

The Art of Acting

THEA 2311.001

JanTerm 2018

Instructor: Allison Pistorius
Schedule: Daily 9am-12pm, 1pm-4pm
Location: SMU-in-Taos
Office Hour: By Appointment
E-mail: apistorius@smu.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW/LEARNING OUTCOMES

Pillars - Creativity and Aesthetics- (Level 1)

1. Students will be able to identify methods, techniques, or languages of a particular art form, creative endeavor or craft(s) and explain how those inform the creation, performance or analysis of creative work. (Level 1)
2. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of concepts fundamental to the creative impulse through analysis, performance, or creation. (Level 1)

Proficiencies and Experiences - Oral Communication

1. Students will be able to select and use appropriate forms of evidence in a public presentation.
2. Students will be able to design verbal messages to suit particular audiences and purposes.
3. Students will be able to use visual cues (such as presentation software, staging, props, costumes, makeup, and gesture) to enhance a public presentation.

DISABILITY ACCOMODATIONS:

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

ATTENDANCE:

There is **no late admittance**. Be ready to play at the start of each class session (9AM and 1PM)

“Ready to play” means in the classroom, in a seat, with your class materials out, your phone turned off and put away, and ready to begin work. Anything that does not fulfill the aforementioned requirements will result in being counted TARDY. If you need to use the restroom before class, or step outside and take a breath, or make a phone call, or check email, etc, DO IT BEFORE CLASS STARTS.

Each student is allowed one “freebie” absence and tardy. Each class missed after the one “freebie” will result in the drop of one letter grade to the final grade of the semester. (A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc)

3 tardies will result in an unexcused absence.

A personal note: Don't let an otherwise good grade become a bad one because of attendance and tardies. It happens much easier and faster than you realize. These are factored in AFTER the final grade is calculated, so keep a record of them for yourself. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class every day. When a student is tardy, a record will be kept of his/her arrival time or that the tardy was a result of not being “ready to play.” If you ever have a question about how many absences or tardies you have incurred, please do not hesitate to ask.

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

DRESS CODE AND OTHER POLICIES:

Students are required to wear clothing that allows for unrestricted movement to each class. The main focus of our work takes place on our feet, so students must feel comfortable and able to move without restrictions. Try to avoid: flip-flops and shoes that are not secured to your feet, short skirts and/or dresses, high heels, low-cut tops, large dangly jewelry, and any clothing that is either excessively revealing, tight- or loose-fitting. Examples of appropriate clothing include, but are not limited to: workout clothing, dance attire, sweatpants, jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism of any kind is prohibited by the SMU Student Honor Code. For more information, please see <http://smu.edu/honorcouncil/>

In accordance with Texas Senate Bill 11, also known as the “campus carry” law, following consultation with entire University community SMU determined to remain a weapons-free campus. Specifically, **SMU prohibits possession of weapons (either openly or in a concealed manner) on campus.** For more information, please see: http://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/Police/Weapons_Policy.”

Unless specifically requested otherwise, phones should be kept off and secured in bags for the duration of class. They will not be anywhere on your person during warm

up, games, or work with a partner in front of class. The first time you are caught using your phone you will receive a warning, and every other instance after that for the duration of the semester, you will receive a deduction of 1/2 of that day's participation credit (.25 points).

No recording of any kind - video or audio, of the instructor, classmates, or yourself - is allowed unless specifically approved by the instructor. If you are caught recording without permission, the first time you will receive a warning, and every other instance will result in the final grade of the course being dropped a letter grade (A to A-, A- to B+, etc).

REQUIRED MATERIAL AND TEXT:

Reading material (brought to class each time it meets):

Play Script: We will read one full-length play during the course of the term (title tbd) to be supplied by the instructor. Once this play is assigned and handed out, it is to be read by the date specified and brought to class every time it meets.

Letters to a Young Artist: Straight-up Advice on Making a Life in the Arts - For Actors, Performers, Writers, and Artists of Every Kind, by Anna Deavere Smith

Other supplies:

Folder or other tool for organizing handouts provided by the instructor (there will be several)

A PENCIL

Loose-leaf paper/small notebook in which to take notes.

Any necessary script materials for the scene/étude currently being explored in class.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will complete assignments in and out of class. Minimum application by the student to the assignments will result in an average grade of C. Maximum application by the student to the projects can result in an A. Please see the attached rubric for how work in this course will be considered and graded.

In Class Participation: One can only learn acting by DOING, therefore it is imperative to your success in the class that you are present, on time, and ready to work. You will be graded on your willingness to participate, both in discussion and in exercises, on your working relationship with your partners in étude and scene work, and on your willingness to work as part of a larger ensemble.

