

GRAD ACTING IV: CONTEMPORARY ACTING

TPP 6149

Spring 2021

Meeting Times and Location: MWF 12:50-2:45 pm, CON G13 or via Zoom

Credits: 2

Professor Tim Altmeyer

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232 McGuire Pavilion

Office Hours: By appointment

MFA ACTING IV: Over a series of progressive exercises, students continue to integrate and refine contemporary analytical and performance techniques, derived from the teachings of 20th century acting theorists (namely Uta Hagen), to expand their repertoire and range of creative choices—essential for the actor who aspires to work in contemporary theatre and in front of the camera.

OBJECTIVES/GOALS:

- The student develops a way of working that strengthens and refines performance work in terms of immediacy, moment-to-moment living, purpose, clarity, detail, specificity, use of self and truthfulness
- The student acquires a vocabulary and an extensive working knowledge of concepts with which to develop a readily-accessible, repeatable, effective acting process
- The student demonstrates a competent knowledge of select contemporary acting theories and theorists
- The student develops an understanding of professional demands and expectations
- The student develops bravery in exploration, rehearsal and performance
- The student develops the capacity to think critically and articulately about the acting process
- The student develops a more defined point of view as an artist

TEXTS:

True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor (Paperback) by David Mamet (Vintage Books Edition, 1999, Vintage ISBN: 0-679-77264-2)

Respect for Acting by Uta Hagen (Wiley, 1973, ISBN: 0-02-547390-5)

Acting Professionally (Paperback) by Robert Cohen & James Calleri (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, ISBN: 978-0-230-21724-9)

WORLD ACCORDING TO TIM (WATT):

“Portrayals of human behavior have a recognizable logic about them.”

“Interpretation is the marriage of story (fiction) with the personal, subjective experience of the actor.”

“As a teacher, I can only espouse and impart what I understand to be true and useful for me as an artist.”

CRITICAL DATES (Subject to change):

1/11 Overview

1/13 Meet Uta

1/27 Object Exercise

1/29 Release Objects

2/5 Styles Revisited

2/12 Scene

2/22 Scene

3/3 Scene

- 3/12 Scene
- 3/22 Stand up
- 3/29 Business of the Business
- 4/12 Paper due
- 4/21 Final Project due

COURSE OUTLINE:

WEEK 1-4	MEET UTA HAGEN
WEEK 5-11	SCENE WORK APPLICATION
WEEK 12	STAND UP
WEEK13	BUSINESS OF THE BUSINESS
WEEK 14-16	FINAL PROJECT

GRADING BREAKDOWN:

Performance	50%
Written Work/Participation	30%
Final (Jury Scenes)	20%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	% Equivalency	GPA Equivalency
A	100-94	4.0
A-	93-90	3.67
B+	89-87	3.33
B	86-84	3.00
B-	83-80	2.67
C+	79-77	2.33
C	76-74	2.00
C- *	73-70	1.67
D+	69-67	1.33
D	66-64	1.00
D-	63-60	.67
E, I, NG, S-U, WF	59-0	0.00

- Please note that a C- is no longer an acceptable grade for any course in which a 2.0 GPA is required, for example, any course in the major.

UF grading policy website:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#calculatinggpa>

EXPECTATIONS REGARDING BEHAVIOR/DEMEANOR: One goes to a good school to get a good education and, in turn, to get a leg up in her profession. The professional workplace demands disciplined work and behavior. Otherwise, you get fired and create a very bad reputation for yourself. Bad reputations get around. A similar work ethic is required of you in this class, as an advanced-level college student, a responsible citizen and future professional. Assignments will be completed in a timely, thorough fashion. They will meet a level of sophistication fitting for advanced students of the theatre.

