

**Saint Louis University
Madrid Campus
Department of Fine and Performing Arts**

THR 2510 M01 Acting I

Spring 2018 MW 17:30-18:45 Studio, San Ignacio Hall

3 Credit Hours

Prof. Cary Barney, MFA

(e-mail cary.barney@slu.edu; tutorial hours MWTR 16:00-17:30 or by appointment)

Course Objectives: In this course, students learn to control the instruments of acting (voice and movement). They develop skills for scene analysis, and acquire the focus and discipline necessary for performance. Each student, by the end of the term, performs three scenes and a monologue. Students will also acquire basic projection and enunciation skills, as needed, and an understanding of basic theater vocabulary and protocol.

Course Description: The first two weeks of the course emphasize non-competitive ensemble exercises and games, some adapted from the work of Joseph Chaikin and the Open Theater. These activities serve to break down inhibitions, build confidence and help establish an atmosphere of collaboration and support. These exercises, along with vocal warm-ups, will continue to be used at the beginning of each class throughout the term.

The course then moves into intensive work in the fundamentals of acting. As the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky is central to modern acting, we will acquaint ourselves with his theories and touch on ways others have tried to put them into practice. For the most part we will follow the model of scene preparation given in our textbook, although alternatives will be considered. We will read the play or plays chosen for final scene work, analyzing individual scenes and overall character "through-lines".

Students will be paired off three times for extended scene work. The first scene will be David Mamet's short play *Cold*; the second scenes will be selected from the works of Anton Chekhov; the third and culminating scenes will be chosen from plays to be announced. Monologues from *Spoon River Anthology* will be worked on and presented as well.

We will spend some time in each class working on your voice, using exercises from Cicely Berry's *Voice and the Actor* and other sources. You are expected to continue this work outside of class (try it in the shower) and to apply it to the scenes you work on. If you have a quiet voice, be prepared to work on volume. There will be an overall voice evaluation at the end of the course. Time will also be made for theater games involving improvisation and mime skills, usually as part of warm-ups.

Texts: *A Practical Handbook for the Actor* by Melissa Bruder et.al. Additional texts will be distributed in class or online.

Participation: If you're not prepared to participate, you shouldn't be here! If you are a shy person, be willing and prepared to change. All students are expected to contribute to an atmosphere of friendly, supportive, energetic creativity and to give helpful critiques of each other's work.

Exams: There are no exams for this course. There may, however, be pop quizzes based on reading if I get the feeling that not everyone is doing the reading.

Written Work: Writing assignments (scene and character analyses or other exercises) must be typed on a computer and printed out.

Critical Writing Assignment: You will be assigned a short (2-3 pages) critical paper, evaluating a performance by an actor in a play (recorded performance permitted) or, with instructor's permission film, using the concepts and vocabulary taught in this course.

Scene Work: The culminating work in this course will be scene work. Important points:

- **MEMORIZE YOUR LINES.** Neither you nor your partner will be allowed to read from a script or to call for a line during the presentation. Failure to memorize lines lets your partner down and gets you an F.
- **PROPS, COSTUMES and SET PIECES** are *your* responsibility. Keep them to a minimum, using only what you absolutely need for the scene.
- **USE THE SPACE.** Sitting in chairs for the whole scene doesn't show much effort, imagination, or expressiveness.
- **DON'T DIRECT.** Scene work is about listening and responding to each other as actors, not shaping your partner's performance or wowing the audience with clever production concepts.
- **REHEARSE REGULARLY.** Organize a rehearsal schedule with your partner and stick to it. (*If your partner is letting you down, let me know ASAP.*)
- **DON'T NEGLECT YOUR WRITTEN WORK.** For each scene you perform, you *must* hand in, *before performing*, a detailed scene analysis following the model in our textbook. This work is part of your grade for the scene. *No exceptions!*

Collaboration: Scene work is by its nature dependent on communal effort and cooperation. ***Slackers who skip rehearsals, don't memorize lines and/or don't communicate with their scene partners will be asked politely but firmly to drop the course*** so their lack of commitment won't hurt others.

Memorization: You are expected to memorize your lines thoroughly, accurately, and on time. Otherwise you will be holding up others and wasting valuable rehearsal time. *There is no such thing as "sort of" knowing your lines!* You either know them completely, absolutely and instinctively, or they will fail you and everyone else at crucial moments. Memorization is not difficult, but it does require time and discipline. Lock yourself in a room with your script, turn your phone off, and read and reread each line aloud until you can do it without the script. Recite your lines to yourself over and over. Memorize your cues as well so you know when to speak. Run lines with your partner. The sooner you're both "off book," the better your scene will be.

