Beginning Acting

Spring 2018

Course description: Emphasis on the understanding and exploration of the actor’s tools and the application of the actor’s basic skills through the creative process.

Required books:
- The Goat or Who is Sylvia by Edward Albee
- Doubt by John Patrick Shanley

Class Meetings:
Griffith Fine Arts Building Room 100 (Downstage Theatre)
Class - Tuesday 3:30 -4:45 pm
Lab - Thursday 3:30 -5:45 pm

Instructor: Prof. Cleo House, Jr.
E-mail: housec1@sfasu.edu
Phone: (936) 468-4003
Office: Griffith Fine Arts Building, room 212B
Office Hours: 10:30 am-12 noon MWF or call for appointment; drop-ins welcome

In addition to regular class meetings and individual preparation (traditional “homework”) time, this course requires a substantial amount of audition and rehearsal time that must be arranged with student directors, and, in lieu of a traditional final exam, a performance of a scene that must be scheduled to accommodate student directors and multiple faculty members. To facilitate this process, every student must be prepared to accept scheduling mandated by the instructor and the School of Theatre faculty, including evening and weekend work times.

Program Learning Outcomes Supported in this Course
1. The student will be able to analyze a script in ways that are necessary to a theatre practitioner or scholar/ critic. (All degree plans)
2. The student will demonstrate collaborative and/or leadership competencies appropriate to participate or take a leadership role in a theatrical production. (All degree plans)
3. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships. (All degree plans)
4. The student will demonstrate intermediate to advanced competence in one or more theatre specializations. (BA)
5. 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)
6. The student will be able to present an effective presentation appropriate to the student’s specialization. (BFA)

Student Learning Outcomes for this Course (and supported PLO’s):
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
1. Understand vocabulary of the theatre (PLO’s 4, 6, & 8)
2. Create a performance and analyze a text (PLO 1)
3 Utilize and comprehend modern acting theory (PLO’s 3, 4, 6, & 8)
4 Effectively collaborate on a performance project with a scene partner and a director (PLO’s 3, 4, 6, & 8)
5 Describe the principles of an actor’s process (PLO’s 4, 6, 8, & 9)

General Notes:
1. There are rehearsal and performance dates outside of the scheduled class time. Please look at the schedule now. If this poses a problem you MUST inform the instructor by the second week of class.
2. Assignments are due on the date listed. If absent and emailing a written assignment, it must be sent by the start time of class in order to receive credit.
3. Theatrical scripts may contain strong language that might be considered offensive to some: profanities, violence, sexual terms or references to religious deities. Please see me privately by the end of the first week of class if this is a problem for you.
4. Physical contact may occur from time to time with fellow students in class. I may also have to adjust parts of your body for proper alignment and to release tension while working. Please see me privately as soon as possible if this presents a problem or if you feel uncomfortable.
5. If you have a disability or physical injury that hinders you from participating in class activities please see me privately as soon as possible so we can make arrangements to accommodate you.
6. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Class Participation/50 points
Consistent, active, productive, collaborative participation. To succeed in this course you must be alert and engaged, willing and able to participate in class exercises, cooperative, supportive and respectful of your fellow students in every class session. You may request a mid-term assessment of your participation. Any pattern of tardiness or absenteeism may have a negative effect on your participation grade (as few as three absences or three times late for class may be considered a pattern).

Quizzes /40 points
Covering lecture, discussion and reading material. If you miss a quiz because of an unexcused absence you will receive no credit (a score of 0, a grade of F); if you miss a quiz because of an excused absence you must make an appointment for an oral make-up quiz (which will be at least as difficult as the written quiz).

Production Critiques/40 points
Two written critiques (also called “reviews”) describing and analyzing the acting in The Mountain Top and the OAP festival; and Biederman and the Firebugs. Each critique should be two and half pages minimum and four pages max. If you miss one of these productions you will receive no credit (a score of 0, a grade of F) for that critique. Each critique is due on the class immediately following the closing performance.

Homework /30 points
You will be assigned homework. Each assignment will have special instructions. You will be responsible for turning in all assignments on the dates listed in the schedule.

Performance (4)/80 points
You will have multiple performances in this course. Please note that with each performance growth and retention is expected. You will be given special instructions and a rubric for each performance.
Rehearsal Process/20 points
Each student will be cast in a student director’s final scene. The directors will receive rubrics to assess your 1) professionalism 2) reliability 3) effort 4) preparedness

Final Performance/40 points
Each student will be cast in a student director’s final scene. A rubric will be provided later in the semester. You will be assessed on your research, playing your GOTE, and additional basic acting techniques as discussed in class.