Étude and Scene-work Self-Assessments: These assessments will be scored for their ability to fulfill CA Pillar 1 – please be thoughtful and use language introduced in

class to analyze your work as a whole in the Étude/Scene. Instructor will provide specific questions to address. Each assessment must be one page* at minimum.

Étude and Scene-work Rehearsal Report and Given Circumstances:

The **Rehearsal Report** is a written response to in-class rehearsals. The student should describe both the experience of rehearsing in front of the group as well as watching his classmates. Describe the rehearsal process, any exercises or discoveries you found interesting/challenging/helpful/illuminating/etc, how the work grew and changed through rehearsal, and what you learned from it.

Given Circumstances is a first-person account of the character's answers to Who Am I, Where Am I, Who is Around Me, What Do I Lack, What Does It Look Like, Why Don't I Have It, What Do I Do To Get It, and any other "actor" questions useful to the scene.

These assignments should each be one page* at minimum and are due the class day following the completion of étude 2 and at the last class "session," during which the final in-class performances of scene work will occur.

Reflection Papers: Each student will write two one-page* reflection papers during the term. The first will be a response to the in-class video presentation of *Constellations*, and the second will discuss the field trip. For the first, students will be graded on their attempt and ability to use language, methods, and techniques learned in class to discuss the given circumstances of the production, the success and deficiencies in acting, and the success or deficiencies in directing. This paper should NOT be a summary of the plot of the play and need not comment on the design aspects (set, lights, costumes) unless it is to relate them to the given circumstances and acting. The second will be a personal response to the field trip and discuss what the student found interesting and how the experience affected his or her idea of what acting and performance are.

* For the purposes of this class, "one page" means one FULL page. The text of your paper must take up the *entire* page. Do not leave extra spaces at the top or bottom, and do not insert extra spaces between paragraphs. Papers should be formatted as follows: double spaced, no larger than 12-pt font, no wider than 1" margins all the way around the page. The header need only consist of your name and the title of your paper and should be single-spaced.

Etude/Scene Work: Evaluation of your work in class on études and scenes will be based on:

- Level of preparation (set/props/costumes)
- Level of memorization
- Clarity and implementation of given circumstances
- Ability to engage in and explore techniques discussed in class

Quizzes: There will be six quizzes over assigned reading from *Letters to a Young Artist: Straight-up Advice on Making a Life in the Arts - For Actors, Performers, Writers, and Artists of Every Kind*, by Anna Deavere Smith.

GRADING:

Total Points Possible: **100**

Reflection Papers (2 @ 5 Points each): **10 points**

Étude 2: **20 points**

*Rehearsal Report/Given Circumstances/In-class work - rehearsals and showing:
5 points/5 points/5 points

*Self-Assessment – 5 points

Scenework: **26 points**

*Rehearsal Report/Given Circumstances/In-class work - rehearsals and showing:
6points/7points/8points

*Self-Assessment – 5 points

Quizzes: (6 @ 5 points each): **30 points**

In Class Participation (1 point for each class “session,” meaning 2 points per class
“day”, not including the field trip day - 7 days total): **14 points**

A 95 – 100	A- 90 - 94%	
B+ 87 – 89	B 84 – 86	B- 80 – 83
C+ 77 – 79	C 74 – 76	C- 70 – 73
D+ 67 – 69	D 64 – 66	D- 60 – 63
F 59 or fewer		

SCHEDULE:

***Please note - this schedule is fluid. Both it and the syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor without prior notice to the student

***LtaYA* = *Letters to a Young Artist*

Class 1 (Monday, January 8)

Morning

Due: Both études must be memorized by the first day of class.

LtaYA - *preface, introduction, basics, relationships, work*

Quiz and Discussion

Hand out play to be read

Traditional Games and Improvisation exercises

Afternoon

Continue Improv games and exercises

Class 2 (Tuesday, January 9)

Morning

Due: *LtaYA* - *matters of the mind*

Quiz and Discussion

Continue Improv games and exercises

Afternoon

Begin étude 1

Class 3 (Wednesday, January 10)

Morning

Due: *LtaYA* - *matters of the heart*

Quiz and Discussion

Continue and Conclude work on étude 1

Afternoon

Acting Terminology Lecture

Video: *Constellations*

Homework:

1. With assigned partner, create the world of étude 2 for tomorrow's class using the terminology discussed today
2. 1-page response to *Constellations*

Class 4 (Thursday, January 11)

Morning

Due: *LtaYA - keeping the faith*

1-page response to *Constellations*

Quiz and Discussion

Begin in-class work on étude 2

Afternoon

Complete in-class work on étude 2

Assign scenes and partners for Final Presentation

Homework:

