

THTR 202-001 Acting Fundamentals

Tues/Thurs 10:00am - 11:20am

Room 110, Kupfrian Hall

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Course Description

Acting Fundamentals is a foundational level acting class meant to develop acting skills in a studio environment. 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, vocal, and emotional skills for character development and performance endurance.

Course Objective

This course endeavors to teach the student the basics of acting technique primarily for the stage. Students will be well-versed with concepts such as objectives, tactics, given circumstances, and exploring their own actor impulses. 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.

Learning Outcomes

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

- demonstrating knowledge of how to analyze a play from a character's standpoint
- increase their knowledge of an actor's process, from receiving a script to the performance
- explored their ability to "open" up their emotions and react from a true place
- perform memorized pieces in front of their peers
- collaborate and grow as an ensemble.

Class Policies

Attendance: Attendance is important for this course as most of the coursework will be happening in class. Lateness, early departures, and unexcused absences will be reflected in your grade. For excused absences, a note is needed from the Dean of Students. If there are mitigating circumstances, contact me before the class you will miss. If you are running late, please email me to let me know. If you are feeling sick, please do not attend class in-person. Email me 2 hours before class for a zoom link, and you can attend remotely. You cannot attend remotely for any reason other than being sick.

Participation: This class is an active class and requires full participation. There may be physical touch involved in some exercises. Use the beginning of class to reflect what your boundaries/physical limitations are that day, so you can participate as fully as you are able. There is a line between being uncomfortable and being unsafe. If you are feeling unsafe, please alert me and then feel free to step out of the exercise and observe or take a moment for yourself out of the room.

Consent and Respect: I actively cultivate a room that is welcome for everyone and is grounded in consent. Consent may be given and revoked at any time. Disrespect towards your peers will not be tolerated. If a misstep or action has occurred that makes you feel unsafe or disrespected, please let me know and I will address it.

Anti-Racism: I acknowledge that racism is systemically a part of our culture and am doing my best to dismantle these practices where I find them. I welcome any and all feedback about ways I can be more effective in this process. If you have concerns about these particular days of class when we address these topics, please reach out to me and I will do my best to accommodate your needs.

Land Acknowledgment: We acknowledge that NJIT is located on stolen land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, specifically the Lenni-Lenape. While many Lenni-Lenape people were forcibly removed from their homelands, they are still an active part of New Jersey culture and society. To learn more about the Lenni-Lenape people, visit nanticoke-lenape.info

Questions/Concerns: If you have a question or concern you are not comfortable communicating to me directly, please use the “Anonymous Question Form” in Canvas and I will respond to question or concern at the next class for everyone.

Proper Attire: This class requires the ability to move freely. Please come dressed accordingly in comfortable clothing that allows you to move fully and sit on the ground. Workout gear, sweats, leggings, etc. are all great. Jeans, tight restrictive clothing and chunky jewelry are not ideal for this. Please wear footwear you can easily move in. No crocs or high heels. There may be moments I ask you to remove your shoes and work in socks or barefoot. Layers that you can remove as you warm-up are great as this room gets warm quickly.

Food and Drink: Please bring water with you to class. The voice needs to be lubricated to work correctly.

Cell Phones: Phones are to be turned to silent and put away at the beginning of class. If you are anticipating a call, let me know and then you can take it outside. It is important to be present during class.

The Room: Please respect any space we are working in, both in class, rehearsals, and performances. Restore any items, props, chairs, etc. you may use to where they started.

Missing or Late Assignments: Missing or late assignments will be accepted with penalties unless otherwise noted. If you have mitigating circumstances that prevented you from completing an assignment, please reach out to me so we can discuss options.

Honor Code: 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: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>. 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 includes using AI to write journal entries or papers.* AI includes the use of ChatGPT. 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.