Total 300 points

Grading Policy/Rubric:
270 – 300   A
240 – 269   B
210 - 239   C
190 - 209   D
189 or below F
Tentative Schedule

Jan 16  SOT Spring Auditions

Jan 18  Course Overview  
         Introductions  
         Getting your G.O.T.E.

Jan 23  G.O.T.E. homework due  
         G.O.T.E. review continued

Jan 25  Online Class Meeting today  
         D2L - Quiz 1 over *The Goat or Who Is Sylvia* and *Doubt*

Jan 30  Discuss *The Goat or Who Is Sylvia* and *Doubt*

Feb 1   Discuss the Introduction to p. 18 in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor (PHA)*  
         Complete in class exercises  
         G.O.T.E. review  
         Choose a scene from *The Goat* and *Doubt* to work on

Saturday, Feb 3 7:30pm **attend The Mountain Top** presented in Turner Auditorium as part of the University Series

Feb 6   Discuss Chapter 2 pp. 19-39 in PHA  
         Quiz 2

Feb 8   One Act Play Festival  
         4:00pm **attend the OAP performance** in Turner Auditorium

Feb 13  Continue with Chapter 2 Analyzing a Scene, PHA  
         Compare and Contrast *The Mountain Top* and OAP Critique due today  
         Homework: Block/stage one of your scenes selected on Feb 1

Feb 15  Continue with Chapter 2 Analyzing a Scene  
         Discuss Chapter 3 Truth of the Moment and Chapter 4 Externals in PHA  
         Complete in class exercises (Scoring a Scene)  
         Class discussion of OAP acting  
         Perform blocked scenes (#1) homework

Feb 20  Discuss Chapters 5 - 7 in PHA

Feb 22  In class exercises – bringing it all together

Feb 27  *(attend Biederman... opens on the Main Stage)*  
         Discuss Chapters 8 – 12 in PHA
Mar 1  Online Class Meeting Today
D2L Quiz over readings and class discussions

Mar 6  **Biederman**... Acting Response/Critique due
Discuss the acting in **Biederman**...

Mar 8  Perform your blocked scenes – OFF BOOK (Perf #2)

Mar 20  Lecture: Working with directors
Mar 22  Working with directors continued

Mar 27  Library Day (Find 5 new monologues)
D2L assignment due today. Check D2L for details
D2L Quiz over working with directors lecture

Mar 29  No class due to Easter Holiday

Apr 3  Lecture: Selecting monologues and make audition piece decisions
Apr 5  Entrance, Prepare, Slate, Monologue, Ending, Re-Slate, Exit

Apr 10  Monologue Coaching
Apr 12  Monologue Audition **Performance** (#3)

Sunday, April 15  Directing Scene Auditions/Monologue Audition **Performance** (#4)

Apr 17  Discuss auditions with feedback
Apr 19  **Rehearse** Directing Scenes

Apr 24  **Rehearse** Directing Scenes
Apr 26  Final Class Meeting and Course Review

April 30 – May 4  Directing Scene Performance (Serves as your class **final**
Policies

Diversity and Inclusion Statement:
This class engages material covering a diverse range of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, and disability. While I encourage you to formulate and express your thoughts and opinions throughout the semester, discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated and may constitute disruptive behavior under the student code of conduct.

Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important Note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions, please be respectful of others’ emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students’ experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

Cell phones:
You may check your phones during breaks and when no one is presenting or performing. Otherwise phones are not allowed for use during class time.

Dress policy:
Unless otherwise specified, wear clothing suitable for movement and floor work. Clothing must be all black. Turn shirts with large lettering on the inside. If your clothing choices leave you unable to participate I cannot give you credit for the day.

Attendance Policy:
In keeping with the School of Theatre policy (see pages 12 - 13 of the 2017 - 2018 Student Handbook), the following applies to this course:

“A career in the fine arts demands dedication and discipline; preparation for this career requires conscientious development of effective work habits. To this end, regular and punctual attendance is expected for all classes, laboratories and other activities for which a student is registered or assigned.
“I. It is University policy to excuse students from class attendance for certain reasons related to health, family emergencies, student working the Performing Arts Series, and other situations of similar importance.

“Excused absences from Theatre classes will only be granted upon presentation of written documentation upon the first day of the student’s return from the teacher, sponsor or physician involved. In the case of absences caused by University-sponsored events, inclusion in the University’s public listing of such absences will constitute an official excuse. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor that he/she has scheduled the planned official absence.

“II. A total of...10 excused and/or unexcused absences in Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes will result in the student receiving a failing grade. Excessive unexcused absences will affect your grade. [More than three unexcused absences are considered excessive in this course.]