Grading:

First Scene (*Cold*): 15%
Monologue (*Spoon River*): 15%
Second Scene (*Chekhov*): 15%
Final Scene (TBA): 25%
Critical Writing Assignment: 10%
Participation: 20%

Outside Class: The life you live outside class inevitably affects your work as an actor, and vice versa. To make this a healthy, symbiotic relationship, I strongly suggest you do the following:

- Do your vocal and physical relaxation exercises daily. Morning is a great time; they'll get you off to a good start.
- Take care of your body. Eat well, cut out junk food. Exercise. Don't be a couch potato. Get enough sleep.
- Take care of your voice. If you smoke, now is a good time to stop.
- Take care of your mind. Limit your alcohol intake. Avoid any substance, legal or otherwise, that dulls your senses, slows your reactions, impedes your memory, or makes you lazy.
- Be a sponge, always observing, listening, learning from what you see and hear and read. Keeping a journal is a good way to do this.
- Go to the theatre as often as possible. Go together. Discuss it afterwards. Go again. Get hooked.

Attendance and Lateness: Three unexcused absences are permitted. Any unexcused absences in excess of three will result in a lowered grade. Eight or more absences, excused OR unexcused, will result in automatic failure. An official medical certificate or a note from your academic advisor must be presented in the case of an excused absence. Lateness is cumulative.

This is not a class to be late for. In fact, it's a class to be **early** for. We will begin each class promptly at 5:00 pm with relaxation and warm-up exercises. If you miss them, you will be less ready to do the work in that day's class. If you interrupt them with a late entrance, you'll be disturbing your fellow actors. **Don't be late.**

Don't come and go. It's impolite and distracts others. Once class begins, you are expected to remain in the room until the end of the class. Fill your water bottle and use the bathroom before class. Anyone who leaves will not be allowed to return and will be marked absent for the day.

If you must leave class early for any reason (and it had better be a good one, such as illness or a family emergency), let me know in advance and sit near the door so your departure won't distract anyone.

Mobile Phones must be turned off before you enter the classroom. **Laptops, tablets and other electronic devices** may not be used during class for any reason. They will never be needed for classwork. Students using any of these devices in the class will be asked to leave and will be considered absent for that day. **No exceptions.**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor and University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to

http://spain.slu.edu/academics/learning_resources.html.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at +34 915 54 58 58, ext. 204, send an e-mail to counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu, or to visit the Counseling Office (San Ignacio Hall). Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

ASSESSMENT AND SUBMISSION OF WORK: Saint Louis University - Madrid Campus is committed to excellent and innovative educational practices. In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to relevant accreditation requirements, we regularly assess our courses and programs for evidence of student learning outcomes achievement. For this purpose, we keep on file representative examples of student work from all courses and programs such as: assignments, papers, exams, multimedia presentations, portfolios, and results from student surveys, focus groups, and reflective exercises. Thus, copies of your work for this course—including exams, assignments, or submitted papers—may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. All samples of student work will be anonymized before they are used in assessment exercises. If you prefer that Saint Louis University-Madrid Campus does not keep your work on file, you will need to communicate your decision in writing to your instructor.

University Statement on Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research,

health care and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be accessed on the Provost's Office [website](#). Additionally, SLU-Madrid has posted its academic integrity policy online: <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics>. As a member of the University community, you are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions and appeals.

The professor will review these matters during the first weeks of the term. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Academic Dean of the Madrid Campus.

Title IX Statement

- Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Marta Maruri, whose office is located on the ground floor of Padre Rubio Hall, Avenida del Valle, 28 (mmaruri@slu.edu; 915-54-5858 ext. 213) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.
- If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858 ext. 230) or Sinews Multipletherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid (www.sinews.es; 91-700-1979) To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: http://spain.slu.edu/student_life/docs/SLUMadridSexualMisconductPolicy.pdf

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, students will learn to do the following:

Outcome	Activity/Assignment	Assessment
▶ Attain physical and vocal relaxation	Warm-up exercises	Monologue/scene grades
▶ Understand interplay as a chain of offers	Improvisation exercises	Scene grade
▶ Identify performable action	Exercises, scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Identify essential action	Exercises, scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Use essential action for scene “recovery”	Exercises	Scene grade
▶ Utilize real and imaginable autobiography	Scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Transcend the “given circumstances” of the play	Scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Focus on action rather than emotion	Exercises, scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Analyze scenes for beats and actions	Scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Analyze a role for through-line	Scene analysis	Submitted scene analysis
▶ Exercise vocal control for speed, volume, intensity	Exercises	Monologue/scene grades
▶ Incorporate vocal and physical “builds” into monologues and scenes	Monologue and scene work	Monologue/scene grades
▶ Incorporate “externals” into characterization and scenes	Monologue and scene work	Monologue/scene grades
▶ Respond to direction	Scene work	Monologue/scene grades
▶ Give and take constructive criticism	Scene work	Participation grade
▶ Know and follow basic theatre protocol	Reading and discussion	Participation grade
▶ Understand theatre as a collaborative medium	Scene work	Participation grade

How Scene Work is Graded

in an A performance...

- the actor shows complete, responsive attention to his or her scene partner
- the actor has done, and uses, a detailed, thoughtful scene analysis
- the actor has broken the scene into distinct units of action (beats) which are clearly discernable in performance
- the actor moves and speaks at a natural pace, making good use of pauses
- the actor's body language is expressive and carefully calibrated to the moment
- the actor is clearly relaxed and in control
- lines are memorized perfectly, without a moment of uncertainty
- the actor is consistently "in the moment" without a break in concentration
- volume is more than adequate and is well modulated
- the actor's vocal work is precise and expressive

in a B performance...

