

INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE



Fall 2014
Section #:10609
Cathedral of Learning, Basement16/18
Tues/Thur 3 - 4:15

Instructor: Peter Wood
email: pew16@pitt.edu
phone: 412.624.6568
Office: Cathedral 1604
Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30 - 12:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to develop the students' awareness of the actor's process and to foster a general sense of theatre as an area of human endeavor. Students will be introduced to basic communication skills, including physical and vocal presence in front of an audience. The course will also develop an introductory level of acting skill through the use of regular warm-ups, theater games, improvisation, and simple scene study. The class will culminate in the performance of a final scene. Scenes will be selected from a diverse range of playwrights and students will examine the political, cultural and social context of each play. The course will also provide an introduction to basic theater terminology, and foster the ability to respond to and reflect on theatrical performances. Each student is required to attend University Theatre productions.

Prerequisites: None

GOALS

Through our work together over the course of this semester, each of you should experience:

- Increased confidence in your presence before an audience
- An awareness of how performance of the actor's process may benefit other areas of your life
- Appreciation for theatre as an enduring and expressive human art form, and for its value in the world

OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate progress and achievement in physical and vocal acting techniques grounded in Stanislavsky's method through participation in class games, warm-ups, and targeted exercises.
- Identify motives behind acting choices for specific characters.
- Decide on a specific approach to a scripted scene chosen from various alternatives and apply this approach in workshop, dress, and final performances.
- Create an original interpretation of a neutral (or open) scene.
- Evaluate the merits of and make recommendations to strengthen a given performance, be it their own performances, their classmates, or from stage productions using self-reflections, in-class feedback, and written or verbal critique.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- *Acting: Onstage and Off* by Robert Barton (available at the Book Store or through Amazon. Please note, this is the book that will be used in Basic Acting as well)
- A notebook
- Appropriate clothing for movement, warm-up, and exercises performed in class.

REQUIRED PRODUCTIONS

- *Stop Kiss*, October 2 - October 12, Henry Heymann Theatre
- *Misterioso-119*, October 22 - October 26
- *Endgame*, October 29 - November 2
- *Avenue Q*, November 6 - November 23, Studio Theatre

PROJECTS

Solo Performance: The Character Project

The Character Project will allow you to apply heightened focus skills, recognize self-consciousness, and practice self-awareness. It will also prepare you for scene study. You will create a character based on your observations of life, create conflict, and act out the struggle in a believable solo performance.

Open Scene

This project will allow you to apply heightened focus skills, active partnering and communications skills, and create “given circumstances” while applying them to the performance.

You will be assigned a scene partner and given a brief “open scene” or “neutral dialogue.” You will meet with your partner to create the circumstances (who, what, where, when, why, etc.) and rehearse the scene. You will perform your scene for the class and receive feedback before giving a final performance.

Final Performance: Scripted Scene Study

This is the culminating project for this course and will require you to apply all of the practical objectives and realize the course goals.

You and your scene partner will perform a scene from a scripted play. You will study the play from which your scene is selected, research its production history, and its cultural and/or political themes and present your research to the class. We will then work on the scenes in a step-by-step process, beginning with a read-through, rehearsals, and ending with a final performance. You will be expected to meet with your partner and rehearse your scenes outside of class. You will also do a written script/character analysis. You will be required to learn your lines and use simple props. It is the responsibility of the student/actor to make sure he/she understands the direction and executes the notes/choices to the best of his/her ability. You will also have the opportunity to give and receive constructive feedback to and from your fellow student/actors. Active dialogue between instructor/director and student/actors is strongly encouraged and is generally accepted practice in the field. Note that you will be given specifics on this project. Also, and this is very important, you will not be graded on “acting ability.” You will be graded on the effort, focus, attention, and commitment you bring to this project.

Play Reflections

You will be responsible writing a reflection on *Stop Kiss* and *Avenue Q*. These will be short essays of at least 500 words and with additional question for class discussion. You will receive a style-sheet with more information before the first required play begins.

Quizzes

There will be a number of quizzes that will be announced at least 1 week in advance. These quizzes will be on selections from the required text and the plays that you are required to see.

Journal

At the end of each class, you will be expected to write for 5 minutes about the work we are doing in class. At both the midpoint and the end of the semester, you will be expected to select 8 of those entries to turn in, along with a short paragraph reflecting on your development in the class to that point.

GRADING

Play Reflection 1	50
Play Reflection 2	50
Quizzes	100
Journal	100
Solo Performance	100
Open Scene	200
Scripted Scene (Written Analysis)	100
Scripted Scene (Performance)	150
Class Participation	150
Total Available Points	1000

GRADING SCALE

A+ = 970-1000	A = 900-969	B+ = 870-899	B = 800-869
C+ = 770-799	C = 700-769	D+ = 670-699	D = 600-669
F = 0-599			

CLASS PARTICIPATION

You will be graded on class participation in a serious way. Because of the nature of this class, you are going to be asked to be an active participant. To help you understand what participation consists of, these are the areas you will be graded on:

Performance Focus - When you are rehearsing or performing, your focus needs to be on the work and on the feedback that it generates. If you do not commit to working hard on your scenes and performances, you will lose points.

Audience Focus - It is vital that those who are not performing give their attention to those who are. There are two reasons for this. One, you need to give your peers respect (how would you feel if you are trying to work hard on a scene and other people are talking and ruining your concentration). Two, you can learn a lot by watching other people struggling with the same problems you might have as an actor. I will be expecting everyone in the class to help give feedback at times, so you need to be respectful and focused as an audience member.

