

**THE 1351 – FUNDAMENTALS OF ACTING (FALL 2020)
T/R 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – PERFORMING ARTS CENTER #126**

Instructor: Adjunct Professor Kelsey Cooper M.A.

Office Location: Performing Arts Center #101 Office Hours: By appointment

University Email Address: Kelsey.Cooper@tamuc.edu

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbook:

***Let the Part Play You: A Practical Approach to the Actor's Creative Process* by Anita Jesse (4 Rev Sub edition). ISBN-10: 0963965522**

Most of your reading for this course will come from the above required text. You may also be required access additional materials on D2L. These will be listed in the Course Schedule

Required Viewing

Students are required to view at least one of the two University Playhouse productions during the semester in order to observe different actors at work in production. Production dates TBA

Tickets for productions are available for a nominal fee. You may make reservations by coming by the University Playhouse Box Office (PAC 101) from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Or, you may make advance reservations by phone at any time by calling 903-886-5900 or by email at playhouseboxoffice@tamuc.edu. The Box Office should also be able to direct you as to how to purchase tickets on the online system. Ticket Prices: TAMUC Students/Faculty/Staff (with Valid Student/Faculty/Staff ID) and Children under 18 - \$5.00; Senior Citizens (ages 60+) - \$10.00; Adults - \$15.00.

**Note: Please understand that viewing at least one of the performances listed is an absolute requirement of the course. Part of becoming a skilled actor is viewing other actors' successes and challenges. Clear your schedules now!*

Catalog Course Description:

This course focuses on introducing and developing the basic acting techniques of characterization, role analysis, stage movement, voice, and body control.

Course Introduction:

Welcome! This course is required of all Theatre majors and minors at Texas A&M University – Commerce and aims to teach specific fundamental techniques associated with the acting process per the Stanislavski System. The methodologies used to reach determined objectives/learning outcomes are as follows: guided discussions of readings and performances, rehearsals, workshops, performances, small group and large group activities, written and creative assignments, and quizzes.

This is a class that will be challenging, invigorating, and participatory. Please consider yourself to now be a part of a workshop rather than a classroom as it is usually understood. Begin by considering yourself to be part of a learning community where members support one another with suggestions and constructive criticism. Learning, observing, and sharing are central to this course. An attitude of awareness and openness are essential to your development and your contribution to the developments of the other members in this class. Please leave your worries, frustrations, competitiveness, and negativity outside the classroom door as much as possible. Active participation in discussion and presentation of projects within the class is not only welcome, it is an essential requirement.

Positive, helpful and constructive attitudes are also required! Presentations must be well prepared and shared with the understanding that questions and discussion will follow. The ongoing critique of performance is crucial to everyone's learning process. You should be aware that the vast majority of class time is composed of activities in which you are REQUIRED to actively participate. You will be up on your feet and moving almost every single day. *If you have no plans or interest in sincerely exploring the artistic process of acting and accomplishing significant growth as a performer, this is not the class for you.*

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this semester, the student will be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding and practical proficiency in executing the foundational principles of Stanislavski's approach to realistic acting for the stage.
2. display acquisition of effective skills in working with others via a disciplined, collaborative, professional, respectful, and productive approach throughout the rehearsal and performance processes.
3. exhibit proficiency in accepting and incorporating constructive criticism into his/her own performances, while developing the skills needed to humanely and insightfully evaluate both personal artistic efforts and the work of others.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments:

PARTICIPATION AND GROWTH (20%): *Note that attendance alone does not constitute participation.* As mentioned above, participation is vital in this class. This is an interactive environment and students must not only attend, but must also actively contribute to each class. Furthermore, the completion of miscellaneous homework assignments will also be considered part of your participation grade. There may be quite a few of these short assignments and they are all important in the development of your skills as an actor. Further, as also mentioned above, each student is required to attend one of the University Playhouse's season productions this semester and submit an official program (which has been signed by the show's house manager) as evidence of attendance/successful audience member participation.

