

Sam Houston State University
Course Syllabus
Acting I Spring

Professor: Ron Song Destro
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3 credit hours
THR 164 Room UTC 105
Section 01 T, TH 12:30 – 1:50

Course Objectives:

1. To learn principles of effective acting techniques.
2. To demonstrate effective character analysis, including planning and research.
3. To apply effective acting principles in several scenes and monologue presentations.

Course Description: A study of basic techniques in body, voice, characterization, and play analysis as they are applied to the performance of stage tasks by the actor.

Course Textbook: *See Book Report assignment below.*

Instructional Methods: You will learn mostly by doing, therefore class participation is essential. Most classes begin with warm-up exercises addressing relaxation, concentration, breath, voice and movement, so please dress appropriately (NO HATS, SCARVES OR HEADWEAR, NO BARE MIDRIFTS, SLEEVELESS SHIRTS, etc.)

Course Requirements: All students are required to see **ALL** of the following Department productions and to write a one-page typed critique of **one actor** from each of the following shows: *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Feb 20-23), *Marisol* (Apr 2-5), and *The Full Monty* (Apr 23-26). **One** complimentary ticket will be provided for each show. See assignment page for details. All critiques must be turned in at the beginning of the first class period after a show closes.

Extra Credit will be given for:

- Actor critiques for *Hamlet* (Feb 9), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Apr-May), and *Twelfth Night* (Apr-May).
- One-page analysis of any KCACTF workshops or performances you attend.
- One-page analysis of *Who Really Was Shakespeare?* presentation at the SHSU library.

Scene Work: Much of your grade will be based on partner work. You must be available to work with a partner in the rehearsal process outside of class hours. If you are unavailable to work with your partner, your grade may be lowered.

Monologue and Scene Materials: You will be given guidelines in class for what types of materials are appropriate for class work.

Late assignments, if accepted, will be graded down.

Grading:

1. Performances **33%**
2. Assignments **33%**
3. Class Participation (quality and quantity) **33%**

Twelfth Class Day. Last day to drop without a "Q": **Friday, Feb 1.**

Participation: You are expected to attend class, complete in-class assignments, and demonstrate effective speaking and listening skills. The progress of class members is interdependent because you are expected to communicate and learn together. Any student with excessive absences or latenesses, "excused" or

otherwise, should expect this to affect the participation grade. Each student is responsible for missed classes, coming prepared for the next session. You are expected to come prepared to class, to effectively evaluate your classmates' work, and to participate in asking and answering questions relating to class work, demonstrating effective thinking and listening skills.

Classes begin on time, and you are expected not to leave the room until the class has ended.

Attendance Policy: Class participation is an important part of any performance class, so it is imperative that you attend all classes. If you are absent more than **three (3)** classes, your final grade may be reduced by **five (5)** points for **each** additional absence. Tardiness is unacceptable. If you are tardy **three times**, that equals **one absence**. Excessive tardiness may result in a reduction of your final grade.

It is your responsibility to sign the **Attendance Sheet** each class. If you are present but do not sign in, there is no proof of your attendance. You cannot rely on the instructor's memory to verify your presence.

There is **no difference** between an "excused" absence and an unexcused one, so use your three absences wisely, in case you should ever need them for a true emergency!

Rules of Conduct: Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and thus impedes the mission of the university. Cellular phones, PDAs and pagers must be turned off before class begins. Students are prohibited from eating in class, drinking (water is OK), using tobacco products, reading newspapers, working on materials for other classes, sleeping, wearing inappropriate clothing (**NO HATS, SCARVES OR HEADWEAR, NO BARE MIDRIFTS, SLEEVELESS SHIRTS, etc.**) or engaging in other forms of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave the class and an absence for that day. Students who are especially disruptive may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy.

Academic Honesty: All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experience both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to cheating on an examination or any other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource material. Anyone who engages in this type of behavior runs the risk of receiving a zero on the assignment.

Religious Holidays: University policy states that if any student must be absent from class for the observance of religious holy days they must notify their instructor by the 12th calendar day after the first day of the semester.

Classroom Visitors: Please talk to me prior to class if you would like to bring a visitor to class.