Criteria by which performance work will be assessed:

- Energy & Commitment
- Authority
- Devotion to Course Concepts
- Openness to Exploration

Criteria by which written work will be assessed:

- Content (presentation, support, detail, development, and evidence of course concept knowledge)
- Quality of Writing (grammar, spelling, intro/conclusion, syntax and punctuation)

Also: **Attendance is mandatory.** (See *Attendance Policy*.) To learn to act, you must act. To act, you must be here. Your learning comes in the shared experience. Your participation has as much to do with others' growth as your own. Your absence is costly to everyone. The professional theatre does not make allowances for illness. Actors do not have the luxury of getting sick. Exercise. Eat healthfully. Drink lots of water. Don't smoke. Your body and your breath are your greatest tools as an actor. Protect them. Please note: **Attendance is not the same as participation.** You are expected to be not only physically present, but mentally. You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding of class concepts by the comments and criticisms you make. Speak thoughtfully and often.

Criteria by which participation will be assessed:

- Frequency of Participation
- Quality of Comments
- Listening Skills
- Behavior

ATTENDANCE POLICY: In an attempt to create a disciplined environment that simulates the demands of the actor's workplace, I typically enforce an attendance policy that allows little room for you to exert any personal control over the business of being an actor. The callback, the shoot, and the evening's performance do not wait for your good health or your good night's sleep. However, given the periodic hybrid format of this course and the pandemic during which this course is being taught, there are special instructions that students must abide regarding attendance:

Students who elect to enroll in this course are expected to participate in in-person instruction.

Students are expected to stay home and seek medical help for COVID-19 symptoms or exposure (persistent cough, fever 100.4+, new loss of taste or smell, muscle pain/headaches, shortness of breath, sore throat, chills, diarrhea, or feeling generally ill). The culture of hiding illness or the "show must go on" mentality must be avoided. Students who are medically required to quarantine will have documentation from a medical provider. Students who self-quarantine must communicate with the instructor and "attend" courses remotely synchronously, when available, or asynchronously if approved by the instructor.

*Barring the above circumstances, students are expected to be in attendance (either remotely or in-person, as assigned) daily and to be on time. **Students are allowed 1 "unexcused" absence that does not require documentation and does not conform to the UF "acceptable reasons for absence."** Any other "unexcused" absence will result in a penalty of a full letter grade (10%) from the final grade per "unexcused" absence. To be considered "excused" an absence must be accompanied by appropriate official documentation. Religious observances do not require documentation.*

Any absence from class for the following reasons must be supported by official acceptable documentation to avoid a grade penalty:

- *Illness—doctor's note must be on official letterhead with address and phone number, noting the date and time of visit and diagnosis verifying that an absence from class is warranted, doctor name and signature*
- *Serious family emergencies*
- *Special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences)*
- *Military obligation*
- *Severe weather conditions (e.g., hurricane-related events)*
- *Participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate*
- *Court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena)*

To help organize accommodations, students should inform the instructor by the end of the second week of classes of religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance this semester.

Any student that acquires 3 absences (either excused or unexcused) will be required to meet with this course's instructor and/or area faculty to discuss the student's continued participation in the course.

Failure to attend this meeting will result in Artistic Probation.

Due to the participatory nature of the course that includes in-class collaboration along with partner and ensemble work, if a student acquires more than 2 unexcused absences, the student may be prohibited from participation in partner/group exercises which will affect the student's final grade.

*In the same way, tardiness will also be penalized. It has no place in rehearsal, at auditions, at your early morning call on set for a shoot or at half-hour in the theatre, and it has no place in the classroom. **I will excuse one late arrival to class.** Each additional late shows will result in a 5% deduction from your final score. Simply put: Do the math, show up for class, and develop a discipline that will keep you working in the profession.*

CANVAS AND ZOOM: Administration of this course will be done mostly via Canvas. Due to concerns related to COVID-19, some of this course's class meetings may be held online via Zoom when we are not meeting face-to-face. Consult Canvas for date-specific meeting information throughout the semester. Course delivery is subject to change as the semester demands.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/96413507315>

Meeting ID: 964 1350 7315

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,96413507315# US (Chicago)

+16465588656,,96413507315# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

POLICIES REGARDING MAKE-UP WORK AND LATE WORK:

Excused absences do not make one exempt from class obligations. Work must be made up in a timely fashion, at the discretion of the instructor, typically in the week follow the student's return to class. Unexcused late work will be penalized with penalties increasing relative to lateness; anything past deadline is at least 1 day late:

<u>Days</u>	<u>Penalty</u>
1	3 points
2	5 points
3	7 points
4	10 points
5	12 points

6	15 points
7	20 points
8 +	40 points

SCENE WORK EXPECTATIONS: Scene work is an opportunity to apply and explore course concepts. Given the limited amount of “in-class” time, you will be expected to use the time OUT OF CLASS to move your scenes forward.