Positive, respectful and helpful attitudes are mandatory. *I would like to make this very clear: I will make every effort to treat you with the respect that I believe you deserve. You are also expected to treat your peers and myself with that same respectful attitude.* If I believe that a student is disrespectful, I will ask that person to leave the classroom. In this event, the student will receive a zero for any activities conducted that day in class and receive a zero for his/her participation grade for the day (no matter how long the student has been in class). Disrespect, rudeness, or negative attitudes will *substantially* lower the student's participation grade. The following are other reasons you would be asked to leave the class and receive a zero for the day's activities: sleeping in class, listening to headphones, reading the newspaper, working on other assignments, coming to class under the influence of . . . anything, or otherwise causing disruption or distraction during class (this includes cell phones going off and texting in class – turn them off when you come into the classroom and don't turn them on again until you leave). Finally, it should go without saying that refusal to participate in any activity or part of an activity during class will result in a substantial and appropriate loss of participation points for the student.

Previous acting experience will not guarantee you a good grade in this course. Significant growth and a genuine attempt within the class will. This is a class that regards self-competition as a goal. You and your peers will arrive at various levels, and you will leave at different levels. However, growth from the beginning to the end of the semester can be evaluated. I challenge you to push yourself to grow and succeed. This class is concerned with developing *your* skills to the best of *your* ability. The community in the class is here to help all of us grow and expand our abilities.

Participation will be calculated daily and Growth reflected upon/tabulated at the end of the semester. Under normal circumstances, if you are scheduled to work with a partner(s) on a day you are absent, your participation grade will be reduced double the amount it normally would for an absence. Responsibility to the people you are working with is essential for success in this class. *Each student will begin with a mid-passing Participation and Growth grade of an 80.* Strong effort or lack of effort during each class and over the course of the semester as a whole

will either raise or lower that grade. Amongst other things, additional participation credit may be acquired through successful acting participation in University Playhouse productions.

**Measures Course Learning Outcomes #1, #2, and #3.*

QUIZZES (15%): There will be three short quizzes given in this class that will generally focus on the assigned readings, lectures, activities, etc. Quizzes will be comprised of matching, multiple choice, true/false, and/or short answer questions. Telling me that you were absent after the fact will not excuse you from a quiz. You must contact me before your absence, and approval for makeup quizzes will only be granted in cases of *extreme* emergencies (official documentation required). *Under normal circumstances, no make-up quizzes will be given. Students arriving late to class should be aware... once the first quiz is handed in from a student in the class, no other quizzes will be distributed. So, make sure that you arrive on time and prepared!!!* Each quiz is worth 5% of your final grade.

**Measures Course Learning Outcome #1.*

OPEN CHARACTER SCENE (15%): In pairs, students will rehearse, workshop, and perform a memorized Open Character Scene that has been selected by the instructor. The Open Character Scene will be rehearsed, workshopped, and presented as an improved performance. The length of the scenes will vary depending on the choices made by the actors but will generally run around 3 minutes. Further criteria for this assignment will be given at a later date.

**Measures Course Learning Outcomes #1, #2, and #3.*

CONTEMPORARY MONOLOGUE (20%): Each student will work individually to select and perform a memorized contemporary monologue that is approximately 2 minutes long. The performance will be rehearsed, workshopped, and presented as an improved performance. Further criteria for this assignment will be given at a later date.

**Measures Course Learning Outcomes #1 and #3.*

CHARACTERIZATION COLLAGE PRESENTATION (10%): Each student will create one characterization collage of at least ten images. The collage will be based on the character that the student is portraying in the Contemporary Monologue. The collage will be presented to the class via a planned, formal, developed, rehearsed presentation/speech by the student in which s/he utilizes effective vocal production, physical grounding, expression, etc. This is a creative project that requires you to analyze your character in abstract and concrete terms in order to yield a more truthful portrayal onstage and then take that analysis one step further to develop an effective oral presentation. This is an individual activity. More specific criteria will be discussed at a later date.

**Measures Course Learning Outcome #1.*

SCRIPTED SCENE PERFORMANCE (20%): This will consist of a 5-7 minute scripted scene performance in which you work with another person. *The scripted scene will be memorized, rehearsed, and shown as a performance for an invited audience during class at the end of the semester.* Further criteria for this assignment will be given at a later date.