Begin memorizing Final Presentation scene

Complete Rehearsal Report, Given Circumstances, and Self-Assessment for étude 2

Class 5 (Friday, January 12) - field trip to Santa Fe - Meow Wolf

Due: Given Circumstances, Rehearsal Report, and Self-Assessment for étude 2

Use the travel time to work with your partner on memorization and filling out "Given Circumstances" for the scene and to re-read the play

Homework:

1 page response to field trip due Monday

Class 6 (Monday, January 15)

Morning

Due: *Play* should be read at least twice and students ready to discuss

Final scene should be memorized

1-page response to field trip

Discuss play

Begin in-class rehearsals for Final Presentation

Afternoon

Continue in-class rehearsals for Final Presentation

Class 7 (Tuesday, January 16)

Morning

Due: *LtaYA - art and society*

Quiz and Discussion

Continue in-class rehearsals

Afternoon

Continue in-class rehearsals

Class 8 (Wednesday, January 17)

Morning

Due: *LtaYA - the death of cool*

Quiz and Discussion

Final In-Class rehearsals

Afternoon

Final In-Class Presentations

CATEGORY	Exemplary 96-100	Accomplished 86-95	Developing 76-85	Beginning 66-75	Absent below 65
Cultivate an Understanding of the Vocabulary of Acting and its Techniques (Includes the Assessment of Personal Work and that of Others)	Student shows a full understanding of the vocabulary of acting and is able to fully evaluate his/her own process and that of others using in-class language.	Student shows a moderate to full understanding of vocabulary of acting and is able to fully evaluate his/her own process. In addition, he/she shows some ability to assess others' work using in-class language.	Student shows a moderate understanding of vocabulary of acting and is able to partially evaluate his/her own process. In addition, he/she attempts to assess others' work using in-class language.	Student shows a minimal understanding of vocabulary of acting and is able to partially evaluate his/her own process.	Student shows little to no understanding of vocabulary of acting, is unable to evaluate his/her own process.
Explore and Implement Acting Techniques in Practical Performance and Creative Situations	Student displays full implementation and approaches mastery of skills introduced during the semester. In addition, he/she is always willing and able to explore, play, take direction, and make changes when asked.	Student displays high degree of implementation and proficiency in skills introduced during the semester. In addition, he/she is consistently willing and often able to explore, play, take direction, and make changes when asked.	Student displays some implementation and approaches proficiency in skills introduced during the semester. In addition, he/she is consistently willing to explore, play, take direction, and attempt make changes when asked.	Student displays minimal attempts at implementation of and proficiency in skills introduced during the semester, though rarely willing and/or able to play, explore, take direction, and make changes when asked.	Student makes little to no attempts to implement and displays minimal to no proficiency in skills introduced during the semester. He/she is unable and/or unwilling to play, explore, take direction, or make changes when asked.
Actively Engage with and Participate in Reading Assignments, Discussions, Exercises, Games, and Warm-ups	Student actively participates in and fully commits to all in-class activities and completes all reading assignments.	Student participates in all in-class activities though with less-than-full commitment and completes all reading assignments.	Student participates in most in-class activities and does so with less-than-full commitment and completes most reading assignments.	Student participates minimally during in-class activities and completes at least 1 reading assignment.	Student participates minimally or not at all during in-class activities and completes none of the reading assignments.
Exhibit an Understanding of and a Willingness to Implement the Degree of Preparation Needed for an Actor to Be Successful	<u>Fully Prepared</u> (memorized by due date, if not before; extensive work on given circumstances/ objectives/ actions/obstacles out of class and reflected in class; always brings necessary prop/ costume/set pieces; always present for rehearsals/in-class work)	<u>Very Prepared</u> (memorized by due date, mild shakiness after; fully considered given circumstances/ objectives/ actions/obstacles out of class; always brings necessary prop/ costume/set pieces; always present for rehearsals/in-class work)	<u>Moderately Prepared</u> (memorized, though still noticeably shaky after due date; acceptable work on given circumstances/ objectives/ actions/ obstacles out of class; brings necessary prop/ costume/set pieces most of the time; consistently present for rehearsals/in-class work)	<u>Minimally Prepared</u> (some, but not full memorization by due date; little work on given circumstances/ objectives/ actions/ obstacles out of class; brings some prop/ costume/set pieces some of the time; consistently present for rehearsals and in-class work)	<u>Not Prepared</u> (not memorized; little to no work on given circumstances/ objectives/ actions/ obstacles in or out of class; consistently does not bring necessary prop/ costume/set pieces; consistently not present for rehearsals/in-class work)