

MFA Acting 1 (TPP6115)—Altmeyer

MODERN ACTING THEORY AND PRACTICE

MFA ACTING 1

TPP 6115

Fall 2025

Meeting Times and Location: MWF Period 2-3 (8:30 AM - 10:25 AM), CON G14

Credits: 2

Professor Tim Altmeyer

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210 McGuire Pavilion

Office Hours: Email to make an appointment

MODERN ACTING THEORY AND PRACTICE: Diagnostics of analytical and technical skills of acting through exploration of psychological realism through the use of psycho-physical exercises.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Over a series of progressive exercises, students begin to discover an effective, dependable, repeatable set of working tools for the actor, derived from contemporary acting philosophies (David Mamet/Atlantic Theatre Company), to enhance their sense of truthfulness in their performance work—through greater use of self, presence, purposefulness, and impulsivity.

OBJECTIVES/GOALS:

- The student develops a way of working to refine their acting in terms of immediacy, moment-to-moment living, clarity, specificity, and personal connection
- The student acquires 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 greater bravery in exploration, rehearsal and performance
- The student demonstrates the capacity to think critically and articulately about the acting process
- The student develops a more defined point of view as an artist

REGARDING CONTENT: People learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions and express their diverse opinions on course content which may include images, texts, data, or theories from many fields. This is especially true in courses that deal with provocative or contemporary issues. UF offers many such courses, in which students encounter concepts of race, color, sex, and/or national origin. We teach these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today's complex world. With this in mind, we do not limit access to, or classroom discussion of, ideas and opinions, including those that some may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another's ideas. But hostility, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, and provocation for provocation's sake have no place in a classroom; reasonable people disagree reasonably. These guidelines can help instructors and students as they work together to fulfill the mission of the University of Florida, which includes the exploration of intellectual boundaries, the creation of new knowledge and the pursuit of new ideas. In this course, we will cover content and material that some may find difficult. It is important that we do not shy away from engaging with material that may be controversial or challenging. I encourage you to reach out to me if you are struggling with the course material. In class, if you need to step away for a few minutes as we are covering particular content, you may do so without penalty,

MFA Acting I (TPP6115)—Altmeyer

but I ask that you remember that you are responsible for any information covered in your absence. While I support the idea of the classroom being a Safe Space, I also ask you to embrace it as a *Brave Space*.

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)

A Practical Handbook for the Actor (Paperback) by Melissa Bruder et al (Vintage Original, 1986, ISBN: 0-394-74412-8)

PERSONAL STATEMENT: I am committed to becoming more acutely aware of how I can—in my teaching and artistic practices as well as in my daily interactions—promote a climate for fuller student engagement at the University of Florida.

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):

8/22 Intro
8/27 Action
8/29 Scene Analysis
9/5 As-If Exercise
9/15 Scene 1
9/26 Scene 2
10/8 Scene 3
10/22 Scene 4
11/3 Professional Development Module
11/15 Scene Rewind/Refinement
12/3 Final Presentations

COURSE OUTLINE:

WEEK 1-2 INTRODUCTION/ACTION/SCENE ANALYSIS
WEEK 3 EXPLORATION OF “AS-IF”
WEEK 4-16 EXPLORATION/APPLICATION/INTERROGATION

GRADING BREAKDOWN:

Performance 50%
Written Work/Participation 30%
Final 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

MFA Acting I (TPP6115)—Altmeyer

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 EFFORT: 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 (including memorization)
- 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, syntax, and punctuation)

Also: **Attendance is mandatory.** 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 healthily. 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: To create a disciplined environment that simulates the demands of the actor's workplace, we enforce an attendance policy that allows little room for you to exert any personal control over the business of being an actor. Students are expected to attend class on time at scheduled meeting times.

Students are only allowed ONE "unexcused" absence without penalty.

MFA Acting 1 (TPP6115)—Altmeyer

Each additional “unexcused” absence will result in a penalty of a half a letter grade (5%) from the final grade.

To be considered an “excused” absence, it must be accompanied by appropriate official documentation:

- Illness. A doctor's note must be on official letterhead with name, address, phone number, and signature, noting the date and time of visit and diagnosis verifying that an absence from class is warranted and providing a proposed return-to-class date. Even if a student self-tests positive for COVID, they should get a doctor's note to authenticate the excused absence.
- 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)

Religious observances do not require documentation. To help organize accommodations, students must inform the instructors by the end of the first week of classes of religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance this semester.

In the same way, tardiness (lateness) 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.

Students are only allowed ONE late show without penalty.

Each additional late show will result in a 2%-point deduction from your final score.

Simply put, do the math, practice healthy habits, show up for class, and develop a discipline that will keep you working in the profession.

POLICIES REGARDING MAKE-UP WORK AND LATE WORK:

Absences do not make one exempt from class obligations. Work must be made up in a timely fashion, at the discretion of the instructors, typically in the week following 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	10 points
2	25 points
3+	40 points

INTIMACY/STAGE VIOLENCE PROTOCOL: For scenes with intimacy—hugs, kissing, groping, fondling, bodily contact that requires vulnerability, intimate or violent—please consider these whenever possible:

- 1) Rehearse in a public location (acting studio or hallway or common room)
- 2) Rehearse with a third person to act as director/stage manager or rehearse in a space with other actors who are working on their scene.

MFA Acting I (TPP6115)—Altmeyer

- 3) Note your boundaries; if you are uncomfortable with the scene or the manner in which the scene is being rehearsed, discuss it with your scene partner and instructor.
- 4) You are not required to kiss or be in close bodily contact. Discuss with your instructor and scene partner other options.

Working:

- 1) Know the story, the context, and the given circumstances to justify intimacy.
- 2) Communicate any boundaries to partner. Respect the boundaries of your partner. If you make a mistake apologize. If someone oversteps a boundary, make them aware so the action can stop/change. Be sure that you have consent from your partner to do the action you want to do.
- 3) Create choreography or a set of actions that are agreed upon, discussed and consented to by all partners. Don't change the choreography without discussion and rehearsal.

There should be no full nudity in scene work. Partial nudity should take into account story, context, given circumstances and the actors' comfort with it.

CANVAS AND EMAIL: Much of the administration of this course will be done via Canvas. Course delivery is subject to change as the semester demands. The course Zoom link can be found on Canvas.

However, the requested method of communication outside of scheduled class time is email. Electronic mail or "email" is considered an official method for communication because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official UF email on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking email daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official student email account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed.

UF POLICIES & PROCEDURES: Information about university-wide policies and resources can be found here: <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

COURSE FEES: \$100.00

Please refer to ONE.UFL.EDU regarding course fees.