INTERMEDIATE ACTING
SYLLABUS * THR 321.001 and 321.020 * Spring 2012
Mon. 2:00-2:50 / Wed. & Fri. 2:00 – 3:50 * Griffith Fine Arts Bldg. 100
Course numbers: 20208/21738

Instructor: Jason Davids Scott, Ph.D.
E-mail: scottjd@sfasu.edu Office phone: 936-468-1119
Office hours: Tues/Thurs 12:00 – 1:30 (or by appointment) / FA 222

Course Description (from General Bulletin):
Designed to give the student actor the opportunity to explore the acting process through
modern realistic dramatic literature and to continue his/her development of a method for
building an honest and believable character. A full list of program learning outcomes,
learning objectives, and student outcomes is on page 6 of this syllabus.

Course Description (from Professor Scott):
Traditionally, this course has been taught as a “scene study” course – a course where actors
work on two-person scenes and monologues in a “lab” setting. While the broad strokes of
that definition will apply to this class, there are also some significant differences.

First of all, the goal in this class will not be the “study” of scenework strictly speaking, but
rather the ongoing investigation and discovery of scenes that will give students the skills
necessary to keep their scenes “alive” and in the moment. The goal is not to “perfect” a
scene and discover a single truth or meaning within a scene, but rather to engage the text
anew with every performance.

Thus, while we will discuss some of the traditional terms from the mode of acting called
“psychological realism” (e.g., Stanislavski), the emphasis will be on developing acting skills
and techniques that are based on spontaneity, impulse, and improvisation. The theatre
games of Viola Spolin and the terminology and approach of Michael Chekhov, in particular,
will be our basis. The overall philosophy in this class is that it is the ACTOR who is the
source of the meaning of the PERFORMANCE – not the author, not the script, not the
director, not the teacher. You, the actor, are the “authority” – you are the one that brings
the work to life. The text and the teacher are merely there to inspire, suggest, and
designate some guidelines and boundaries.

Finally, students will be encouraged to explore beyond the traditional canon of “serious,”
realist dramatic literature and the limits of two-person scenes. If you want to work on that
sort of thing, you will be able to – but I also hope you take this opportunity to explore
ensemble scenes, scenes from genres such as comedy and absurdism, and more
contemporary performance pieces as well.
Course Requirements and Assignments:

**ATTENDANCE:** 25 points

- Attendance is MANDATORY and will ONLY be excused with a doctor’s note or prior permission for an exceptional circumstance (family emergency, etc.). If you are too sick to come to class, you are sick enough to go to the doctor and get a note saying you are sick.
- Every student is allowed THREE unexcused absences without penalty.
- Each additional unexcused absence up to SEVEN will cost you 6 points, respectively (see chart below).
- Each additional absence beyond seven EITHER EXCUSED OR UNEXCUSED will cost you 7 points. If necessary, points will be deducted from your attitude/participation grade.

To summarize:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3</td>
<td>No penalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-12 points – best possible grade, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>-25 points – best possible grade, C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-32 points – best possible grade, D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 or more</td>
<td>-39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Students with TEN OR MORE ABSENCES – regardless of whether or not they are excused – WILL FAIL THE CLASS. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- TARDINESS AND PUNCTUALITY COUNT. I will note students who are tardy (more than 3 minutes late). I will not take off attendance points for the first FOUR tardies. However, beyond that, TWO TARDIES COUNT AS AN ABSENCE – even those first four. If you have a recurring problem getting to class on time for a legitimate reason, let me know.
- Leaving class before it is over for any reason without prior permission will be considered an unexcused absence, and will incur my wrath.

**ATTITUDE AND PARTICIPATION:** 15 points

- If you arrive in class ready to work, with a good attitude, and a sense of adventure and fun, then you don’t need to worry about this grade. If you are a poor scene partner or exhibit a poor attitude, this grade may be affected to the extent that it will lower your overall grade.