Using Feedback - Remember, I am not going to grade you on your acting ability. However, when you are given feedback or asked to try something for a rehearsal or performance, it is your responsibility to incorporate that feedback into your rehearsal/performance. Listening to and using feedback is central to the art of performance and I expect you to take this seriously.

Warm-ups & Exercises/Games - You are expected to be ready to warm-up when class begins, not 5 minutes into class. If there is a reason you might find it difficult to be ready to start on time, please speak to me as soon as possible. Please note, that this also involves being properly attired for this class. As we will be doing a great deal of physical movement and working as a group, you need to dress appropriately. If you regularly wear clothing that is restrictive or otherwise hinders your ability to warmup or engage in exercises, you will lose points.

Additionally, you must be prepared to engage and commit to the exercises and games that we do in class. I understand that for some of you, much of what you will be asked to do will seem odd or unusual, but you are expected to commit, to the best of your ability, to these exercises.

ATTENDANCE

You will be allowed two absences without any penalty during the semester. Every other absence will lower your grade by 3%. Late arrivals will count against your participation grade (see "Class Participation"). If you will be absent on a day when you are scheduled to perform, it is your responsibility to contact your scene partner and switch your time with another pair. If you miss a second presentation date, your scene partner may be reassigned and you will lose all points for that assignment.

EXPECTATIONS

What you can expect from me . . .

- I will create a respectful and supportive classroom.
- I will be fair and transparent in my grading.
- I will do my best to help each of you succeed in this class.

What I expect from you . . .

- You will respect your peers and help create a supportive and safe classroom.
- You will focus on the work and will not use cell phones or other devices to text, surf the web, or otherwise take your focus away during class.
- You will do your best to succeed.

DIVERSITY CLAUSE

All participants of this class, both students and instructors, are required to help promote and maintain, at all times, a positive atmosphere in which everyone displays and receives respect, tolerance, and encouragement regardless of race, gender, religion, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. Plagiarism, copying of assignments, and cheating will not be tolerated. Violating the University-wide policy on academic honesty will result in automatic failure on the assignment and possible failure of the course. A copy of the university's policy statement is available at <http://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html>.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, please notify both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule your appointment. The office is located in 216 William Pitt Union and the website is www.drs.pitt.edu. This information is confidential and the instructor may not discuss it in the class unless you choose to do so.

THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT MEDIA STATEMENT

In accordance with “The Pitt Promise: A Commitment to Civility,” The University of Pittsburgh Student Code of Conduct, and the professional standards and expectations of our field, students, staff and faculty in the Theatre Arts Department agree to the positive, responsible and respectful use of social media. The Theatre Arts Department’s commitment to civility includes zero tolerance for public aspersion upon students, classes, facilities; the un-approved posting of production videos or photos, per Equity guidelines; cyber bullying.

Any member of the university community may file a complaint in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code of Conduct and its procedures can be accessed here: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/studentconduct>. The Pitt Promise may be accessed here: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/pittpromise>.

THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT CASTING STATEMENT & MAINSTAGE AND LAB SEASON MISSION

We are committed to producing stories from multiple cultural perspectives, of diverse styles and structures and from multiple time periods.

To tell every story upon our stage, students and artists of all abilities, races, genders, sexualities, nationalities, and religions are needed for our casts, our crew, and our production teams.

As a department, we are committed to analyzing and understanding a playwright’s intentions for location, time and character. We are equally committed to challenging ourselves to think beyond the strictures of given circumstances and historical expectations in production.

We are committing to cultivating within our students and faculty a space for artists who are willing to take risks, to stretch themselves and to see each class, audition and production opportunity as a fresh opportunity for greatness.

COURSE CALENDAR*

Class Date	Assignment(s) Due & Planned Activities
August 26	Introductions Cover Syllabus/Projects/Expectations
August 28	Introduction to warm-up routine & icebreaker games
September 2	Quiz 1: Barton, 1-36 Games Cover basic Laban terms & explore ways of moving
September 4	Movement exercises & games
September 9	Quiz 2: Barton, Ch 3
September 11	Movement exercises & games
September 16	Quiz 3: Barton, Ch 4
September 18	Movement exercises & games
September 23	Solo Performances
September 25	Micro open scenes: focus on given circumstances
September 30	Quiz 4: Barton, Ch 7 Continue with micro open scenes
October 2	Vocal basics
October 7	Quiz 5: Barton, Ch 8 Open Scene "stumble throughs"
October 9	Open Scene "stumble throughs"
October 14	NO CLASS
October 16	<i>Stop Kiss</i> Reflections Due <i>Stop Kiss</i> Discussion Costume & Props list for Open Scene Due
October 21	Open Scene Performances
October 23	Open Scene Performances
October 28	8 Journal Entries Due <i>Misterioso-119</i> Discussion
October 30	TBD
November 4	<i>Endgame</i> Discussion

Class Date	Assignment(s) Due & Planned Activities
November 6	TBD
November 11	TBD
November 13	TBD
November 18	Final Scene Stumble Throughs
November 20	Final Scene Stumble Throughs
November 25	<i>Avenue Q Reflections Due</i> <i>Avenue Q Discussion</i>
November 27	NO CLASS
December 2	Written Analysis Portion of Final Scene Project Due
December 4	Final Day of Class 8 Journal Entries Due
December 8-13	Final Scenes presented during finals week.

** The course calendar is subject to revision if necessary during the semester*

SYLLABUS AGREEMENT FORM

I, _____, (print name) have read the syllabus and course timeline and understand the classroom policies, expectations, and rules as stated in the syllabus and timeline. By signing this form I agree to comply with the policies, requirements, expectations and consequences, accept the outline for this class, and acknowledge the instructor's right to adjust the timeline with due notice.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Please return this page to the instructor by this semester's add/drop date.