attend a performance of *Peter and the Starcatcher* November 7-9. More information will be provided later in this document.

Participation: Related to the importance of attendance, participation is critical to success in this course. We will be consistently working on exercises and material in class, sharing our viewpoints, and challenging ourselves to think outside the box and use the tools given in the lessons. I promise to foster an environment of curiosity and openness if you promise to approach the class with effort and bravery.

Additionally, this course may function very differently from what you are used to or your other courses here at NJIT. Acting—and theatre—is an art form. There is technique and methodologies involved in every step, which is part of what we are learning. But know that these techniques and methods are not **the only path forward**. In fact: there is not one path forward—there are many. These methods serve not as objective truths, but rather as tools to help the artist explore deeper and more effectively and to, hopefully, find ways of affecting themselves and their audiences in a more and more relevant and profound way as time passes.

As a result, your participation in this course is based on your effort and willingness to commit fully to the assignments and exercises. No one student will learn *exactly* the same things as any other student—instead, when you fully commit yourself to the work you will discover your own path of discovery. As your instructor, **I am seeking and observing the level to which you commit and how much effort you expend.** You cannot expect me to read your mind—I can only observe each of you deeply to see what effort, commitment, exploration, and bravery you bring to each class. **Your job is to show me this work.** Do this authentically and with deep curiosity and you will not only succeed in this class, but also take many lessons with you to the rest of your life.

Communication: Reaching out to me as soon as you know of any concerns or problems is very important. I know that extenuating circumstances happen and I am committed to finding a way to best help all of us through this course whenever possible. This means I must get communication from you as soon as you think there may be an issue. Please reach out to me—email is typically best, but I am available to chat briefly after class (typically) and during my office hours and by appointment.

Consent and Respect: I work to create a room welcome to everyone and rooted in tolerance. Disrespect toward anyone in the classroom will not be tolerated. If an event occurs that makes you feel unsafe or disrespected, please let me know so it can be addressed.

Please note: Some of our work in this class will involve physical touch and emotional topics (depending on material the student chooses). Each student will have the opportunity to establish any boundaries and they will be upheld to the fullest extent possible, while still allowing for class to proceed. Please also feel free to come to me with any other boundaries, concerns, or questions you have if they are not fully addressed for you in class. Also note that consent for physical touch on one day does not necessarily imply that same consent on another day—so you may give and take away consent at any time.

Anti-Racism: Racism is systemically a part of our society and I will be working hard to dismantle these practices where I find them. We may be addressing issues of race within this course. I welcome any feedback about ways I can be more effective in this process.

Questions/Concerns: Always feel free to visit me during office hours or email me with any questions/concerns. If there is something you aren't comfortable communicating with me directly, please use the 'Anonymous Question Form' in Canvas and I will respond in a subsequent class for everyone.

Missing or Late Assignments: Missing or late work will not be accepted. If you feel you have legitimate circumstances that prevented you from finishing your work on time, please reach out to both me and the Dean of Students to discuss if there might be appropriate options.

Academic Integrity: *Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).*

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu

Land Acknowledgement: We acknowledge that NJIT is located on stolen land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Leni-Lenape people. Leni-Lenape literally translates to “Men of Men” but is taken as “Original People.” (<https://nanticoke-lenape.info/history.htm>) To learn more about the Leni-Lenape people, visit <https://nanticoke-lenape.info/>.

Texts: We will be using *The Actor In You* by Robert Benedetti (7th Edition) available at the campus bookstore. You must purchase this book as we will use every day in class.

Additionally, you will be expected at a few points in the semester to search for your own material in plays to use for class. More info will be provided to help you with this search.

Other supplies/considerations:

–You will be keeping a journal for this course that you will add to every class period.

Please get one blank notebook that you will use exclusively for this course and bring it to every class meeting (along with a pencil/pen).

–Keep in mind that we will be using the full facility of our bodies and voices for every class period. **Please wear clothing that you not only have full range of motion in**, but also that you feel comfortable sitting/laying down on the floor in. Additionally, I suggest always having a **bottle of water** with you as well.