**Measures Course Learning Outcomes #1, #2, and #3.*

Grading:

GRADING SCALE: The following grading scale will be used to determine all individual grades as well as the student's overall grade in the course:

A=90%-100% (Exceptional Quality Work); B =80%-89% (Good Quality Work); C=70%-79% (Average Quality Work); D=60%-69% (Below Average Quality Work); F=0%-59% (Fails to Meet Acceptable Expectations in Quality of Work)

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TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

WORKING EMAIL REQUIREMENT: It is a course expectation that you have a working email address that you check daily. There may be times that I need to contact you with important information and email is often the speediest and easiest way of doing so.

SAVING OF ASSIGNMENTS: Unfortunately, papers/projects do occasionally get misplaced. Please, for your sanity, save your work on a thumb drive, etc. Do not depend on your paper staying on the hard drive of any university computer, as it will be deleted, altered, or worse – turned in by someone else as his/her work! Be aware that it is a course expectation that you keep copies of your original and graded assignments until you receive your final grade for the semester.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Communicate, communicate, communicate! If something is occurring that is presenting you with difficulties in this class, let me know. Don't be intimidated. I am here to assist you in success and will do my best to help you achieve it. Talk to me! The easiest and most reliable way to contact me is via email. I check it fairly frequently. Please do not leave a message for me in the main department office.

Student Resources:

Department of Theatre

Performing Arts Center (PAC) 101

Phone: 903-886-5346 (Main Office)
<http://www.tamuc.edu/mmct/default.asp>

Communication Skills Center

Talbot Hall

<http://www.tamuc.edu/litlang/CSC/index.htm>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Policies and Procedures:

CLOTHING: Dress for maximum freedom and movement. You may occasionally be lying and rolling on the ground. Fair warning: the floor may or may not be spotless. Wear comfortable shoes that you can move around in or bring other shoes. Heels, boots, short skirts, tight jeans, and low-cut shirts will all restrict movement (and consequently restrict your ability to participate in class). Do not wear jewelry that will affect your freedom of movement or speech. No hats are allowed to be worn during warm-ups, activities, performances, etc. Also, please keep your hair securely away from your face during all exercises, workshops, and performances in class – it is essential that I be able to see your face during all practical acting exercises.

No one will be excused from a class activity because of clothing concerns; you are required to wear clothing that will not inhibit participation in class activities!

ATTENDANCE: You should realize the vital importance of daily student attendance for developing new skills and understanding new material. *You are expected to attend every class meeting.* I am very strict about this. *There is no way to make up a missed acting class!* If you do not attend class, you may be leaving your partner stranded if in-class time is devoted to partner work, which it often will be! Your absence will effect someone other than yourself – please be considerate. In cases of *extreme* emergency (such as hospitalization or a death in the family), you are required to contact me and any group members, partners, etc. *before* the class you must miss.

I will take roll at the very beginning of each class in order to aid me in calculating your participation grade and tracking your attendance.

The formal attendance policy for this class is as follows: You are allowed two emergency absences in this class with no attendance grading penalty (although your participation grade will still be lowered accordingly upon a missed class). Upon the third absence, the student's overall grade in the course will be reduced by 3 points. This 3 point deduction policy will continue for each subsequent absence. *Due to the mandatory daily interactive nature of this course, upon*

the sixth absence (regardless of circumstances), the student may automatically fail the course. (Please be aware that missing a scheduled appointment/coaching time with me without significant and appropriate advance notification also counts as an absence.) Keep up with your absences in this course – this is your responsibility. Do not ask me how many absences you have during the semester; I may not have that information readily available when you need it.

*for more information on the university attendance policy please go to the following link:

<http://www7.tamuc.edu/registrar/attendance.asp>.

LATE ARRIVALS: To further foster a high level of commitment—and because the work we will be doing this semester will involve intensive focus—the class will adopt the following late entry policy. Students must be on time for every class. Entering a class late or leaving early is disruptive to the flow of the class and indicative of a less-than disciplined/committed artist. Please be on time out of consideration to your learning process and the processes of others. If you are late for class, your participation grade will reflect this. The class will begin promptly at 11 a.m. If you arrive after 11:10 p.m., please do not enter the classroom (you will be marked absent regardless). If you arrive within the ten minute grace period, please do so discretely in order to avoid disrupting the class activities/discussions. *It is your responsibility to make sure that you find me after class and document your late attendance for the day—otherwise, your initial marked absence documented during roll will remain.* Also, you are expected to stay until you are dismissed from class. An early departure will also significantly reduce your participation grade. *Two late arrivals (within the ten-minute grace period) or early departures (or any combination of the two) may be counted as one absence in the class.*

CELL PHONES AND LAPTOPS: Please turn off all cell phones upon entering the classroom. Please do not check messages or engage in text messaging during class. This is disruptive to the flow of the course. Further, please take notes by hand and do not use laptops during class.