Americans with Disabilities Act: It is the policy of SHSU that no otherwise qualified disabled individual shall, solely by reason of his/her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic or Student Life program or activity. Disabled students may request assistance with academically-related problems stemming from individual disabilities by contacting the Director of the Counseling Center in the Lee Drain Annex or by calling (963) 294-1720.

Sam Houston State University
THR 164 Acting 1

Assignments

1. **Character Analyses.** (for monologue & scene characters) *1 typed page. Use attached form.*
For each character you will portray, after reading the **entire play** from which your scene or monologue is taken (you may be quizzed on the whole play) , you must answer the following questions on the attached form. (Whenever the play does not supply the information, you **MUST** make reasonable assumptions, supported by the text). Answer all questions and leave no answers incomplete.

Biographical information of the character:

- a. Full name
 - b. Age
 - c. Occupation
 - d. Marital or family status
 - e. Place of residence
 - f. Hobbies
 - g. Likes and dislikes
 - h. Career goal
 - i. Life goal
2. What is/are the character's **objective(s)** in the scene you're portraying?
 3. What is/are the character's **obstacle(s)** in the scene you're portraying?
 4. What is the character's **super-objective** throughout the entire play?
2. Be prepared to answer questions about any part of the play. You are responsible for having read the entire work.
 3. **Actor Critiques.** (for each SHSU production) *1 typed page.*
Write a **one-page** critique to be read aloud in class on **one actor** from each of this semester's productions, explaining how the actor's use of body, voice and imagination assisted or harmed the effective creation of his/her character. **DO NOT** give a general show review. Bring two copies: one you read, one for the instructor.

Note: if you come to class on the day this assignment is due and do not have the work, you will be asked to leave since you cannot contribute to the discussion and can use the discussion to complete your assignment. You will be marked absent.

4. **Acting Book Assignment.** *3 typed pages.*
You will be responsible for reading one of the books on the list (no two students may choose the same text). You will **type** a chapter-by-chapter outline, describing key ideas found in each chapter. Just a few sentence re-cap per chapter is sufficient. This will be handed in to your instructor. You will then present a 3-minute oral summary of the book, lead the class in one exercise from the book, and be prepared to answer questions about the text. Bring two copies: one you read, one for the instructor.

And don't forget:

Extra Credit will be given for:

- Actor critiques for *Hamlet (Feb 9)*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream (Apr-May)*, and *Twelfth Night (Apr-May)*.
- One-page analysis of any KCACTF workshops or performances you attend.
- One-page analysis of *Who Really Was Shakespeare?* presentation at the SHSU library.

NOTE: Always keep a copy of all work turned-in, in case it should be misplaced! Never e-mail assignments.

**Sam Houston State University
THR 164 Acting 1**

BOOKS ON ACTING

1. ACTING: THE FIRST SIX LESSONS -Richard Boleslavsky
2. ACTING WITHOUT AGONY -Don Richardson
3. METHOD OR MADNESS - Robert Lewis
4. ADVICE TO THE PLAYERS - Robert Lewis
5. THE END OF ACTING - Richard Hornby
6. CREATING A CHARACTER - Moni Yakim
7. THE STANISLAVSKI SYSTEM- Sonia Moore
8. ON METHOD ACTING - Easty
9. ALL ABOUT METHOD ACTING - Ned Manderino
10. SANFORD MEISNER ON ACTING - Meisner
11. TRAINING FOR THE THEATRE: Premises and Promises by Michel Saint-Denis
12. THE TECHNIQUE OF ACTING - Stella Adler
13. RESPECT FOR ACTING - Uta Hagen
14. THE ACT OF BEING - Charles Morowitz
15. ACTING IN PERSON AND IN STYLE -Jerry L. Crawford
16. PLAYING SHAKESPEARE -John Barton
17. THE ACTOR AND THE TEXT -Cicely Berry
18. VOICE AND THE ACTOR -Cicely Berry
19. FREEING THE NATURAL VOICE -Kristin Linklater
20. FREEING SHAKESPEARE'S VOICE -Kristin Linklater
21. THE RIGHT TO SPEAK - Patsy Rodenburg
22. THE NEED FOR WORDS - Patsy Rodenburg
23. TRUE AND FALSE: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor by David Mamet

FOR BOOK REPORT: Type out a chapter-by-chapter outline of the book, describing key ideas found in each chapter. Just a few sentence re-cap per chapter is sufficient. This will be handed in to your instructor. Present this material in a 3-minute presentation to the class. Be prepared to lead one exercise from the book and to answer questions about the work. Bring two copies: one you read, one for the instructor.