**ACTING JOURNAL:** 10 points (collected four times @ 2.5 points each)

- At FOUR times during the semester (2/17, 3/9, 4/14, 5/8), I am going to collect your ACTING JOURNAL. In this journal, you can write about the exercises we do in class, your response to the class work of others, or anything related to acting. I will expect about 2-3 pages per week (typewritten, double-spaced). If you do this assignment thoroughly and on-time, you will receive maximum credit. I’m not grading grammar, spelling, etc., though it couldn’t
hurt to master these skills. (You may also write about the acting in any department productions.)

**MONOLOGUE:** 10 points
- This will be our first project, but we will revisit the monologue later in the semester as well. Your grade will be based on PREPARATION and MEMORIZATION, as well as your continued effort on exploring the possibilities of the text.

**SCENE PROJECTS:** 3 @ 10 points each
- During the semester, you will be doing THREE SCENES. I will determine the dates of these scenes as the semester progresses. Some scenes may be performed more than once.
- Most of your grade (8 points) in the scene will be based on PREPARATION. In other words, IS YOUR TEXT MEMORIZED. As you will discover, blocking, finding “themes” and “motifs,” object work, etc., will vary greatly as you begin to perform your scenes.
- The remaining 2 points for each grade will be based on your GROUP EVALUATION of each other. If you are a good scene partner and contribute, show up to your out-of-class rehearsals on time, etc., then you can expect your partners will recognize that and give you a good evaluation.
- The content of these scenes will be determined by you and your partner(s), and approved by the instructor.
- Scenes should be SUBSTANTIAL (note the time length for each project), from well-known, previously produced plays written after the year 1880.

**IMPROVISED PROJECT:** 10 points
- Right after Spring Break, we will spend some time learning long-form improvisation strategies. At some point, you will be spontaneously put into a group of 4 or more and asked to improvise a realistic, dramatically engaging scenario. (Each group will perform TWICE on the same day, in “sets” of 20-25 minutes each).

**Grading Summary:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monologue</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvised Scenes</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude/Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grades will be assigned on a standard 90/80/70/60 scale.
Miscellaneous Things You Should Know:
These books are not “required” but might be helpful if you want further information:

*Improvisation for the Theatre* by Viola Spolin.
*Truth in Comedy* by Del Close, Charna Halpern, and Kim “Howard” Johnson
*Impro* by Keith Johnstone
*To the Actor* by Michael Chekhov

PLEASE WEAR COMFORTABLE, “WARM-UP” TYPE CLOTHES IN CLASS. For your scenes, COSTUMES ARE NOT NECESSARY: in fact, I’d prefer if you performed in your standard blacks/warm-ups (though if you’d like to add a small costume piece like a hat, glasses, scarf, simple coat, etc., that would be okay).

Paying attention? E-mail me directly by Wednesday, January 25, introducing yourself, and I will give you an automatic 3.5 points extra credit.

PLEASE WEAR COMFORTABLE SHOES or, better yet, THICK ATHLETIC SOCKS.

Technology in Class (violations may affect your grade):

- **ABSOLUTELY NO CELL PHONES.** If I see you looking at your cell phone for more than a couple of seconds (i.e., to check the time), I’m not going to be happy. Do yourself a favor and just TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES unless there is a pressing, emergency reason. (Not just “vibrate,” ALL THE WAY OFF).

SFA Mandated Syllabus Info:

**Academic Integrity:**
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp
Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Program Learning Outcomes:
This course applies at an introductory level to the following Program Learning Outcomes as identified by the School of Theatre:

- The student will be able to analyze a script in ways that are necessary to a theatre practitioner or scholar/critic. (All degree plans.)
- The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships. (All degree plans.)
- The student will demonstrate competence in one or more theatre specialization(s). (BA)
- The student will demonstrate collaborative and/or leadership competencies appropriate to participate or take a leadership role in an effective theatrical production. (All degree plans.)
- The student will be able to complete and document a major project as a stage manager, as a designer or technician, or as an actor or director, demonstrating advanced competence in the student’s specialty. (BFA)
- The student will be able to present an effective presentation appropriate to the student’s specialization. (BFA)

