Beginning Acting
DRAM 1351.002/1051.021
Fall 2020

Instructor: Slade Billew
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Office Hours: MW 1:00PM – 3:00PM*, T 1:30 – 2:30* or by Appointment
*due to COVID-19 all office hours will be on Zoom

Class Time and Place: TR 11:00 – 1:15
McKibben 324

Catalogue Description: Three semester hours, one-hour lecture, four hours lab per week. Emphasis on the understanding and exploration of the actor’s tools and the application of the actor’s basic skills through the creative process.

Objectives: In this course we will use foundational acting techniques to come to better understand ourselves as creative artists. We will use these exercises in imagination and creative discovery to develop presence on stage, effective partnering, and script analysis. Further, we will discuss fundamental aspects of the career of the performer. You will notice that the course calendar is quite vague. My experience in teaching acting is that different groups need different things at different times. Therefore, we will discover the day to day work of the class together as we move through the semester.

Teaching Philosophy: I do not believe that teaching is me giving you information and you receiving it. Rather, I believe that we engage together in a process of research, challenge, and negotiation. It is important to me that you consent to the work of the class. In order to consent you must understand what it is we are doing, and believe that you are encouraged to ask questions and even to challenge ideas I present. Sometimes you will disagree with me, and that is what should happen. We must develop the capacity to say “no” in order to nourish our personal and artistic autonomy. It is only by being able to say “no” that we can truly say “yes.” This does not make class a free for all where everyone just does what they want. Instead, we work together to craft the class environment and there may be times when we need to discuss, negotiate, and accommodate individual difference. I recognize that there is a power imbalance in any classroom and that many, if not most of you will distrust that I really mean the above statement. We will work to create an environment where you can develop that trust. I don’t approach class this way because I want you to like me or because I am a “nice human”, rather I believe that part of what you must learn in your time at SFA is to think of yourself as an autonomous artist with your own thoughts, visions, and ideas that are just as important (but crucially not more important) than the thoughts visions and ideas of everyone else in the room.

Required Texts: Acting: the basics by Bella Merlin, second edition

Grading components:
1) Engagement 45%
2) Performance Work & Analyses 55%

Final Grading: (0-59.4) F  (59.5-69.4) D  (69.5-79.4) C  (79.5-89.4) B  (89.5-100) A
Engagement (45%): The expectation in this class is that you are fully engaged as an artist for each class session. You must be present and ready to work at the beginning of each class. You are expected to be mentally, emotionally, and physically prepared. You will be asked to engage as a student, artist, and collaborator every day. You should meet or exceed the expectations of the course, the School of Theatre, and the University. Your engagement will be noted and evaluated.

NOTE: You should expect to commit significant out of class time to preparation and rehearsal. You must treat this out of class work as a serious commitment. If I receive more than two complaints about any student’s presence, preparation, or participation in outside rehearsals, that student will be asked to withdraw from the class. Below is a rubric for Engagement grading:

A – Student shows a heightened level of attention, commitment, and effort.
B – Student shows an acceptable level of attention, commitment, and effort.
C – Student is present and not disruptive or obviously disengaged,
D – Student is present and mildly disruptive or disengaged.
F – Student is present and significantly disruptive or disengaged.
0 – Student is not present or asked to leave class.

Performance Work & Analyses (55%): Throughout the course of the semester you will rehearse and perform several pieces. Each of those assignments is outlined below. More specific details will be forthcoming in class.

Breakdown of Performance Work Assignments:

Stage Direction Scenes (10%) – You will perform a short self-created scene with a partner(s).

Monologue (15%) – You will rehearse and perform a new one-minute monologue of your choosing. It should be from a realistic play written in the last 30 years, and a piece that would be appropriate for you to use in a professional audition. You will also turn in an analysis for this piece, which will be detailed in class and on d2l.

Directing Scene Performance (15%) – You will audition for the Beginning Directing class and perform in one of the scenes directed by those students. You will turn in a journal of your rehearsal experience that includes an analysis of your scene.

Scripted Scene Performance (15%) – You will perform a scene assigned to you. You will also turn in an analysis for this piece, which will be detailed in class and on d2l. We are going to work from the play Rabbit Hole that previous students have enjoyed working, however if there are elements in the play that you are not comfortable engaging please discuss them with me, and we will find a solution that works for both of us. The scenes will be performed in Zoom.

Program Learning Outcomes

This course applies to the following School of Theatre Program Learning Outcomes at an introductory level.