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS: All assignments must be submitted in hard copy to the instructor. While you are welcome to email me any questions that you may have, please understand that under normal circumstances, I cannot accept emailed student work at this time.

LATE WORK: *Workshops and Performances – Under normal circumstances, a missed workshop or performance may not be made up.* Late Written Work/Projects – Late miscellaneous homework counting as part of “participation” will not be accepted. Late project-based written work/projects will be deducted a full letter grade each weekday after the assigned due date. This means that if you have to be absent for some reason on the day a written assignment is due, you must give your assignment to one of your classmates to hand in for you, or you will receive a grading deduction. All assignments are due within the first ten minutes of the class period unless I specify otherwise. At 12:40 p.m. on the day that the assignment is due, your assignment will receive one letter grade reduction in credit; at 12:30 p.m. the following day another letter grade will be reduced, and so on. No late assignments will be accepted after one week past the original due date.

EXTRA CREDIT: As a general rule, there is no extra credit offered in this class – please, do not even ask. In the *rare* instance that an extra credit opportunity arises, that opportunity will be announced and equally available to all members of the class.

ADAPTATION OF ASSIGNMENTS: Due to the fluid nature of this performance-based class, some assignments/scheduling may need to be adapted. All changes will be announced prior to implementation.

FOOD, DRINK, GUM, and SMOKING: Please do not bring food or drinks into the classroom at any time (exception: you may bring bottled water with you to class). As this is a course focusing on practical performance, chewing gum is not allowed at any time during class. Students are not allowed to smoke during class time – even when in individual/partner rehearsals at an outside location.

INCOMPLETES: Under normal circumstances, an Incomplete (I or X) will not be given for a final grade in this course.

ARTISTIC CONTENT: Writers and performers have explored a wide range of themes and viewpoints, using a variety of artistic approaches. Pieces will be selected by the students and instructor in order to aid their accomplishments in relation to the course learning outcomes. The pieces chosen and presented may contain ideas, language, or depictions of behaviors/images that you personally find offensive or otherwise disturbing. *Try to concentrate on the performance rather than your opinion about the material in such an instance.* There is also a policy in this class that a performer is required to inform his/her audience that the performance piece may be offensive during the student's slate. Any class member is always welcome to leave the classroom for that particular performance and return afterward in this case.

PERFORMANCE MATERIAL: All performance material will come from plays appropriate to the unit under study. *No film scripts will be used in this class for performance purposes.* This is a course in acting for the stage – not film. Although there is significant crossover, these two art forms are different in a number of ways. Further, when choosing material, a piece found on the internet or in a monologue/scene book that is not part of an actual play script will not be acceptable. In order to work on a selection in this class, you must have access to the entire play from which the piece comes.

University Specific Policies and Procedures:

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: This course adheres strictly to the college's guidelines for Academic Dishonesty printed in the *Student's Guide Handbook*. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as your own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. All work must be new and created for this class during this semester by you. It is your responsibility to assure that you understand the definition of Academic Dishonesty at Texas A&M-Commerce. If such an instance occurs, the student will receive an automatic zero for the work in question, and I will immediately report the incident to the Head of the Department. (*You should be aware that this could result in dismissal from school without credit for the semester.*)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce
James G. Gee Library
Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

**Note: Please be aware that under no circumstances can I implement any disability accommodations without official documentation from the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services at Texas A&M University - Commerce.*

STUDENT CONDUCT: All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Student's Guide Handbook*, Policies and Procedures, Conduct.)

NON DISCRIMINATION NOTICE: Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement Texas Senate Bill – 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et.al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University–Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M– Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer. Web url: <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34Saf et yOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf> Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR will be posted on D2L and given out the first day of class.