COURSE SYLLABUS: ACTING FOR NON-MAJORS 1  Spring 2008

College of Fine Arts, Boston University

Class Days/Times:  Tues/Thurs 12:30-2 pm  Room 354

Instructor:  Andrea Southwick  Office: CFA 406 (office hours by appointment)
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Course Description:
Through a series of exercises and a variety of acting techniques, students will explore the essential elements of acting, creative expression and collaboration in the theatre. These include vocal and physical warm-ups, relaxation, concentration, sensory awareness, listening, communication, teamwork, and spontaneity. Participants will learn a variety of ways to create a character and express one’s emotion through the voice, body, and imagination. Skills will be developed to create ensemble and to work in relationship with people, objects and places. Ultimately, through in-class scene presentations, acting students will bring the fruits of their labor to an audience in order to convey vital stories, ideas, emotions, and provocative questions that reflect or challenge humanity.

Fundamental elements and guidelines to achieve the goals of the class:
- Peeling off layers of life habits, defenses, attitudes, comfort zones, self-censorship
- Learning to release tension; allowing oneself to believe
- Must build trust • Support each other • Respect each other's process
- Only positive feedback – no negative feedback – find a positive way to offer suggestions – start with “what worked for me…”
- Get to know yourself; get to know each other
- Listen to each other; listen to yourself
- Be willing to risk
- Learn by doing; learn by observing
- Respect each other’s process and unique experience, and respect your own
- Always speak from your own experience, from “I”

Physical/Vocal Acting may include exercises based on:
- Grotowski , Moni Yakim, Michael Chekhov, Laban, Kristin Linklater, Roy Hart, Viewpoints (Anne Bogart)

Acting Techniques may include exercises based on:
- Sanford Meisner, Uta Hagen, Stanislavski, Robert Benedetti, Robert Barton, Robert Cohen, Keith Johnstone, Eric Morris, and many others

Suggested texts:
- A Challenge for the Actor by Uta Hagen
- The Sanford Meisner Approach by Larry Silverberg
- An Actor Prepares by Constantin Stanislavski
- An Acrobat of the Heart by Stephen Wangh
- Freeing the Natural Voice by Kristin Linklater
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

**Attendance & Punctuality:**
Attendance for each class is mandatory. This course is almost entirely experiential and each session builds on the previous one: one must be in class in order to succeed in this course. Each participant in this course is a member of an ensemble and will be working with partners who heavily rely on one another. When one person is absent, it impacts the entire group.
- **Two EXCUSED absences are allowed.** (Excused = very sick, family emergency, other vital situation approved by me.) Your third absence from class, and every absence thereafter, will knock 1/3 off your final grade.
- Lateness will not be tolerated and will reduce your grade. 2 Lates = 1 Absence.
- Tardiness and absenteeism will also greatly impact your participation mark!

**Notebook:**
- Please create a notebook for this class. Bring it with you to every class. It should contain:
  - Course Syllabus: It will change as we go along! Have it with you to make note of the changes.
  - Journal/Class Log: Reflect on your feelings, observations, ideas and questions each week. You will use it to refer to in class in response to exercises and questions that we will explore. I will never see/read your journal.
  - All Class Handouts: you’ll use these in class.
  - All Assignments: you’ll use these in class.

**Assignments:** A variety of handouts, readings, short writing assignments, exercises, weekly rehearsals and a final process paper will constitute your outside course work. Many, but not all of these can be found on the syllabus. Do expect me to assign other homework as we go along.

**Outside Rehearsals:** As part of your course work, each student is required to meet outside of class once a week with a partner from class to work on the assigned exercises, and/or to rehearse the neutral scene midterm projects, and the scripted scene final projects. You must rehearse each week outside of class in order to keep up with the in-class work.

**Midterm Project: Neutral Scene Presentations:** Due Tuesday 3/18

**Final Project: Scripted Scene Presentations:** Due Tuesday 4/29

**In-Class Participation:**
Participation in all class activities and discussions is required. Your voice, ideas and expression are an essential part of our ensemble and of the training.

**Process Paper:** Due Tuesday 5/6
Write a 1-2 page self-evaluative paper about your process and growth during the semester. What have you realized about the actor’s job, your strengths and weaknesses, and yourself as a theater artist? What in the process of acting has surprised you or revealed something to you about the process of making theater?
Clothing: Wear comfortable clothing that is appropriate for a full-range of movement. No jeans, skirts, buckles or belts. Elastic waists are preferable. Be prepared to work in bare feet, (sometimes sox are fine.) Remove all jewelry that can get in the way.

This is a hands-on class. There may be physical contact between the instructor and the students.

GRADING:

Your grade in this course is based on attitude, effort, commitment, attendance, preparation, participation, discipline, energy, creative risk-taking, collaborative contribution and personal growth. An “A” grade is reserved for the student who consistently does exceptional work in all of these areas, in addition to fulfilling the above outlined requirements with excellence.

Participation, Preparation & Personal Growth: 50%
Mid-Term Project: 10%
Weekly Assignments: 10%
Final Project: 20%
Process Paper/Self-Evaluation: 10%

CLASS SCHEDULE:

(Subject to change! Please bring with you to every class and note changes as we go along.)

