

## **Beginning Acting (PCA 107 A)**

T/H 12:40-2:40p @ GR 108

**Spring 2013**

**Instructor:** Charlie Pepiton

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**Office:** Griffiths 112

**Office Hours:** Monday/Wednesday 10:00-12:00p, and by appointment. Not available on Fridays.

### **Course Description:**

An introduction to the basic mental and physical skills used in acting, including use of imagination, understanding of the self, character analysis, body flexibility and expression, and voice and diction. Coursework includes exploratory and centering exercises, improvisational techniques, and scene and monologue study.

### **Teaching/Learning Philosophy:**

Myth, ritual, performance, story, comedy, tragedy, romance, word, movement, idea, transference. All of these are vital to us as humans and to the development of strong communities, and all of these are wrapped up in the function and purpose of theatre. I presume you are here to learn about acting and performance and that you care about those things listed above. Our work in this class will be collaborative and dialogic. There will be a necessary, and thrilling I think, give and take throughout the course. It will require that you take risks, reveal yourself, and listen and respond as others do the same.

### **Required Texts:**

- *The Actor's Script* by Charles S. Waxberg
- *Hush: An Interview with America* by James Still

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

- to gain knowledge about and respect for the craft of acting
- to understand and be able to articulate the role of the performer in historic and contemporary cultures
- to acquire a vocabulary for analyzing scripts and performances
- to demonstrate an understanding of the mental skills of acting: the use of imagination, creativity, concentration, analysis, an understanding of the self, and performance evaluation
- to demonstrate an understanding of the physical skills of acting:
  - physical control (movement, blocking, relaxed readiness, and focus)
  - vocal control (quality, clarity, variety, projection, and articulation)
- to reflect with knowledge and understanding upon one's own performances
- to reflect with knowledge and understanding upon others' performances and provide appropriate feedback
- to express oneself clearly and effectively in speaking and writing

**Guidelines for Class Dynamics:**

- Treat your classmates with respect at all times. Feel free to respectfully challenge your classmates by suggesting ways in which they can improve, but refrain from personal attacks.
- When your peers are speaking, listen actively.
- Participate each day to the fullest extent of your ability
- Dress for maximum freedom of movement. If your scene work requires special clothing, come prepared. Note that you may not wear shoes in the classroom that have either hard or marking soles. Especially in the winter, be sure to bring an extra pair of soft, non-marking shoes or be prepared to work barefoot. For your safety, you may not work in socks.
- If you must be late, please do not enter during a performance. Wait outside until you hear the applause that signals the end of the performance. If you must leave during class, please wait until the conclusion of a performance.
- Obviously, if your performance calls for an electronic device, use one, but except for those rare exclusions, there is no need for cell phones and/or laptops in this class. We will all ceremonially “kill” our devices before class begins.
- Chewing gum and eating are prohibited in the classroom. You may bring water to class, but no other beverages are permitted.
- All personal items need to be left on one wall of the studio space. The performance space is our collective creative space and it must be kept clean and free of clutter.
- Please understand that while we may sometimes work closely together in seemingly informal ways, it is important that we take our work seriously and maintain an appropriate level of professionalism.

**Course Requirements:**

There will be (1) one play production critique, (4) four performances [a private moment, an open scene, a monologue, a scripted scene], (3) three performance analyses, (4) four written peer critiques, (1) final self-analysis paper, reading quizzes (as needed), and your daily class attendance and participation. Your full participation in class discussions, exercises, and projects is vital to your success in meeting the learning goals for this course.

**Late Assignments & Performances:**

Late work is never accepted. All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. All performances are scheduled well in advance and may not be rescheduled without documented evidence of dire need. I know that sometimes there are emergencies. If you find yourself in a moment of *real* panic, come talk to me about your situation as early as possible.

**Assignments may not be turned in via email without prior permission for a specific instance.**

There is no way to make up quizzes/notes (on reading assignments), peer critiques, or other in-class assignments. Such assignments are part of your participation grade, and a failure to complete them will result in a deduction of points from your participation grade.

Missed Performances: The latter three performance assignments will be staged twice, a preliminary performance and a final performance. Students who miss a *final* performance due to an *unexcused* absence will receive **zero** credit. Students with an *\*excused* absence may make up the performance, but again, performances are scheduled well in advance. If you know that you have a game or will be absent on a particular day. Don't schedule yourself to perform on that day. Be pro-active. Advocate for yourself.

