

THTR 1003-280R: Acting 1: Introduction to Acting  
CU Boulder – Fall 2015 – LIBBY 05E  
Mon/Wed 10 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.  
Final Exam: Wednesday, December 16, 4:30-7 p.m.

Instructor: Emily K. Harrison, MFA, PhD    email: emily.harrison@colorado.edu  
Office Hours: Mondays, 3-5 p.m.            Office Location: THTR C1B86

### **Course Description**

From CU Catalog: Introductory course designed to explore creativity, collaboration, and communication in the craft of acting. Focuses on basic terms and concepts of psychological realism fundamental to the actors' process through solo work and ensemble exercises. Open to majors and non-majors.

This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamental tools of acting, including introductions to basic approaches to hone one's "craft." Emphasis will be placed on discovering the inner artist, an often-overlooked part of the actor's training. The course will use games, scenes, monologues, and readings to provide students with a solid understanding of how to create a character, analyze a text, and utilize important vocabulary. Students will begin to understand the demands placed on professional actors and train in audition techniques.

### **Required Text**

*A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder, et. al

### **Recommended Reading**

*An Actor Prepares* by Constantin Stanislavsky

*Sanford Meisner on Acting* by Sanford Meisner and Dennis Longwell

*Audition* by Michael Shurtleff

*Daring Greatly* by Brene Brown

### **Course Objectives**

- Application of basic fundamental acting techniques to create truthful performances.
- A foundation for preparing and executing strong audition material.
- To gain a deep understanding of basic acting terminology and methodology.
- To learn, understand and personalize techniques for analyzing a script for performance.

### **Course Requirements**

- **Monologue/Scene Work**
  - Each student will be required to present two contrasting monologues. The goal is to work on and improve material for an audition piece.

- Each student will be required to prepare and perform two scenes with a partner for a grade; the first scene will be less formal, the second more formal.

Students are expected to use the scenes and monologues to apply what they have been learning in class and in assigned readings. Students will be graded on memorization, improvement from the first to the last performance, attitude, direct application of class work to acting work, ability to communicate to an audience, and commitment to assigned acting partner. Scenes will require at least 10 hours of rehearsal time outside of class to be scheduled with scene partner. The scenes will be coached at least once in class before final presentations.

- **Written Work:**

- **Scene/Monologue Breakdown:** Each student will be required to do a breakdown of their monologues and their second scene as outlined in *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*. This assignment will give students an opportunity to make specific, text-based choices about their character and add depth to the life of the scene. **Breakdowns are due the day of the first presentations and will not be accepted late.**
- **Character Bio:** Each student will be required to hand in a paper that includes a detailed biography of their character for both monologues and both scenes. The biography should be culled from information given in the play as well as the actor's imagination, and should be between 2 and 2.5 pages in length. **Character bios are due the day of the first presentations and will not be accepted late.**
- **Character Collage:** Each student will be required to prepare a collage that reflects their character for both monologues and both scenes. There are no rules or limitations for the collage – creativity and specificity are encouraged. I encourage you to do something more than create a document containing pictures you find on the internet; the more creative you get, the more effort you put into your collage, the better your grade will be. **Collages are due the day of the first presentations and will not be accepted late.**
- **Response Papers:** Each student is required to attend two professional productions and write a two-page response based on their experience as an audience member. Tickets must be purchased at your own expense. Instructor will provide a list of eligible productions to choose from. These responses should address the following questions:
  - Would you recommend the play to others? Why or why not?
  - How was the acting overall? Use what you've learned in class to help develop and articulate your opinions.
  - Focus on two performers and discuss what you observed in their movement choices, vocal choices, pursuit of objectives and use of tactics with their characters. Were they convincing? Were they

compelling? Why or why not? Did you agree with the choices the actors made?

Response Papers are due no later than a week after you see the production and will not be accepted late. Ticket stubs/confirmation and program must be attached.