“III. The student will be allowed a maximum of...three unexcused absences in Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes.

“IV. In the case of missed classes, the student will be held responsible for the successful completion of assigned work and/or projects.”

Also, in this course if you arrive late for or leave early from any class session it will be considered the equivalent of 1/3 of one absence. The same rules apply for excused and unexcused absence from a part of a class session (arriving late or leaving early) as apply to absences from the entire session.

Academic Integrity:
The university administration has requested that the following policy be quoted on every course syllabus:

“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”

In keeping with the School of Theatre policy (see pages 16-17 in the Handbook), the following applies:

“"It is the responsibility of the student to abstain from cheating. Dishonesty of any kind with respect to examinations, written assignments, in or out of class, alteration of records, or illegal possession of current examinations or keys to examinations shall be considered cheating....Courtesy and honesty require that any
ideas or materials borrowed from another must be fully acknowledged [NB. “another” includes any Internet resource]. Offering the work of another [including an anonymous or group Internet author] as one’s own is plagiarism. The subject matter of ideas thus taken from another may range from a few sentences or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, or the writing of other students [or web sites]. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgement is also considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas or materials taken from another is guilty of plagiarism.’

“The School of Theatre expects students to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. Misrepresenting someone’s work as your own or knowingly allowing someone else to represent your work as his/hers constitutes academic dishonesty. Such behavior is antithetical to our work as scholars, as artists, and as members of a community founded on trust and mutual respect. It is an insult to faculty and an affront to honest students.

“Penalties for academic dishonesty may range from failure of a specific project to failure of the course, suspension from the production season for up to one year, and referral to university authorities for further action, which may include suspension or expulsion from the university.”

It is the student’s responsibility to know the definition of plagiarism and to avoid unintentional as well as intentional plagiarism. In this course, unintentional plagiarism will be treated no differently from intentional cheating. All of your work must be your own original work (unless appropriately cited). In recent years professional directors have successfully asserted legal ownership of staging. In other words, it is possible to plagiarize another director’s concept, blocking or other ideas. This too is a form of cheating and carries all of the consequences described above.

Withheld Grades:
The university administration has requested that the following policy be quoted on every course syllabus: “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.”

Acceptable Student Behavior:
According to the General Bulletin, “A student enrolling in the university assumes an obligation to conduct himself/herself in a manner compatible with the university’s function as an educational institution.” In this course, you must uphold the highest standards of respect for the teaching and learning process. Any behavior that distracts from our educational or artistic work, or would cause a reasonable person working as instructor or student in this setting to feel uncomfortable or distracted, will not be tolerated. This includes whispering or talking out of turn or making other distracting sounds at any level of volume, no matter how low, or making irrelevant or inappropriate gestures or signs of any kind, no matter how small. If you engage in such behavior, you will receive one warning from the instructor. If the same behavior or any other disruptive behavior occurs after a warning, you will be required to leave the class immediately, counted absent (unexcused) from the class, and held responsible for assigned work and/or projects due or assigned in the class. You will have to satisfy the instructor that you intend to behave appropriately for the rest of the semester before returning for the next class meeting. Any disruptive behavior after one ejection will result in a failing grade for the course; you will not
be permitted to return for the rest of the semester. Serious conduct violations will also be referred to university authorities for further action.

The university administration has suggested that the following statement be used in every course syllabus: “Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.”

Policy on Late Work:
When an assignment’s scheduling affects other students (scenes with student actors and/or student audiences, for example) it is never accepted late if the change of schedule might inconvenience or affect the work of others. Written work that must be completed in sequence to build for success on a complex project is never accepted late. Individual written assignments such as critiques may be accepted late at the instructor’s discretion, but the grade on the assignment will always be affected negatively (the later it is, the larger the penalty), and the instructor will always make it his top priority to be fair to students that submitted their work in on time.

Guidelines for Written Work:
Except where otherwise instructed, whenever it is reasonable to expect it, written work such as critiques, play analyses and casting breakdowns should be word-processed using Microsoft Word or Apple Pages software and submitted in the appropriate dropbox of the course management system. It should be printed in black ink on regular white copier/printer paper in a widely-used, highly readable font such as Times New Roman, no less than 10 nor more than 12-point size, with margins of approximately one inch. In other words, it should look much like this document except that it should be double-spaced. It should have your name word-processed on the front page (no title page is necessary). (For more details on standards for college papers in the arts and humanities, consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers.) Unless otherwise specified, due dates refer to the scheduled class start time.

Students with Disabilities:
The university administration has requested that the following policy be quoted on every course syllabus:

“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. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/