Preliminary performances are not given a point score, but students who miss a *preliminary* performance will lose **25%** from their *final* performance grade.

Being unable to find time to rehearse with your scene partner, having a computer or printing problem at the last minute, having an assignment or exam in another course, participating in the faculty directed production, or leaving early for breaks (whatever the reason) are not legitimate reasons for late performances or assignments.

### **Attendance / Tardiness:**

Attendance and participation are crucial in this course. Theatre is a collaborative art that requires the presence and focused dedication of the entire ensemble. The group suffers if you are not present and engaged. Your scene partners will count on you to be here to rehearse with them, and your peers will count on you to support their efforts and offer them feedback. I expect you to be here, be prepared, and to take advantage of every opportunity to learn and grow as an actor.

Students are allowed **TWO absences**, *\*excused and/or unexcused*, during the course of the semester. Each additional absence will result in a reduction of your final semester point total by **50 points per absence**. *\*Excused absences* occur due to an emergency situation, an illness serious enough to require a visit to a physician, or an approved university field trip or game (written documentation is required).

Three tardies and/or early departures equal one absence. Tardies and/or early departures of more than 30 minutes are considered full absences.

This is an active, physical class, but should you find a way to sleep in class, your slumber equals a full absence and will count toward your total semester absences.

Please, aim for perfect attendance. If, however, an absence is unavoidable, please notify your collaborators and/or me as soon as possible and well in advance of class/rehearsal. When you enter the classroom, please sign the attendance sheet. I will collect it at the beginning of class. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to sign it at the end of the class. If you are not signed in, you will be marked absent for that day.

Please note: In the rare event that a class is canceled, you must be prepared for the class following the canceled class, unless otherwise noted.

### **Reading:**

The reading assignments in this course are designed to give you the theoretical framework for your practical work in the rehearsal studio. Without the theory, your practice will be hollow. It goes without saying that the reading is important, but you will need to read so that you are engaging with the text. Mere skimming will not suffice. For every assignment, there will be real practical applications, but you must do the time with the book in your hand. I will assume in class that you have already spent the time it takes to process and interrogate the text. We will have discussions about the readings, but we will also activate the theory. Please be prepared for class at the beginning of class. Come with questions. Come with thoughts.

### **Writing/Study Skills Assistance & Accommodations:**

If you'd like assistance with your written assignments I recommend visiting The WORD Studio, located in the library. You should also consider the Office of Academic Support in Whitman Hall for assistance with note-taking, exam prep, time management, organization etc. If you have a disability and need accommodations, please see me as early in the semester as possible.

**\*\*Please refer to the Student Handbook for the university's policies on academic dishonesty.\*\***

### **Grading Criteria**

Grades in this class are based on skill, creativity, dedication, discipline, respect for the craft of acting, and an effort to grow as an artist. Virtually everything you do in this course is evaluated, and much of this evaluation is by nature subjective. In an attempt to minimize subjectivity, each assignment will be evaluated for quality, effort, and thoroughness.

### **You will be graded on the following:**

Performances  
Written Work  
Quizzes/Notes  
Participation

### **Grade Assessment and Conversions to 4.0 Scale:**

(1) Private Moment	25 Pts
(1) Open Scene	50 Pts
(1) Open Scene Analysis	50 Pts
(1) Monologue	100 Pts
(1) Monologue Analysis	50 Pts
(1) Scripted Scene	100 Pts
(1) Scripted Scene Analysis	50 Pts
(4) Peer Critiques	40 Pts (10pts/Critique)
(1) Production Critique	50 Pts
(1) Final Self-Evaluation Paper	100 Pts
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Total	+/- 615 Points for the semester

97-100% = 4.0	81-83% = 2.75	69-71% = 1.75
93-96% = 3.75	78-80% = 2.5	66-68% = 1.5
90-92% = 3.5	75-77% = 2.25	63-65% = 1.25
87-89% = 3.25	72-74% = 2.0	60-62% = 1.0
84-86% = 3.0		59% and below = 0

\*Final percentages are rounded up to the nearest whole percentage from 0.5-0.9 and rounded down to the nearest whole percentage from 0.1-0.4.