Texts/Costs

The Actor in You by Robert Bendetti (7th edition) - \$28

Actions: The Actor's Thesaurus by Marina Caldarone and Maggie Lloyd-Williams (optional) - \$15

Respect for Acting By Uta Hagen (available on Canvas)

A Practical Handbook for the Actor by Melissa Bruder, Lee Michael Cohn, Madeline Olnek, Nathaniel Pollack, Robert Previto, Scott Zigler (available on Canvas)

Ticket for *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* - \$15

Ticket for another play/musical - \$20-50

Assignments

Journal Entries: Keeping a journal for this class is an important way to catalog and monitor your progress, as well as reflect on the lessons and experience you have had in class. Journal entries will be directed with a prompt that is based on the work in class and the reading. Each entry should be 1-2 pages long.

Slice of Life: A solo assignment in which you will be responsible for bringing in a 1-2 minute routine you do daily and out of habit and present it to the class.

Monologue: You will select a 1-2 minute contemporary monologue to perform. You will use the tools we discuss in class to analyze the character and bring that to your performance of it.

Acting Scene: You will perform a 2-3 minute (2-3 page scene) from a contemporary play with a partner. You will use the tools we discuss in class to analyze the character and scene and bring that to your performance of it.

Play Analyses: You are required to see 2 performances and write a 2-3 page reflection paper for each one. This paper should not be a summary of the show, but rather a critical analysis about what movement and vocal elements were done well, as well as how you think the actors could improve those elements. How did their movements and voice contribute to their characters? Try and use terms that you have learned in class. If you have a barrier with this, please talk to me so I can accommodate you.

Extra Credit: Work a minimum of 5 hrs on *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* in some capacity. You can help with sets, costumes, ushering (2 performances), etc. This will earn you an additional 3% for your grade. You cannot work 10 hrs and get 6%, but you are welcome to work more hours if you wish. Note that hours already dedicated to work study, Stagecraft, or other classes do not count.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance/Participation: 35%

Journal: 15%

Slice of Life Performance: 10%

Monologue Project: 15%

Scene Project: 15%

Play Analysis Papers 10%

Letter Grade Breakdown

A : 90%<

B+ : 88% - 89%

B: 80% - 87%

C+: 78% - 79%

C: 70% - 77%

D: 60% - 69%

F: > 60%

Course Schedule
(syllabus subject to change)

9/2: Introductions, What Is Acting?

9/4: The Inside of an Actor **Reading Due: Bendetti, Pgs. 3-30**

9/9: Exploring Impulses

9/11: Exploring Impulses, Introduce Slice of Life **Reading Due: Bruder, pgs. 40-47**

9/16: Introducing Actions and Objectives, **Reading Due: Bendetti, pgs. 101-115**

9/18: **Slice of Life Performances**, Introduce Monologue Project

9/23: Finish Up Slice of Life, Actions and Objectives

9/25: Using the Voice, **Reading Due: Bendetti, pgs. 30-43**

9/30: Incorporating Qualities of Movement into Impulse, **Due: Monologue Choice**

10/2: NO CLASS (Mental Health Day)

10/7: Script Analysis, Status, **Reading Due: Bendetti, pgs. 50-74**

10/9: Status cont. **Reading Due: Bendetti, pgs. 118-121, Due: Monologue Analysis**

10/14: Monologue First Looks

10/16: Monologue First Looks, **Due: Play Analysis Paper #1**

10/21: Entrances, **Reading Due: Hagen - Entrances**

10/23: In Class Rehearsal, Introduction of Scene Project

10/28: **Monologue Performances**

10/30: Finish monologues, Working as an ensemble, **Reading Due: Bendetti, Pgs. 44-53**

11/4: Listening as Scene Partner

11/6: Listening as Scene Partner, **Due: Scene Choice**

11/6-11/8 - The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, \$15, Jim Wise Theater

11/11: Scene Analysis

11/13: Working with a partner

11/18: Staging the Scene **Due: Scene analysis**

11/20: Stakes and Tactics, **Reading Due:** Bruder pgs. 55-64

11/25: In Class Rehearsal

11/27: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

12/2: Scene First Looks

12/4: Scene First Looks

12/9: In Class Rehearsal

12/11: **Final scene performance**, Wrap up

12/15: **Due: Play Analysis Paper #2**

12/17: LAST DAY FOR ALL LATE WORK