CLASS SCHEDULE *

Week One	Jan 17	Course introduction. Actions, objectives, obstacles. Methods.
Week Two	Jan 22	Books chosen for reports.
	Jan 24	Observation.
Week Three	Jan 29	<u>Due Today:</u> <i>Bring in an instructor copy of a contemporary monologue & character analysis.</i> Character outlines read and discussed.
	Jan 31	Objectives.
Week Four	Feb 5	Monologues performed.
	Feb 7	Monologues performed.
Week Five	Feb 12	Monologues performed.
	Feb 14	Concentration work. Dramatic tension.
Week Six	Feb 19	<u>Due Today:</u> <i>bring in 2 copies of book report and be prepared to present with an exercise.</i> Book Reports.
	Feb 21	Book Reports.
Week Seven	Feb 26	KCACTF.
	Feb 28	KCACTF.
Week Eight	Mar 4	<u>Due Today:</u> <i>Skin of Our Teeth actor critique (2 copies).</i> <i>Skin of Our Teeth</i> discussed.
	Mar 6	KCACTF discussed.
Week Nine	Mar 18	Justification.
	Mar 20	Improv.
Week Ten	Mar 25	<u>Due Today:</u> <i>Bring in 3 copies of a two or three-person 5-minute non-realistic scene** for class consideration.</i> Scenes read, partners chosen in class.
	Mar 27	The text.
Week Eleven	Apr 1	<u>Due Today:</u> <i>Bring in character outlines.</i> Character outlines discussed.
	Apr 3	Character work. Relaxed Energy.

Week Twelve	Apr 8	<u>Due Today:</u> Marisol actor critique (2 copies). Marisol discussed.
	Apr 10	Scenes performed.
Week Thirteen	Apr 15	Scenes performed.
	Apr 17	Ensemble work. Expression. Endowment.
Week Fourteen	Apr 22	Story-telling. Centering.
	Apr 24	Voice & Body.
Week Fifteen	Apr 29	<u>Due Today:</u> Full Monty actor critique (2 copies). Full Monty discussed.
	May 1	The text.
Week Sixteen	May 6	Rhythm.
	May 8	Believability.

** subject to change based upon the particular class needs.*

*** Non-realistic scenes include Theatre of the Absurd (some [but not all] Beckett, Ionesco, Guare, Ives, Destro, Picasso, Albee, etc.) and other avant-garde styles. These are plays that, when seen, do not resemble the way real people speak in real life. They are absurd, poetic, non-sensical, etc.*

Always keep a copy of all work turned-in, in case it should be misplaced! Never e-mail assignments.

Name:

Date:

Name of Character:

Play title:

Playwright:

*Remember you must answer **ALL** of the following questions fully. Whenever the play does not supply the information, you **MUST** make reasonable assumptions, supported by the text. You must be specific (i.e. "His full name is Mahattma Kane Jeeves" and not "The Man" or "She is 23" and not "in her early twenties").*

Character's full name:

Age:

Occupation:

Place of residence:

Marital or family status:

Religion (if any):

Philosophical view of life:

Political affiliation (if any):

Hobbies:

Likes:

Dislikes:

Career goal:

Personal life goal:

In this scene, my character's **objective(s)** is/are to:

In this scene, my character's **obstacle(s)** is/are to:

In the entire play, my character's **super-objective** is to:

The play's **theme** (not topic) is (must be a complete sentence):

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Sam Houston State University
THR 164 Acting 1

I have read the syllabus and schedule for Prof. Destro's THR 164 class, understand it, and comprehend that I must comply with all requirements for successful completion of this course, written or oral, and especially understand that lost or poor participation will adversely affect my grade.

Signature

Date

Printed Name