

Point Loma Nazarene University
Department of Communication & Theatre
TRE270: Acting I
Mondays 1:00 – 3:45, Salomon Theatre
Fall Semester, 2016

Professor: Walter O. Williams, Ph.D.
 Office Hours: T/R 1-2:30 pm, or by appt.

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OVERVIEW

Art (to quote many in the artistic community) is the search for truth. This can be a problematic statement in that the modern academy often views truth as the purview of the empirical and social sciences, or philosophy, or perhaps theology, but art? However, when we speak of a search for truth in the theatrical art, we are not referring to an empirical truth, but a narrative truth—a truth that deals with the search for meaning in the struggle of the human experience. In theatre, this meaning is explored in the presentation of living stories. We share a perspective on human issues with our audience, and encourage them thereby to struggle with those issues as well. This is a search for truth as well as a search for self.

All art forms have instruments by which artistic perspectives are shared. In the theatre that instrument is the actor rendering a living text. The purpose of this course is to begin to develop you as artists and instruments in this exploration of the human experience. This is a participatory course very much oriented toward a group dynamic. We will work with one another throughout the semester in a studio setting where taking risks is strongly encouraged. Our goal will be the development in each actor of spontaneity, simplicity, and readiness on the stage through a disciplined approach to the art. If we recognize that the talent inherent in the actor is a gift, then we should take the responsibility to develop the gift, to train the instrument so that it can artistically present the living narrative. It is important to understand that there are no “finished products” expected in this course. Everything we will do will be a work in progress.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To understand the fundamentals of the western realistic acting approach developed by Konstantin Stanislavski and oriented toward the identification and exploration in each role of the playable actions.
2. To begin to identify and develop the vocal, physical, and emotional tools necessary for the competent actor.
3. To begin to establish a sense of self in relation to your art.
4. To realize that though the “gift” of talent can’t be learned, methods of developing it and disciplining it can.
5. To establish a well-ordered approach to the art of acting. Inspiration is key in the approach to any art, but sound craft is one of the best paths to artistic inspiration and therefore should not be avoided.

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU’s Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at DRC@pointloma.edu. See Disability Resource Center for additional information.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible*. New York: Penguin.
Any good scene book for actors (i.e., 2-person scenes and monologues).

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Stanislavski, Konstantin. *An Actor Prepares*. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
----- . *Building a Character*. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
----- . *Creating a Role*. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
Meisner, Sanford. *On Acting*. New York: Vintage, 1987.
Toporkov, Vasily. *Stanislavski in Rehearsal*. New York: Theatre Arts Books.
Hagen, Uta. *Respect for Acting*. New York: Macmillan.
Cole, Toby and Helen Chinoy. *Actors on Acting*. New York: Crown.

COURSE PROCEDURE

As I stated, this is a participatory course from a studio perspective. There will be very little lecture and extensive student involvement in scene-work. From the very first meeting we will work to develop the sense of ensemble. This means we will help and encourage one another even while we critique each other's work. We must trust one another's sincerity in the process in order to learn well. To this end, I will expect you be timely and prepared. If you plan to attend occasionally, or be marginally prepared, please don't attend at all. There will be extensive preparatory work associated with this course, and time will be required of you outside the formal class session.

Student Responsibility:

It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university), not the instructor. Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) will result in a grade of F on the official transcript.

PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

GRADING SCALE

Because of the performance nature of this course, the grading will be necessarily subjective in nature. However, this does not mean arbitrary, and the grades will not be based solely on product, but on process as well. It is more important that you stretch yourself while perhaps failing well than that you always succeed while resting in your comfort zone. I will generally assess grades based on preparation, participation, immersion in the process, attitude toward your work and your classmates, and quality of performance. It is important to remember that no scene is a finished product. In class presentations will be prepared outside class, but will be worked on extensively, **IN CLASS** at the time of performance, so expect this. In addition to the performance portion, there will be several written assignments required of you, which will be graded on a 100-point scale. These will consist of exercises in role development, scene development, and a journal. My grades are based on the following criteria:

A: Indicates exceptional work that reflects deep thinking, superb creativity, individual incentive, and an extremely high level of intellectual and/or physical attainment.

B: Indicates very good work that reflects a thorough understanding of theory and practice, but is somewhat lacking in individual incentive, thinking, and/or creativity, or physicality.

C: Indicates work that reflects a satisfactory completion of the assignment as directed, but is lacking in thoroughness, individual thinking, and/or creativity.

D: Indicates work that, although passing, reflects a lack of understanding of theory and/or fails to fulfill the assigned tasks.

F: Indicates work that reflects an inability or unwillingness to do the assigned task.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Grading for this course will be determined in the following manner:

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|-------------------|-------------|
| Scene work | 80% |
| Written Exercises | 10% |
| Journal | <u>10%</u> |
| TOTAL | 100% |

CAVEAT

This syllabus may at times need to be altered or amended. I'll try to give you plenty of forewarning should this become necessary.

COURSE SCHEDULE

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Assignment</u> |
|------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 8/30 | Introduction | Syllabus |
| 9/12 | Audition Monologues | |
| 9/19 | Portrait & Poem Exercise | |
| 9/26 | Portrait & Poem Exercise | |
| 10/3 | Scoring a role | Miller <i>The Crucible</i> |
| 10/10 | <i>Crucible</i> Work | |
| 10/17 | <i>Crucible</i> Work | |
| 10/24 | Scene 1 work | Bio & Score due |
| 10/31 | Scene 1 work | |
| 11/7 | Scene 1 work | |
| 11/14 | Scene 2 work | Bio & Score due |
| 11/21 | Scene 2 work | |
| 11/28 | Scene 2 work | |
| 12/5 | Final Scene Work | Bio & Score due |
| 12/14 (1:30 – 4) | Final Scenes | Journal due |