- the actor's responsiveness to his or her scene partner is mostly consistent but may be broken at certain moments
- the actor's scene analysis is thorough and usable, though it may be lacking in detail, and not consistently followed throughout the scene
- beats are mostly distinct and discernable in performance, though beat changes may be less clearly defined
- the actor is mostly in control of pace and uses pauses effectively, though some sections may seem rushed through
- lines are adequately memorized; any small deviations are well covered
- the actor is mostly "in the moment" but may at times lapse into self-conscious "performing" for the audience (i.e., "hamming")
- the actor is mostly in control of body language, though there may be some involuntary movement due to nerves
- volume is adequate; vocal work is mostly expressive, though there may be lapses

in a C performance...

- the actor is reciting dialogue, not acting
- the actor shows little or no responsiveness to his or her scene partner
- the actor rushes through his or her lines without suggesting anything behind them
- lines are inadequately memorized, and line problems distract occasionally from the scene
- the actor's scene analysis is superficial, doesn't follow the proposed pattern, and may not focus adequately on action
- the actor is completely focused on the audience, "hamming," rather than being "in the moment" of the scene
- the actor shows little control over physical and vocal performance

in a D performance...

- lines are imperfectly memorized, so that the actor's concentration is devoted almost entirely to remembering them
- there is no written scene analysis

in an F performance...

- the actor has not memorized the lines at all, and it is impossible for the scene to proceed

SYLLABUS (subject to change)

Weds. Jan. 10 Introduction to the course. Ensemble exercises.

Mon. Jan. 15 Relaxation. Ensemble exercises. Simple improvisation.

Weds. Jan. 17 Breathing and voice. Ensemble exercises. Stanislavsky and his legacy. Read *Handbook* for Monday. (It's short and reads fast.)

Sunday, Jan. 21: Last day to add a course or drop without a "W"

Mon. Jan. 22 Beats. Discuss *Handbook*. Scene analysis. Preparation.

Weds. Jan. 24 *Cold* scene assignments. *Cold* scene work: listening.

Mon. Jan. 29 *Cold* scene work: eye contact, comfort zones, body language. **Cold scene analysis due.**

Weds. Jan. 31 *Cold* scene work: using silence.

Mon. Feb. 5 *Cold* scene work: keeping it new.

Weds. Feb. 7 *Cold* Scene presentations. *Spoon River* monologue assignments.*

Mon. Feb. 12 *Spoon River* monologue work: exploring the text.

Weds. Feb. 14 *Spoon River* monologue work: vocal builds.

Mon. Feb. 19 *Spoon River* monologue work: pace, rhythm, acceleration/deceleration.

Weds. Feb. 21 *Spoon River* monologue work: physical counterpoint.

Mon. Feb. 26 *Spoon River* monologue presentation.

Weds. Feb. 28 Chekhov scene assignments. (Memorize over weekend)

Mon. March 5 Chekhov scenes: exploring the text, finding the subtext.

Weds. March 7 Chekhov scene work. Theatre protocol.

Friday, March 9: Last day to drop a course and receive a "W"

Mon. March 12 Chekhov scene work. Status moves. **Chekhov scene analysis due.**

Weds. March 14 Chekhov scene work. Using props and scenery.

Mon. March 19 Chekhov scene work.

Weds. March 21 Chekhov scene presentation. Final scene assignments. (Memorize over break)

Mon. March 26 – Fri. March 30 Semana Santa (NO CLASS)

Mon. April 2 Discuss final scene script.

Weds. April 4 Critiquing a performance. Writing a critique. Final scene work

Mon. April 9 Final scene work.

Weds. April 11 **NO CLASS – SHOW WEEK – ATTENDANCE AT PLAY (Wednesday or Thursday) MANDATORY! Attendance will be taken.**

Mon. April 16 Final scene work.

Weds. April 18 Final scene work. **Final scene analysis due.**

Mon. April 23 Final scene work. **Critical Writing Assignment due.**

Weds. April 25 Final scene work.

Mon. April 30 Final scene work.

Weds. May 2 **HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

Thurs. May 10, 15:30-18:30: **DESIGNATED FINAL EXAM TIME.** Final presentation of scenes.

An Actor's Manifesto

(things you'll hear me repeat *ad nauseum*)

Never say anything just because it's your next line.

If you're not listening, you're not acting.

There's no such thing as "sort of" knowing your lines.

The script is not the play.

The pauses are as important as the lines. Sometimes more important.

All pauses should be pregnant.

Plays live in silences.

There's no such thing as nothing happening.

Everything happens between the lines and beneath the lines.

You don't act the script. You act what's under the script.

If you always say a line the same way, change it.

(Especially if you like hearing yourself say it that way.)

Always make it new. Let it evolve.

Acting is living, not pretending. Imagine it and live it.

It's not about you.

Relax. Listen. React.

Acting is reacting.

Stop performing!

Stop "acting"!