Class #1: Tuesday 1/22
- Intros
- Warm-up
- Acting: What is good acting? What is acting good for?
- Social Repertoire Game
- ASSIGNMENT due 1/24: Social Repertoire Charts

Class #2: Thursday 1/24
- Warm-up
- Process Homework: Social Rep Charts
- Intro to Meisner’s techniques & word repetition game
  - The Reality of Doing
  - First Step: basic repetition game
- ASSIGNMENT due 1/29: basic repetition w/a partner for 20 minutes
  - Make notes, bring back observations and questions

Class #3: Tuesday 1/29
- Physical/Vocal Acting Work
- First Step: basic repetition continued
- ASSIGNMENT due 2/5: one-word repetition w/a partner for 20 minutes
  - Make notes, bring back observations and questions

No Class Thursday 1/31: (Andrea’s performance in Fitchburg)
Class #4: Tuesday 2/5
- Physical/Vocal Acting
- Review basic repetition
- Introduce Three Moment Game

Class #5: Thursday 2/7
- Physical/Vocal Acting
- Three Moment Game Continued
- ASSIGNMENT:
  - basic repetition w/a partner for 15 minutes; three-moment game for 15 minutes
  - Make notes, bring back observations and questions

Class #6: Tuesday 2/12
- Physical/Vocal Acting
- Three Moment Game continued
- Introduce full repetition

Class #7: Thursday 2/14
- Physical/Vocal Acting
- Full repetition continued

  - ASSIGNMENT due 2/21:
    - half hour w/partner; 10-minute review of basic repetition & three-moment game; 20 minutes of full repetition
    - Make notes, bring back observations and questions

No Class Tuesday 2/19: Substitute Monday classes

Class #8: Thursday 2/21
- Physical/Vocal Acting
- Full Repetition; add objectives
- ASSIGNMENT due 2/26: Read handout: Objectives, Obstacles, Actions, Stakes

Class #9: Tuesday 2/26
- Physical/Vocal Acting
- Full Repetition with objectives, etc.
- ASSIGNMENT due 2/28: Choose partners for neutral scenes (or I can assign)

Class #10: Thursday 2/28
- Quick Warm-up:
- Neutral Scenes & Repetition
- ASSIGNMENT:
  - Get together w/partner & spend at least a half an hour going over the scene w/repetition
  - Read handouts
Class #11: Tuesday 3/4
- Quick Warm-up:
- Neutral Scenes & Repetition & Objectives
- ASSIGNMENT: Choose w/partner who, what, where for neutral scene

Class #12: Thursday 3/6
- Quick Warm-up:
- Neutral Scenes/Repetition
  - Objectives
  - Obstacles
  - Tactics/Actions
  - Stakes
- ASSIGNMENT over break:
  - Choose on your own: objectives, stakes, tactics, obstacles
  - Get together w/partners to rehearse as much as needed for presentations due on 3/18 (first class when we get back from break)

SPRING BREAK 3/8 – 3/16 NO CLASSES

Class #13: Tuesday 3/18: MIDTERM PROJECT
- Quick Warm-up:
- Ten minute practice
- Neutral Scene Presentations
- Receive assigned plays & partners
- ASSIGNMENT: Order the play — need it by 3/25 — DON’T READ YET

Class #14: Thursday 3/20
- Warm-up:
- Receive assigned scene from the play (I will give you photocopies)
- First Readings of scripted scene w/repetition
- ASSIGNMENT: Get together w/partner & read entire scene w/repetition

Class #15: Tuesday 3/25
- Warm-up:
- Continue First Readings of scenes
- ASSIGNMENT: Read Play w/guidelines & Yakim’s Character Clues Handout

Class #16: Thursday 3/27
- Warm-up:
- Scene work
- ASSIGNMENT:
  - Re-read play
  - Uta Hagen’s questions: handout
  - Meet once a week w/scene partner—Play w/objectives, etc. in your rehearsals
Class #17: Tuesday 4/1
- Warm-up:
- Scene work/Character Work

Class #18: Thursday 4/3
- Warm-up:
- Scene work/Character Work
- ASSIGNMENT:
  - Meet one a week to rehearse w/scene partner
  - Process Papers: get started if you haven’t already

The following classes will consist of the following possibilities:
- Scene Work
- Character Work
- Staging Work: viewpoints, etc.
- Ensemble Work

THERE WILL BE AN ADDITIONAL CLASS ADDED AT A TIME TBA TO MAKE UP FOR THE EARLIER MISSED CLASS

Class #19: Tuesday 4/8

Class #20: Thursday 4/10

Class #21: Tuesday 4/15

Class #22: Thursday 4/17

Class #23: Tuesday 4/22

Class #24: Thursday 4/24

Class #25: Tuesday 4/29
- FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS

Class #26: Thursday 5/1
- FINAL SCENE PRESENTATIONS

Class #27: Tuesday 5/6: “FINAL” class:
- Process the Work
- Process papers due