Handouts with specific assignment guidelines will follow.

Students are encouraged to record their grades and attendance on the attached page.

## Performance Rubric

Criteria	(8pts)	(7pts)	(6pts)	(5pts)	(4pts)
<b>Tension &amp; Emotion</b> 8 points	Tension is motivated and constant throughout – characters’ objectives and needs are fully played in the scene. Emotion is believable, specific, and matches the character, play and style.	Tension is mostly motivated – characters’ objectives and needs are played in the scene most of the time. Emotion is believable, specific, and mostly matches two of the three (character, play and style).	Tension is not always motivated or consistent throughout – some of the characters’ objectives and needs are played in the scene. Emotion is somewhat believable and sometimes matches one of the three (character, play and style).	Tension is not consistent at all– characters’ objectives and needs are not fully played in the scene. Emotion is not motivated, general, and/or does not match character, play or style.	Tension is missing – characters’ objectives and needs are missing in the scene. Emotion is missing.
<b>Memorization</b> 2 points	All lines are correct, fluid and display a command of the scene. 2pts	All but a few lines are correct and the scene is fluid. 1.5pts	Some choppiness and some lack of fluidity, needs more rehearsal. 1pt	Scene is choppy, many line errors, needs much more rehearsal. .5pt	Scene is not memorized. 0pts
<b>Characterization</b> 8 points	Strong choices are made to create character fully.	Good choices are made to create character.	Character is not constant and/or choices were not strong.	Limited characterization/ breaking of character during the scene.	Character is not present or character is undefined.
<b>Movement &amp; Blocking</b> 8 points	Choices are made as to how and when to move based on the characters’ needs and style of the scene.	Generally choices are made as to how and when to move based on the characters needs and style of the scene.	Some choices are made as to how and when to move but some unmotivated movement as well.	Movement is choppy and feels unmotivated overall and/or does not relate to the character or the style of the scene at all.	Very little movement and/or movement that does not relate to the character or the style of the scene at all.
<b>Diction, Projection, Modulation, &amp; Rate</b> 8 points	Scene is easy to understand and hear. All words are clear and loud enough to hear with good vocal modulation and motivated rate.	Most of the scene is easy to hear and understand but needs work on one of the following (modulation, projection, diction, or rate).	Most of the scene is easy to understand but needs more work on two or more of the following (modulation, projection, diction, or rate).	Trouble hearing and understanding the scene and/or scene lacks any modulation.	Scene cannot be heard or understood and/or is monotone.
<b>Tempo &amp; Rhythm</b> 8 points	Tempo and rhythm are appropriate and the scene has a logical build.	Tempo and rhythm are good, some build but not strong or clear enough.	Tempo and rhythm are good, but no clear build.	Tempo is too fast or too slow and there is no build.	Tempo is so fast or so slow that it distracts from the scene.
<b>Unity &amp; Communication</b> 8 points	There is a excellent sense of the whole play. Actors clearly listen to one another.	There is a good sense of the whole play. Actors listen to one another.	There is somewhat of a since of the whole play. Actors need to listen a bit more.	There is not much since of the whole play. Actors not listening to one another.	No sense of the whole. Actors disconnected.

Total \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

\*Based on a rubric created by Stephen Gundersheim at Winthrop University

Play Title \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Acting

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spring 2013

PERFORMANCE

\_\_\_ of 25pts Private Moment

\_\_\_ of 50pts Open Scene

\_\_\_ of 100pts Monologue

\_\_\_ of 100pts Scripted Scene

WRITTEN WORK

\_\_\_ of 50pts Open Scene Analysis

\_\_\_ of 50pts Monologue Analysis

\_\_\_ of 50pts Scripted Scene Analysis & Score

\_\_\_ of 50pts Production Critique

\_\_\_ of 100pts Final Paper

OTHER

\_\_\_ of \_\_\_ pts Quizzes/Notes

\_\_\_ of \_\_\_ pts Quizzes/Notes

\_\_\_ of \_\_\_ pts Quizzes/Notes

\_\_\_ of \_\_\_ pts Quizzes/Notes

\_\_\_ of \_\_\_ pts Quizzes/Notes

Number of Absences: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tardies: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE:     /Total Possible Points = \_\_\_% = \_\_\_ on the 4.0 scale

See 4.0 conversion chart on the course syllabus