Stephen F. Austin State University

Topics in Theatre and Drama:
“The Method” in the Movies

Spring 2024

Instructor: Prof. Scott Shattuck (he/him)
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Phone: 936.468-1336 (office), 917.860-6180 (mobile)
Office: Griffith Fine Arts Building Rm. 225
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 3-4 pm; Tuesday, Thursday 12:30-1:30 pm
or by appointment (preferred). Office hours end on April 19. Meetings by Zoom, FaceTime, or phone may be arranged upon request.

To avoid disappointment, it is always best to let me know you will be coming even if you are coming to a scheduled office hour. If you prefer to meet on Zoom or FaceTime, or on the phone, that can usually be arranged so please just let me know. I am always open to meeting outside office hours at a mutually convenient time; the most efficient way to find one is to speak on the phone.

You may text or call me any time between 8:00 am and 9:00 pm especially if your message or question is time sensitive. Otherwise, e-mails are usually preferred. Use the address above, not the D2L email system, or you may never receive my reply. Please be specific in the subject heading. Also, please specify in the body of your email what course (Theatre Topics) you are in. If you do not hear back from me within 48 hours, please email again or reach out to me in another way. If I need to contact you I will usually use your D2L email, so please be sure to forward those to an email you check frequently. Whether it’s sent to your SFA email or your D2L email, you are responsible for any message I send.

Class Meetings: Upstage Theatre (Griffith Fine Arts Building Rm. 301)

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 am-12:15 pm
Important Dates to Note:
The last day to drop this course via mySFA and remain enrolled in other spring classes is Feb. 2 by 5 pm.

The last day to drop this course using a Drop Request Form and remain enrolled in other spring classes is April 10 at 5 pm. This drop may count toward your six-drop limit.

The final is scheduled for 10:30 am Tuesday, May 7.

Course Description: Specialized topics in the history, literature, theory, and practice of theatre.
Prerequisites: DRAM 1362 and an additional six hours of DRAM courses.

Our topic this semester is the Stanislavsky-based approach to acting which is often called “The Method” with a focus on its history and ongoing role in English-language cinema.

Course Contact and Study Hours

This is a three semester-credit-hour course, so there will be three hours of in-class instruction per week, and each student should spend an average of six additional hours of reading, viewing/listening, writing, reviewing, and other learning time outside of class every week.
Text and Materials:

No required textbook. You may instead incur expenses buying or renting screen media.

Recommended: The Method: How the Twentieth Century Learned to Act by Isaac Butler
“Gurus: The Story of Acting” (podcast)
An Actor’s Work by Konstantin Stanislavski, translated by Jean Benedetti

You will need access to a computer and the internet, especially to use the university’s course management system, D2L Brightspace, and possibly Zoom. You may also need access to media available from sources such as Prime Video, YouTube Movies & TV, the iTunes store, etc. You should watch films and similar media on the largest screen available to you (smart phone screens are not recommended).

Course Calendar (subject to change):

Preview: Course overview 1/18
Week 1: Background: Stanislavski and his “System” 1/23-25
Week 2: Background: The Group Theatre 1/30-2/1
Week 3: Background: Hollywood Style Before (and since) “The Method” 2/6-8
Week 4: “The Method” Comes to Hollywood: Boleslawski, Tone, Garfield 2/13
Week 5: The Mentors: Adler, Meisner, Lewis, Kazan 2/15-20
The Guru: Strasberg and The Actors Studio 2/22
Week 6: Brando and the Mid-Century Masterpieces 2/27-29
Week 7: Mid-Century, continued 3/5-7
Spring Break March 9-17
Week 8: Method So White: Poitier, Dandridge, Quinn, Moreno, Mako 3/19
Mixed Traditions: Julius Caesar & Virginia Woolf 3/21
Easter Holiday April 28
Week 10: Apotheosis, continued 4/2-4
Week 11: Research and Transformation: DeNiro, Day-Lewis, Theron, Bale 4/9-11
Week 12: The British “Method:” Mike Leigh & The Drama Centre 4/16
“Suit the Action to the Word:” The Many Methods of Meryl Streep 4/18
Week 13: Neo-Naturalism and Documentary/Fiction 4/23
Today and Tomorrow: Zendaya, Chalamet, who’s next? 4/25
Week 14: Final Projects 4/30-5/2
Final Week: Evaluation and reflection 5/7 (final exam period 10:30 am-12:30 pm)
Course Requirements:

1. Consistent, active, productive, collaborative participation. To succeed in this course, you must be prepared (with the assigned reading completed, for example), alert and engaged, willing and able to participate in class exercises, cooperative, supportive, and respectful of your fellow students in every class session. To maximize your participation grade, you must volunteer to speak in discussions, participate in demonstrations of techniques, etc. The instructor’s assessment of your participation will form 25% of your final grade for the course. Upon request, you may receive 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).

2. Two written production responses relating the direction of the two School of Theatre “Mainstage” productions of the semester (The 39 Steps and Real Women Have Curves) to material from the course. Each response will be brief (100 words maximum). In order to write it, you will purchase a ticket for and attend each of these productions at least once (you may have to pay the student ticket price). If you have a cast or crew assignment on one or both productions your assignment will still be to relate the acting to the course from the perspective of your role/job. If you miss one of these productions you will receive no credit (a score of 0, a grade of F) for that response. Each response is due at the time of the next class session immediately following the closing performance. The average of your response grades will form 10% of your final course grade.