- 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 areas of theatre specializations. (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
Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

• Analyze a dramatic text and interpret a character. (PLO:A)
• Embody fundamental concepts of modern acting theory. (PLO:B)
• Employ standard acting vocabulary. (PLOs:A,C)
• Articulate a basic personal artistic process. (PLOs:C,D,E,F)
• Translate analysis into specific vocal and physical choices. (PLOs:A,C,E,F)
• Demonstrate the ability to work cooperatively on a creative/interpretive project. (PLOs:B,D)

POLICIES and EXPECTATIONS

COVID-19 MASK POLICY

Masks (cloth face coverings) must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times in this class and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. Students not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be asked to leave the class. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to disciplinary actions.


Hybrid Course Design:

Most class meetings will occur in a hybrid fashion. This means there will be a group of students in the classroom and a group of students joining the class via Zoom each time the class meets.

• These groups and this rotation will be determined in the first class meeting which will be on Zoom. You are expected to fully participate whether you are online or in person. We will discuss in the first class meeting what full participation means on Zoom.
• The in-person meetings will be masked and socially distanced. You must maintain appropriate social distance at all times.
• If you are generally concerned about your health and safety you may ask to participate in the course entirely online.
• All Office Hours will be conducted on Zoom. A permanent link for those sessions will be posted on d2l.
• If you become ill, whether you think it is from COVID-19 or not please do not attend in person classes. If you feel healthy enough to attend online, please do so. If you do not, then please communicate with me per the attendance policy below.
• Acting teachers around the country are working to discover how to teach performance in this current context. We are all striving together to figure this out, so please share your thoughts and experiences as we progress through the semester.
• Per University policy the course will move completely online after Thanksgiving break.

Course Specific General Expectations:

• All Acting, Movement, and Theatre Speech classes at SFA require the wearing of black movement clothing. This is a common practice in many Theatre training programs. It is intended to create a sense of unity across the performers, make it easier to step in and out of character, and help the performance classroom feel like a space separate from daily life. Your clothing should be solid black and not include designs, images or words. Small brand logos are acceptable. Your clothes should effectively cover your body through a range of movement possibilities. Hats if worn must be turned with the bill backwards. If you are not wearing class appropriate clothing, you will be asked to leave, and receive an absence for the day, as well as, a loss of engagement points.
• This class requires significant physical interaction between students. Please come to class clean, and with nails trimmed. (THIS IS UNTRUE IN THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES)
• Jewelry should be removed before class. This includes necklaces, long, dangling earrings, watches, body piercings and large rings. This prevents potentially dangerous snags on your own body or other’s bodies.
• Soft soled movement or athletic type shoes shall be worn for class. I would encourage black shoes, but as quality shoes are expensive any color is acceptable.
• Bring a no-spill water bottle to class. Only water is allowed. Fill it before class; you can’t leave class to fill it. No food in class (this includes gum and candy).
• Hair should be kept out of the face.
• Assist in keeping the space clean, organized and ready for the next class.
• As a student in a pre-professional theatre program you should approach class in the same way that you would a rehearsal. You should be on time. You should be prepared. You should leave any outside concerns at the door.

Absences/Lateness: Theatre is an intrinsically collaborative art, and the practical application side of your training occurs largely in the classroom. Therefore, your absence from class impacts not only your learning, but also the learning of other students. You should not miss class. You will lose engagement points anytime you do. However, I recognize that life happens. Please be in communication with me about any absences. If you do not communicate with me about an absence within 24 hours or if your absences become excessive your grade will be significantly impacted. The same is true for chronic lateness. It is your responsibility to obtain any missed notes from a classmate. It is your responsibility to check in with me after class if you arrive after attendance is taken.

As stated by College policy: Seven (7) absences in a T/TH class or ten (10) absences in a MWF class will result in an automatic failure of the course.
**Course Work:** All course work must be completed and turned in as indicated by the course calendar, as discussed in class, or communicated on d2l. Late work will only be accepted in emergency circumstances. It is your responsibility to pursue making up missed work, not my responsibility to make sure you do so.

*Students with documented disabilities must meet with the instructor in advance of accommodation to arrange accommodations for that disability.*

**General Expectations:**

*Please respect others as well as yourself; this includes other students, the instructor, guest speakers, and performers. The majority of the following guidelines for behavior reflect this principle.*

1. Recording class in any form is not allowed. Recordings of Zoom sessions will be made available.
2. Cell phones should be set to silent or turned off and stowed before you enter the room. Absolutely NO use of cell phones is allowed in class unless there is an emergency, or it is approved/requested by the instructor.
3. Disorderly conduct or talking inappropriately in class is not permitted.
4. Failure to follow any of these expectations will result in being dismissed from class and counted absent (unexcused).

