

Experiences in Acting

Class Time: Tuesday evenings 7pm-9:30pm
Location: Boger Hall, Room 115 (41 Wyllys Ave)
PROFESSOR: COREY SORENSON
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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to the art of live-performance through the theatrical lenses of Improvisation, Solo-Performance, and Scene Work. Grounded in the classical acting technique of the Stanislavski system, students will experience being both actors and art makers. No prior acting experience is required.

Required Readings will be selected from:

- “Improvisation for the Theatre” by Viola Spolin
- “A Challenge for the Actor” by Uta Hagen
- “The Intent to Live” by Larry Moss
- “The Actor and the Target” by Declan Donnellan
- “The Theatre Experience” by Edwin Wilson

II. COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop physical, vocal, and imaginative freedom towards the purpose of communicating thoughts and ideas publicly.
2. Establish a practice for recognizing, integrating, and utilizing performance anxiety.
3. Develop an ensemble/collaborative atmosphere while understanding and experiencing the individual’s responsibility to the ensemble.
4. Develop basic acting skills through unscripted exercises that explore the psycho-physical connection. Including: imagination, concentration, intention, action and play.
5. Develop an understanding of the acting process by identifying, defining, and practicing the essential principles of the discipline of acting. Including: Awareness. Connection. Listening. Answering. Given Circumstances. Objective. Obstacle. Conflict. Resolution.
6. Develop the ability to create a solo performance from a uniquely personal point-of-view.
7. Develop spontaneity and basic skills in communicating with a partner and/or ensemble through performance exercises.
8. Begin to develop the ability to understand and interpret a dramatic role from script to performance.
9. Perform a theatrical scene while both embodying a character and actively listening to a scene partner(s).

III. COURSE OUTLINE

This is a practical studio course, emphasizing learning through doing, and embodied knowledge. Performance exercises will be supported with assigned readings and videos. Students will be required to participate in in-class exercises, rehearse outside of class on a regular basis, respectfully collaborate with assigned scene partners, author their own performance material, and serve as responsive audience members to in-class performances.

Grades will be assessed on written work and performance work.

Performance exercises and projects will include:

- Ensemble Theatre games
- Acting exercises
- Blank Scenes
- Solo Performance Monologue
- Scripted Scene

Written Assignments include:

- Play Quiz
- Solo Performance Script
- Solo Performance Response essay
- Character Analysis Worksheets
- Final Exam

IV. Assignment/Grading Breakdown:

You can track your personal grade throughout the term on Moodle.

| | |
|--|-----|
| Participation in Improvisation, Ensemble, Acting exercises | 10% |
| Open Scene Performances | 15% |
| Solo Performance Response Essay | 5% |
| 4 th Side Exercise | 5% |
| Solo Performance Script | 10% |
| Solo Performance Monologue | 10% |
| Play Quiz | 5% |
| Play Scene | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |

V. CLASSROOM, REHEARSAL, PERFORMANCE PROTOCOL:

- 1) Arrive early, ready and willing to work, and be prepared.
- 2) Offer yourself with humility to the process and to your collaborators. The best learning occurs when we work together. It's not a competition.
- 3) Complete assigned readings on the day that they are due and participate in class discussions.
- 4) No cell phone noises. Keep it on silent. If you might be receiving an emergency phone call during class, notify me prior to the start of class.
- 5) Only water. No food, drink, gum, candy.
- 6) Dress appropriately for class activities/exercises. It is important that your clothing not impede your movement; that includes your shoes – exercise clothing is often best. You may be asked to jog, jump, crouch or crawl in this class.
- 7) You are required to costume yourself (from your own wardrobe) for performances.
- 8) You will be responsible for finding any and all props that are used in your scene.
- 9) Be a respectful audience member when your fellow classmates are performing.
- 10) As is true in many acting classes, the work in this course may involve your personal feelings, memories, and imagination. Please see me outside of class if anything in the course becomes uncomfortable or challenging.
- 11) CRITICISM: To protect the safety and academic integrity of the classroom, the instructor will give ALL critique of acting exercises. You are not welcome to respond to another classmates' performance unless invited to do so by both the instructor and the actor about whom you are critiquing. It's not because I have all the answers and my point-of-view is the only valid one in the room, which is certainly not the case. Rather, performing can be very revealing and scary at times (especially for new actors) which is why all criticism in this course will come from the instructor. If, as a student, you see something that you feel needs addressing which I have not addressed, there is likely a reason why I haven't; but I invite you to talk to me about your observations outside of class.

VI. TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE:

| | | | Check Wes Portal/ Moodle |
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| | DATE | CLASS CONTENT (performances are in bold) | ASSIGNMENT for next class |
| 1 | 1/28 | Introductions. Equals. Improvisation Games. Being Seen/Being Heard. Performance Anxiety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read Spolin intro ➤ Read Hagen: Concept and Identity ➤ Read <i>Performance Anxiety</i>. ➤ Watch Anxiety video |
| 2 | 2/4 | Improvisation: Who, Where 4 th Side Exercise set up. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read Hagen: The 4th Side ➤ Rehearse 4th Side Exercise |
| 3 | 2/11 | Perform 4th Side Phone Call Exercise. Hand in Character sheet. Introduce partner work. Introduce Blank Scenes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse blank scene 1 ➤ WATCH: Method history (one perspective) ➤ Read Edwin Wilson: Acting |
| 4 | 2/18 | Perform Blank Scenes 1 with adjustments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse Blank Scene 2 ➤ Read objective in Moss |
| 5 | 2/25 | Perform Blank Scene 2 Objective/Action/Obstacle - conflict | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse Blank Scenes 3 ➤ Read Objective/Action |
| 6 | 3/3 | Perform Blank Scene 3 Begin solo performance creation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse Solo Piece ➤ Watch Solo Performance, "Notes from the Field" |
| | <i>Spring Break</i> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Write and rehearse your solo piece for next class. |
| 7 | 3/24 | Perform Solo Performance – structured feedback. Re-work the piece. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Edit and refine your solo performance based on in-class feedback. |
| 8 | 3/31 | Solo Performance redux Assign Final Scenes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read your play. |
| 9 | 4/7 | Appreciating Performance and the role of the actor. <i>Hand in Solo Performance Essay</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read your play again. ➤ Read Moss "Backstory" |
| 10 | 4/14 | Table Read. Text Analysis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse on your own for Given Circumstances. Create your Character Worksheet. ➤ Read Uta Hagen: Rehearsal |
| 11 | 4/21 | Group rehearsal. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse in pairs twice. (Plan costumes and props.) |
| 12 | 4/28 | Dress Rehearsal with costumes and props. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rehearse in pairs. Be sure to incorporate notes from class. |
| 13 | 5/5 | Perform Final Scenes | |
| | <i>Final Exams/Possible Makeup Day (5/12 @7pm)</i> | | |

Instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course outline, and will notify students of any changes to the schedule

Students with Disabilities:

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/022, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-5581).

“Everyone can act. Everyone can improvise. Anyone who wishes to can play in the theater and learn to become “stageworthy”.” -- Viola Spolin

“Artists are the people that no matter what, pick up the pen, pick up a paintbrush. They take the time to translate what is happening to create something that resonates deeply with the rest of the people that are caught in the middle of their own reality”. – Anna Deavere Smith

“There are no accidents in art – only the fruits of long labor” --Constantin Stanislavski