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- analyze a dramatic text and interpret a character (PLO: A)
- explain fundamental concepts of modern acting theory (PLO: B)
- employ the vocabulary required of the actor (PLOs: A, C)
- develop and articulate a basic personal artistic process (PLOs: C, D, E, F)
- translate thoughtful analysis into specific oral and physical choices (PLOs: A, C, E, F)
- demonstrate the ability to work cooperatively on a creative/interpretative project (PLOs: B, D)

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.
http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/
COURSE SCHEDULE:
REQUIRED ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE IN BOLD

Week One: Jan. 20
Introductions / Review syllabus

Week Two: Jan. 23, 25, 27
- Monday: Discuss finding material for monologues and scenes
- Wed·Fri: Advanced theatre games: object work, space work, qualities of movement
  For Friday: Come with three monologues (contemporary only, though they may be in a non-realistic style). These should be approximately 3 minutes.

Week Three: Jan. 30, Feb. 1, 3
- All week: Exploring solo work – improvised solo scenes, silent scenes, solo exercises
  Monologues approved and dates assigned by February 1

Week Four: Feb. 6, 8, 10
- Monday: Solo exercises.
  Wednesday: Performance of Monologues
  Friday: Performance of Monologues

Week Five: Feb. 13, 15, 17
- Monday: Introduction to duo improvisation exercises
  Establish your scene partner and come with choice of 3 duo scenes
  Scene selections should be approximately 6-8 minutes in length
- Wednesday: A/B Scenes, other exercises.
- Friday: More group/duo work
  Scenes assigned and scheduled.
  First Journal Collection

Week Six: Feb. 20, 22, 24
- Monday: Ensemble exercises
  Wednesday: Performance of Duo Scenes
  Friday: Performance of Duo Scenes

Week Seven: Feb. 27, 29
- All week: Ensemble building / group exercises
  For Monday, February 27: Establish your ensemble scene partners (3-5 per scene) and choice of 3 ensemble scenes of 8-10 minutes in length.
  Scene and group assignments scheduled on Wednesday, February 29.

NO CLASS FRIDAY MARCH 2 – HS THEATRE FESTIVAL DAY

Week Eight: Mar. 5, 7, 9
- Monday: Ensemble exercises
  Wednesday: Performance of Ensemble Scenes
  Friday: Performance of Ensemble Scenes
  Second Journal Collection
**SPRING BREAK – Week of March 11-16**

**Week Nine: Mar. 19, 21, 23**
- **Monday:** Discussion day – what the heck are we doing?
- **Wed-Fri:** Long-form improvisation skills and exercises

**Week Ten: Mar. 26, 28, 30**
- **All week:** Long-form improvisation skills and exercises

**Week Eleven: Apr. 3, 5**
- **Monday:** Long-form improvisation skills and exercises
- **Wed:** Long-form Improvised Scenes Performance/Assignment

**Friday April 7 – Monday April 10 – Easter Break**

**Week Twelve: Apr. 12, 14**
- **Wednesday:** Discussion of long-form improvisations
- **Submit group and scene selection for final scenes (multiple scenes or short plays of 10-15 minutes)**
- **Friday:** Reperformance of Monologues
  - Final scene assignments scheduled
  - **Third Journal Collection (Friday)**

**Week Thirteen: Apr. 17, 19, 21**
- **All week:** Rehearsal of Final Scenes

**Week Fourteen: Apr. 24, 26, 28**
- **Monday:** Final scene workshop/rehearsal
- **Wed-Fri:** Performance of Final Scenes

**Week Fifteen: May 1, 3, 5**
- **Monday:** Discussion of Final Friday performance
- **Wednesday:** Rehearsal of Final Friday performance
- **Friday:** Performance for invited guests / Showcase of class work

**FINAL JOURNAL DUE MONDAY, MAY 8 by 5:00 PM.**