3. Independent research and oral report. At some point in the semester you will be assigned a topic, such as the work of a specific film actor or director, to research and report on your findings to the class. These reports will be made during regular class sessions and your assignment may be due at any point in the semester. Each one should be approximately ten minutes in length. You must give your report from notes rather than reading an essay to the class, and you should be prepared to incorporate visual aids and field questions about your subject. Before the time of your report, you will submit your research notes, annotated with the sources you used. 15% of final grade.

4. Oral movie review. Watch a well-known film approved in advance by the instructor and analyze it using concepts and vocabulary from the course. Discuss your analysis with the class in a presentation of approximately ten minutes in length. These presentations will be made during regular class sessions and your assignment may be due at any point in the semester. You must provide your analysis from notes rather than reading an essay to the class. You should be prepared to incorporate visual aids and field questions about the motion picture and the acting in it. 15%.

5. Semester project. Develop a substantial project that responds directly to the topic of the semester and present it, briefly, in class during the final week of regular class sessions. Creative and collaborative projects are encouraged. Examples of this
project might include a book review, making a short film, acting a scene from a screenplay, or building a web site about a sub-topic from the course. The project must be approved by the instructor no later than mid-term. The project or supporting materials must be submitted by the class start time on April 30. 20%.

6. Final quiz. During the final exam period you will take a comprehensive quiz covering material from the entire semester. The quiz will be taken on Brightspace, so you will need to bring an appropriate device or arrange in advance to take your quiz in a computer lab. You will be free to use books, your notes, and online resources including course materials posted on Brightspace and even a search engine. 15% of final grade.
Grading:

The letter grade on each assignment is translated to this numerical scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>F</td>
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The final grade is then calculated using the percentages in the “Requirements” section above, and the numerical weighted average is translated to this letter-grade scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89.500-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>79.500-89.499</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.500-79.499</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.500-69.499</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59.499</td>
<td>F</td>
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Attendance Policy:

In keeping with the School of Theatre policy (see *School of Theatre 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...7 excused and/or unexcused absences in Tuesday-Thursday 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. Each student is responsible for keeping track of their own attendance; do not rely on the professor for an attendance warning!]

“III. The student will be allowed a maximum of...two unexcused absences in Tuesday-Thursday 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 at least 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.

**Attending Shows**

To attend ticketed theatre productions, you should get your ticket well in advance to avoid missing a show due to a sell-out (which is especially but not exclusively a concern at closing performances). The Box Office is in the lobby of the Griffith Fine Arts Building. Using a credit card, you may also order tickets on the phone at (936) 468-6407. The Box Office strives to be open from 9 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday and from 45 minutes before each performance but is sometimes required to close because staff is not available. If your call is answered by voicemail, you should leave a clear message including your phone number (spoken slowly) and you will get a call back. A credit card may also be used at boxoffice.sfasu.edu, but please carefully consider any additional service charges before using this option.
Academic Integrity:

SFA Statement:

“The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity” outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.”

In keeping with the School of Theatre rules (see 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, including generative artificial intelligence (AI) sources such as ChatGPT]. Offering the
work of another [including an anonymous or group or AI 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 or AI platforms]. 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:**

SFA Statement: “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.”

SFA Statement: “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 production responses 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 play analyses and casting breakdowns should be word-processed using Microsoft Word software and submitted as a Word document or PDF in the appropriate Dropbox of the course management system. It should be printable 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. 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:

SFA Statement:

“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/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).”

Student Wellness and Well-Being:

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)

[www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents)

936.468.7249

dos@sfasu.edu
SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit.

Services include:
• Health Services
• Counseling Services
• Student Outreach and Support
• Food Pantry
• Wellness Coaching
• Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

Crisis Resources:
• Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
• National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
• Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
• johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
Program Learning Outcomes (PLO’s) Supported in this Course:

Students who successfully complete this course will have achieved mastery of the following Program Learning Outcomes as identified by the School of Theatre:

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 be able to form and articulate a critical analysis and evaluation of a work of theatre. (BA, BA with Teacher Certification.)
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.)

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s) for this course (and supported PLO’s):

When you successfully complete this course, you will be able to…

1. Use widely understood vocabulary to describe and analyze acting in different styles. (PLO 2, 3)
2. Analyze a screen character’s motivations, obstacles, and actions. (PLO 1)
3. Intelligently discuss action-based acting approaches including the Stanislavsky System and multiple interpretations of “The Method.” (PLO 3)
4. Assess the success of screen performances in the representational idiom. (PLO 2)

Please Note:

This syllabus is a plan for the course, and every effort will be made to follow the plan. However, the year 2020 taught even the most confident and flexible among us that circumstances can cause plans to change. If adjustments become necessary, priorities will be to seek alternative ways to meet our learning goals, and to ensure that every student is treated fairly with no student unduly penalized by external circumstances which affect us all.