For Sharing 1, your exploration may be (but is not required to be) an ACTIVE, REHEARSED reading of the scene. Memorization is certainly not mandatory at first, but you should be talking and, more importantly, LISTENING (not glued to your scripts) and pursuing your respective objectives. Allow yourselves to be present with each other to discover thoughts and impulses. BE READY TO TALK ABOUT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCENES THROUGHOUT THIS WORKSHOP PROCESS.

For Sharing 2, you should be on your feet working in an appropriate and specific physical 3-D living space for your characters to discover moment-to-moment behavior within your surroundings and with each other--demonstrating an authority with the script that allows you to be more connected with each other than the page. If the action/dialogue demands props, you should have/be using them. Memorization is still not mandatory, but you should have authority enough for an even greater sense of talking and listening (not glued to your scripts) and pursuing your respective objectives. The work should also reflect (and build upon) the discoveries/discussions from Sharing 1.

Sharing 3 will be a logical escalation from Sharing 1--almost fully (if not entirely) off-book--with props and environment almost fully integrated.

By Sharing 4, you should be fully off-book with full engagement with the surroundings, props and each other to discover living moment-to-moment behavior in the scene.

You will have a familiarity with the space--so even if you can't get time to rehearse in the studio, you can rehearse elsewhere, keeping the space in mind so that the transition to it will be fairly easy.

The escalation is swift for a week's time--and I'm not looking for a fully-realized rendition--but you'd be surprised how much you can achieve in a short time when you stack the deck in your favor. Do the work that will allow you to be SPECIFIC and LIVING in your performances. It will create a discipline in you to prepare you for standard 3 week rehearsal periods (or less) at regional theatres and for film and television shoots that provide little to no rehearsal for the actor.

Similar expectations apply to all performance work that is to be rehearsed and presented in class—relative to the total time devoted to a given project on the course calendar.

Know that it is never a bad thing to exceed expectations at each stage of the process.

A COVID-19 NON-NEGOTIABLE:

For all face-to-face scene work, COVID-19 safety protocols must be honored at all times—including no person-to-person contact, maintaining at least 6 feet physical distance between actors, and the wearing of masks. To do this *creatively* in in-class explorations, actors will incorporate a mandatory given circumstance into all of their monologue and scene work—regardless of the circumstances that the playwright provides:

There is a deadly pandemic going on, and to protect your character and their loved ones and/or the other character and their loved ones, you as the character must maintain strict safety protocols.

So, for instance, if you are playing Sister Aloysius in a scene from *Doubt*, not only must you honor the given circumstances that Shanley provides in the writing and the cultural circumstances that the world of the play prescribes that affect her relationships and behavior, you must also honor the circumstance of a deadly pandemic that poses a serious threat to the well-being of Sister Aloysius and those she loves.

If a scene calls for or implies physical contact, you must figure out another way to communicate the thought or impulse behind the physical contact—just as you would in a “real-life” scenario where touch can be hazardous to one’s health or the health of a loved one.

Any violation of this restriction will bring an immediate halt to the exploration and result in an automatic zero for the day for that student.

UF HONESTY POLICY: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold both ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: ***On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.***

UNAUTHORIZED RECORDINGS: A student shall not without express authorization from the faculty member and, if required by law, from other participants, make or receive any recording, including but not limited to audio and video recordings, of any class, co-curricular meeting, organizational meeting, or meeting with a faculty member.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES:

UF Counseling Center

3190 Radio Rd
Gainesville, FL 32611-2662
352-392-1575
www.counsel.ufl.edu