

**University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown**  
THEA 1502-4010 ACTING 1 (30228)  
H. Scott Baron – Instructor Syllabus – Spring 2016

Tu Th 9:30-10:50  
Studio Theatre

Office: 218 Pasquerilla Performing Arts Center  
Office Hours: Tu Th 12:30-1:00 PM (or by Appt.)  
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3 Credits

### **Course Description**

An exploration of the basic skills required in the craft of stage acting – with special attention given to the discovery of truthful behavior within an imaginary setting. Through in-class exercises and scene work, students will develop a better understanding of acting fundamentals, as well as a working vocabulary for future exploration.

### **Required texts and material**

- Internet w/email access
- No texts required
- Any texts, scripts or reference material may be provided as needed during class or available online

### **Course Objectives**

- This class provides a professional focus on the craft of acting. The main goal is to enable the student to discover honest, truthful behavior within a scripted reality. A major emphasis of the training will employ what has been called “Meisner Technique” – a method of exploration devised by Sanford Meisner from The Neighborhood Playhouse in New York. This, in turn was derived from the Stanislavski method of acting.
- Partnership, professionalism and respect are essential qualities for any exploration of human behavior and will be a major focus here.
- Through improvisational techniques and scripted performance in a safe classroom setting, students will learn through trial-and-error how to both accept and give criticism and use it to strengthen their technique and to better evaluate theatrical performances.
- A major goal is also to help the student recognize that acting is BOTH an art and a craft. The art of acting will equip the student with a keener sense of observation and self-awareness – to broaden their vocabulary and provide a well-rounded source of inspiration and personal creativity.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE**

- Everyone is expected to come to each class prepared to participate. The classroom is a “safe” environment. By that I mean that every student is allowed to fail at any time without fear of condescension or overly-personal critiques. This is often a difficult

convention to adjust to, but it is the most effective method of improvement. Any performance takes a degree of bravery in exploration – and this class will encourage that quality and nurture a feeling of mutual trust.

- Attendance is mandatory. This is a “collaborative” class. You can learn just as much (often more) by observation as you can by performance. Three unexcused absences will result in an automatic loss of one letter grade. Ten will result in an automatic failure. In addition, you are evaluated daily (see **Grading Standards** below).
- Lateness means coming to class after attendance has been taken. Two or more late attendances equal one absence. It is not uncommon in professional theater to define “being on time” as “arriving five minutes early”. Bottom line – be ready at the beginning of class.

### CLASS DECORUM

- All rules and regulations are stated in the various student and university handbooks and are enforced at all times – this includes plagiarism (presenting material as your own without proper acknowledgement). Students in this course are expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh’s Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student violating this obligation for any reason should expect a disciplinary process as outlined in the Policy.
- Please wear comfortable clothes in which you can move freely, providing support, protection and modesty.
- Report all injuries immediately.
- No food or beverages are permitted with the exception of bottled water with a cap.
- Gum is never allowed.
- Cell phones should be set to VIBRATE and NO TEXTING EVER during class.

### INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

- A variety of improvisational exercises will help the student discover a basic sense of truth within a fictional environment. Much of the first several weeks will be spent on these and all students are expected to actively and willingly engage.
- Perform a lip-sync to a song of your choice. Create the world of the song and situate yourself in it to deliver the message. This is not an impersonation or a music video. Students are also required to submit a background paper with this exercise.
- With a partner, students will prepare and present at least one scene from a professionally produced play. In-class rehearsal time will be permitted as much as our schedule allows, but rehearsal outside of class will be required.
- Each student will prepare at least one solo monologue from a professionally produced play.
- Each student will be required to read a play they are not working on and submit a written analysis as defined during the course. Selection needs to be pre-approved by the Instructor.
- Each student will be required to attend one live theatrical performance during the term and submit a written analysis as defined during the course. Selection needs to be pre-approved by the Instructor.
  - You may use either of our spring productions as long as you are not a part of them. If you are, you must find another live production to analyze.

- The spring production of Agatha Christie’s thriller *And Then There Were None* will be presented March 23-26. *Golgonooza 2016* - the student-produced, student-written and student-acted production – is scheduled for February 22-25.
- Audition dates for both productions will be forthcoming.
- Writing Guidelines: Papers should be neatly typed (no larger than 12 point font), double spaced and stapled in upper left corner – at least 3 pages with standard margins.

### Grading Standards

No one is graded on talent – which is subjective. Neither are students graded against each other. Rather, participation and commitment to daily exercises, improvisational explorations, discussions, disciplined work ethic and being a supportive class member will strongly inform your grade. Effort and supportive collaboration – in and out of class – are also key components. As this is a performance-oriented class, there are certain disciplines that must be factors in the grading of your scripted exercises. Of special note is your commitment to memorizing lines, as well as the energy and commitment to the reality of your final performance. Again – this does not reflect your degree of “talent”, but your willingness to explore and learn. Actual grading rubrics for final presentations will be provided closer to the assignment deadline.

#### WEIGHT OF ASSIGNMENTS

- Daily Participation (engagement, attitude) 5 possible pts/class
  - (x 29 classes = 145 possible pts total)
- Lip Sync presentation & paper 25 possible pts
- Partnered scene 50 possible pts
- Monologue 40 possible pts
- Read Play analysis paper 20 possible pts
- Live Play analysis paper 20 possible pts

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS = 300 pts

A+	294-300	4.00
A	279-293	4.00
A-	270-278	3.75
B+	261-269	3.25
B	249-260	3.00
B-	240-248	2.75
C+	231-239	2.25
C	219-230	2.00
C-	210-218	1.75
D+	201-209	1.25
D	195-200	1.00
D-	189-194	0.75
F	<189	0.00

## Withdrawing From Class

- 1/19/16 – The ADD/DROP period ends
- 3/16/16 – Last day to withdraw from an individual class (Monitored Withdrawal)
- 4/8/16 – Last day for a complete withdrawal from all Spring classes.

## Disability Accommodation

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Health and Counseling Services, G-10 Student Union, 814-269-7119 as early as possible in the term. The Office of Health and Counseling Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

## Class Schedule

WEEK 1	January 7	Intro to Acting 1
WEEK 2	January 12 & 14	Building a Foundation of Truth
WEEK 3	January 19 & 21	The Reality of Doing
WEEK 4	January 26 & 28	Be Specific (5 Ws) / <b>Choose Lip Syncs</b>
WEEK 5	February 2 & 4	Lip Sync Presentations (5 Ws paper)
WEEK 6	February 9 & 11	Yin & Yang (ungraded 5 Ws papers)
WEEK 7	February 16 & 18	<b>Scenes chosen</b> / In-class Scene Rehearsals
WEEK 8	February 23 & 25	In-class Scene Rehearsals
WEEK 9	March 1 & 3	In-class Scene Rehearsals
<b>WEEK 10</b>	<b>March 8 &amp; 10</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
WEEK 11	March 15 & 17	PRESENT FINAL SCENES
WEEK 12	March 22 & 24	PRESENT FINAL SCENES / <b>Monologues chosen</b>
WEEK 13	March 29 & 31	In-class Monologue Rehearsals
WEEK 14	April 5 & 7	In-class Monologue Rehearsals
WEEK 15	April 12 & 14	PRESENT FINAL MONOLOGUES
WEEK 16	April 19 & 21	PRESENT FINAL MONOLOGUES 2 final papers due Wrap-up