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

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

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

Student Resources

Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC)
The webpage for the AARC is located here. The AARC provides free tutoring help for students, including virtually. If you need help with your writing skills, this is the place to go!

The Career Closet
The Career Closet lends professional clothing to current students and alumni for job interviews, conferences, auditions, etc... See info here.

Counseling Services
The people at the counseling center are here to help with a wide range of issues including anxiety, depression, and grief. Their information can be found here. In the event of a crisis outside of business hours, please call the Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1-800-392-8343.

Disability Services
If you have a disability and require special accommodations, either during class or during exams, or both, disability services are here to help. Just remember: while we generally do everything in our power to accommodate requests, we cannot do so unless you go through the Office of Disability Services first. If you feel like this service may be of use to you, visit them as early as you can, at the start of the semester. Their information can be found here.

Food Pantry
If you are struggling with food insecurity (or, alternatively have food to donate), please consider visiting SFA's Pantry. Information about the pantry (and other pantries) is located here.
**Health Clinic**

As a student you can gain access to medical services through the health clinic. Information can be found [here](#).

**Veterans Resource Center**

If you are a military veteran, you may find the veterans resource center helpful. Information can be found [here](#):

This list is a work-in-progress. If you are aware of resources that you believe should be added, please let me know!
### Tentative Course Calendar

**PLEASE NOTE:** Dates and topics will be revised if necessary. Additional reading and assignments may be given in class. Dates indicate when assignments and reading are DUE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>R 8/27</td>
<td>Course orientation, Exercises ON ZOOM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>T 9/1</td>
<td>How to choose a Monologue, Discuss Reading, Exercises Excerises</td>
<td>Merlin Intro/Ch. 1 Due</td>
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<tr>
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<td>R 9/3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>T 9/8</td>
<td>Discuss Reading, Begin Working on Stage Direction Scenes (SDS)</td>
<td>Merlin Chapter 2 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R 9/10</td>
<td>Exercises, Rehearse SDS</td>
<td>Monologue Selected</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>T 9/15</td>
<td>Discuss Reading &amp; Memorization, Exercises, Rehearse SDS</td>
<td>Merlin Chapter 3 Due</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R 9/17</td>
<td>Exercises, Rehearse SDS</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Five</td>
<td>T 9/22</td>
<td>Discuss Reading, Perform SDS, Exercises</td>
<td>Merlin Chapter 4 Due</td>
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<td>R 9/24</td>
<td>Perform SDS, Exercises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R 10/1</td>
<td>Monologue Work</td>
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<td>Seven</td>
<td>T 10/6</td>
<td>Discuss Reading, Monologue Work</td>
<td>Merlin Chapter 5 Due</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R 10/8</td>
<td>Audition Technique, Monologue Work</td>
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<td>Eight</td>
<td>T 10/13</td>
<td>Monologues Performed, Noble Method</td>
<td>Monologue/Analysis Due</td>
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<td>R 10/15</td>
<td>Monologues Performed, Exercises</td>
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<td>Nine</td>
<td>T 10/20</td>
<td>Discuss Play, Scenes Assigned</td>
<td>Play reading Due</td>
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<td>R 10/22</td>
<td>Scene Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ten</td>
<td>T 10/27</td>
<td>Discuss Reading, Scene Work</td>
<td>Merlin 6/Epilogue Due</td>
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<td>R 10/29</td>
<td>Scene Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eleven</td>
<td>T 11/3</td>
<td>Scene Work</td>
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<td>R 11/5</td>
<td>Scene Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twelve</td>
<td>T 11/10</td>
<td>No Class - Rehearsal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R 11/12</td>
<td>No Class - Rehearsal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thirteen</td>
<td>T 11/17</td>
<td>No Class - Directing Scenes Performed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R 11/19</td>
<td>No Class - Directing Scenes Performed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourteen</td>
<td>T 11/24</td>
<td>No class – Thanksgiving</td>
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<td></td>
<td>R 11/26</td>
<td>No class – Thanksgiving</td>
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**CLASSES MOVE FULLY ONLINE!!!**

| Fifteen| T 12/1 | Scene Work Off Book                                                      |
|        | R 12/3 | Scene Work Off Book                                                     |
| Sixteen| Finals Week | Final Scenes Performed on Zoom                                         |
|        |        | Thursday 12/10                                                          |
|        |        | 10:45am – 1:15pm                                                        |