**PLEASE NOTE: AT NO TIME WILL LATE WORK BE ACCEPTED.**

*Students who fail to turn in required work on the due date will receive a grade of zero for the assignment in question. Assignments will NOT be accepted via email except under the direst of circumstance, and only at the discretion of the instructor.*

*All written work (aside from the scene breakdowns) must be typed or it will not be accepted. All papers should be free of spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors. The grade of the paper will suffer if it is not properly proofread.*

- **Reading/Midterm**
  - The course readings cover a basic method used in the acting process. Students are responsible for the content of these readings. We will discuss the readings in class; students should be prepared to ask questions and offer response to the material. Each student will be required to take a mid-term examination based on readings, scene work, in-class exercises, and vocabulary learned throughout the semester.
- **Class Participation**

Acting is about DOING. Therefore, this class is extremely experiential in nature. Students should be prepared and willing to experiment and actively participate in class exercises, games, and discussions. Prepared exercises will be assigned for in-class presentation. Class participation is 20% of the total grade - missing class means losing valuable class participation points. Students are expected to be on time and ready to work, and should refrain from eating, chatting with classmates or using cell phones during class time. Such behavior will result in a deduction of points from the overall grade. This is serious business, people.

### **Grading Scheme**

Grades will be posted as promptly as possible throughout the semester on CU Learn. Students have no excuse for not knowing where they stand as far as their grade is concerned. Grades will be calculated according to the number of points earned as follows:

### Grading Breakdown

Class Participation:	200 points
Scene Presentation 1:	50 points
Scene Presentation 2:	150 points
Monologue Presentation:	100 points
Spy Project:	100 points
Midterm:	100 points
Written Work:	300 points
• Response papers:	100 points (2 total, worth 50 points each)
• Bios/Collages:	100 points (4 total, worth 25 points each)
• Action Breakdowns:	100 points (3 total, worth 34 points each)

940-1030	A
900-939	A-
870-899	B+
840-869	B
800-839	B-
770-799	C+
740-769	C
700-739	C-
670-699	D+
640-669	D
600-639	D-
599 or lower	F

### Extra Credit:\*

You can earn up to 30 points of extra credit by attending 1-2 additional performance events over the course of the semester and turning in a 1-page response. Instructor will provide a list of eligible productions.

*\*Extra Credit Projects must be chosen from the list provided by the instructor; do not expect to receive credit for seeing a production not listed. All extra credit responses must have the production program and ticket stapled to the back. All extra credit materials must be submitted no later than a week after you saw the show.*

### Rules

- *Take personal responsibility for fostering an environment of safety and creative possibility.* Think of this class as an acting company. Showing up on time for every class means being ready to work at the class start time, being physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to dive in. Enjoy your work, but never forget that it is work. Come to class and rehearsal ready to take risks, prepared to fall flat on your face and willing to get back up and try again.
- *Show respect to your classmates by listening attentively and using your discretion to avoid inappropriate behavior.* The use of cell phones for any reason is strictly prohibited. Please keep cell phones silenced and stored in your bag at all times while in the classroom. Students who use cell phones for any reason in class and students who feel the need to carry on a conversation in class while others are working, will be dismissed at the discretion of the instructor and counted absent for the day.
- *Foster a compassionate, but honest dialogue.*
- *When presenting a scene or monologue you must:*
  1. Have the text MEMORIZED the 1<sup>st</sup> time you get up.

2. Hand in your scene breakdown and any other assigned paper the day assigned.
3. If you do not honor the first two rules then you will not have your scene coached at all. You will be taken out of the sequence of scene work, and will throw off the entire semester. Please honor the rules and respect the process of the other students in the class.

### **Attendance Policy**

As this course is experiential in nature, attendance is crucial. Per department policy, each absence after the second will result in the lowering of the grade by a third. **FIVE absences will result in failure of the course.** This follows the national standard as it pertains to protocol adopted by professional and semi-professional theatre companies and university training programs. Absence on a day you are scheduled to present a scene or monologue will not be tolerated and will result in the lowering of your final scene or monologue grade by 50%. Additionally, lateness is rude and extremely disrespectful to your fellow students and the instructor. **Each tardy, defined as arrival after 10 a.m. counts for ½ of an absence. Tardiness later than 10 minutes into class time counts as a full absence.** There are no “excused” absences, except in EXTREME cases, and then only at the discretion of the instructor. Illness will only be excused if you bring a note from Wardenburg or a medical professional indicating that you were at the clinic during class time, or a note stating that you had already been to Wardenburg or a medical professional and deemed not healthy enough to attend class.

### **Physical Risk and Subject Matter**

*This course includes physical activity, which by its very nature includes an element of physical risk.* Students are encouraged to remain alert, follow directions, and be aware of potential hazards working individually or with others. If you ever feel any concern for your own or someone else’s safety, you are encouraged to speak up immediately. We will be moving around quite a bit in this class; please keep your instructor informed of any physical limitations that may effect your participation. Have fun, but be careful and smart about safety.