Lastly, from time to time there will be readings/material that I post on Canvas for you to use under the 'Files' tab.

Additional Costs: \$15 for a ticket to see *Peter and the Starcatcher* November 7-9 and \$8 for a ticket to the Directors Project. You can purchase tickets at the door or online (ticket link for purchasing will be provided at a later date as the tickets are not currently on sale). Buying in advance online is the preferred way to make sure you secure a ticket.

Grading Breakdown:

Participation: 37.5%

Reflections on Reading Journal Entries: 12%

Peter and the Starcatcher Response Paper 5%

Sonnet Performance 3%

Open Scene Performance 3%

Directors Project Report 3%

Monologue Project:

Monologue First Performance: 3%

Monologue Play Report: 3%

Monologue Paperwork: 3%

Monologue Final Performance: 6%

Scene Project:

Scene First Performance: 3%

Scene Play Report: 4%

Scene Paperwork: 4%

Scene Final Performance: 10.5%

Final Grades:

A = 90 – 100 B+ = 87 – 90 B = 80 – 87 C+ = 77 – 80 C = 70 – 77 D = 60 – 70 F = 0 – 60

Schedule (*syllabus subject to change*):

WEEK ONE:

9/3: Introductions, Going over syllabus, Begin work in the room

9/5: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter

Due: Read Preface (ix-x), pg 3-4, Step 1 (pg 5-16), Step 4 (pg 44-53)

WEEK TWO:

9/10: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter

Due: Read Step 2 (pg 17-30)

9/12: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter, Introduce Sonnet, Begin discussions on monologues

Assign: Finding a Monologue

Due: Read Step 3 (pg 31-43)

WEEK THREE:

9/17: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using sonnet, Introduce Open Scenes

Due: Read Step 5 (pg 60-74)

9/19: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using sonnet and open scenes, Start work on Monologues

Due: Monologue choices turned in

WEEK FOUR:

9/24: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologue and open scenes

Due: Read Step 6 (pg 75-89)

Due: Perform Sonnet

9/26: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologue

Assign: Finding a scene (assign partners)

WEEK FIVE:

10/1: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues

Due: Read Step 7 (pg 90-100)

Due: Perform Open Scene

10/3: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues

WEEK SIX:

10/8: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues

Due: Read Step 8 (pg 101-117)

Due: First performance of Monologue

10/10: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

Due: Scene choices turned in

WEEK SEVEN:

10/15: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

Due: Read Step 9 (pg 118-131)

10/17: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

Due: Play Report of Monologue's Play

WEEK EIGHT:

10/22: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

Due: Read Step 10 (pg 132-142)

10/24: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

Due: Breakdown paperwork of Monologue

WEEK NINE:

10/29: Journaling, Warm-up, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

Due: First performance of Scene

10/31: Journaling, Warm-up, Exercises from chapter using monologues and scenes

WEEK TEN:

11/5: Journaling, Warm-up

Due: Monologue Final Performance

11/7: Discuss Monologue performances and upcoming Response Paper assignment

Assign: *Peter and the Starcatcher* Response Paper

Reminder: Go see *Peter and the Starcatcher* November 7th-9th. Get your tix ahead of time (link TBA).

WEEK ELEVEN:

11/12: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using scenes

Due: Step 11 (pg 145-161)

Due: PATS Response Paper

11/14: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using scenes

WEEK TWELVE:

11/19: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using scenes

Due: Step 12 (pg 162-177)

Due: Play Report of Scene's Play

11/21: Journaling, Warm-up, Discussion on readings, Exercises from chapter using scenes

WEEK THIRTEEN:

11/26: Work in class on scenes

Due: Breakdown paperwork of Scenes

11/28: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

WEEK FOURTEEN:

12/3: Work in class on scenes

12/5: Work in class on scenes

WEEK FIFTEEN:

12/10: Discuss Director's Project; Performances

Due: Final performance of Scenes

Due: Directors Project Response Paper