*Controversial subject matter:* some of our material may include controversial subject matter – i.e., offensive language, racism, sexuality, etc. If you are not prepared to engage such material, please speak with the instructor immediately.

### **Attire**

Avoid clothing that will inhibit your ability to move freely. You should wear sweat pants or yoga pants/leggings or bring a pair to change into. **No jeans or jean-like pants!** If your pants have a zipper and/or belt loops, they probably aren’t great for class. Movement will play a significant role in this class. Wearing jeans will inhibit your ability to participate and will result in the lowering of your participation grade! No skirts without appropriate undergarments (meaning shorts or leggings), and then, only free-

flowing skirts will be permitted. Students who are not appropriately dressed may be dismissed at the discretion of the instructor and will be counted absent for the day.

## **WELCOME!**

I welcome you to this class and look forward to working with each of you. We all have much to learn from one another and many experiences to share. If we approach the work seriously and with focus and passion we can accomplish great things. I encourage each of you to create a supportive and creative environment where everyone feels safe to take risks and become the great artists that you each strive to be.

## **Class Schedule**

Mon., 8/24: Class Intro/discussion

Weds., 8/26: Storytelling workshop with Kelsie Huff

Mon., 8/31: Viewing Assignment due: Brene Brown's TED Talk: *The Power of Vulnerability*  
Reading Assignment due: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*:  
Introduction and pages 3-10  
Relaxation and warm-up exercises

Wed., 9/2: Reading Assignment due: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*: Chapters  
1 and 2  
\*Scene 1 assigned\*  
Relaxation and warm-up exercises continued

Mon., 9/7: **LABOR DAY: No Class.**

Wed., 9/9: Reading Assignment due: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*: Chapters  
3 and 4  
Relaxation and warm-up continued

Mon., 9/14: Scene 1 first presentation - SCENES MEMORIZED  
Character bio, collage and beat breakdown due.  
\*Spy Project discussion/assignment\*

Wed., 9/16: Reading Assignment due: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*: Chapters  
5-7  
\*Scene 2 assigned\*

Mon., 9/21: Scene 1: FINAL PRESENTATION  
Relaxation work

- Wed., 9/23: Reading Assignment due: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*: Chapters 8-12  
Scene/monologue breakdown discussion
- Mon., 9/28: Relaxation work/character work  
Monologues due: each student should bring 3 monologues of his/her own selection for in-class review; see handout posted on D2L for guidelines  
\*Spy Project partners assigned\*
- Wed., 9/30: SCENE 2 PRESENTATION: SCENES MEMORIZED  
Character bio, collage and beat breakdown due  
Scene work
- Mon., 10/5: Monologues finalized: each student should bring 2 monologues of his/her own selection, based on previous discussion. Each student responsible for turning in clean copy to instructor  
Scene work
- Wed., 10/7: Scene Work
- Mon., 10/12: Viewpoints Workshop with Joan Bruemmer-Holden
- Wed., 10/14: Scene Work
- Mon., 10/19: Scene Work
- Wed., 10/21: mid-term exam  
Scene work/character development
- Mon., 10/26: FINAL SCENE PRESENTATION
- Wed., 10/28: Character Development
- Mon., 11/2: Monologue Presentation: 1st MONOLOGUE MEMORIZED  
Character bio, collage and beat breakdown due.  
Monologue work
- Wed., 11/4: monologue work/character development
- Mon., 11/9: Monologue Presentation: 2nd MONOLOGUE MEMORIZED  
Character bio, collage and beat breakdown due  
Monologue Work
- Wed., 11/11: monologue work

Mon., 11/16: monologue work

Wed., 11/18: Spy Project Presentation/discussion  
monologue work

Mon., 11/23 & Wed., 11/25: FALL BREAK: No Class. Hugs, not Drugs.

Mon., 11/30: monologue work  
Discussion: audition expectations and decorum

Wed., 12/2: monologue work/character development

Mon., 12/7: monologue work/character development

Wed., 12/9: monologue work

**Wednesday, December 16, 4:30-7 p.m.: FINAL EXAM – MOCK AUDITION**

*Please note this syllabus is subject to change to best accommodate the needs of the students. Any changes will be made in a timely manner.*

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### **University Policy**

- If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries guidelines](#) under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your professor. [www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices)
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- Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to



discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at:

[www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html) and

[www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

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- All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at: [www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html) and [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/)
- Any written assignments will not be kept on file past 45 days. Please collect any papers you want to keep from the instructor.