**Acting THDN 103**

**Michelle Ong-Hendrick**

**Fall 2023**

**MW 1:30-3:30**

**Trinity Commons**

**Welcome to Acting THDN 103!**

In this class we will create an artistic ensemble and begin to examine how our bodies, emotions and thoughts can be used as tools for the stage. We will explore ways to become comfortable in rehearsal and class so that we can be creatively uncomfortable during character exploration and creation. Using the application of intimacy coaching guidelines (such as the importance of "de-Role-ing"), curiosity about the tensions between healthy boundaries and vulnerability, we will strengthen our emotional and physical muscles. What makes for a good monologue or scene? What is a good fit for you? What are your strengths? Where are you vulnerable? We will work collectively and individually on mindfulness practices, improv, various exercises, and scene work. You will have the opportunity to work on a monologue. We will rehearse and present ten-minute and one- act plays in concert with exercises from Elinor Fuchs’ “E.F.’s Visit to a Small Planet”. Our work in this studio class is collaborative, imaginative, rigorous, and joyful!

Please let me know if any of your religious observances fall on a class day. If you miss class for religious reasons, I will make sure you do not miss any important information. The class will include some reading, (electronic handouts on Moodle), some listening (podcasts), some talking (discussions of these) and some writing (3 reflection papers).

**COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS**

Our acting class is a gathering. We meet with the intention to create a space of creativity, trust, and exploration. Our mission requires us to have deep conversations about the actor’s instruments: our emotions and our bodies. Our goal is to do the work of the actor from a place of curiosity and compassion which honors our shared artistry, humanity, and stories. This will in turn create the possibility for compassion and curiosity toward the characters we will embody. Below are our agreements:

**We bring RESPECT.**

This class values the sharing and listening to other perspectives.

**We build TRUST.**

We value a space where actors can be vulnerable and courageous. This can only happen if we trust one another, so we will do the work needed to build a classroom culture of belonging.

**We have COMPASSION for and HONOR people’s varied journeys.**

Our journeys are unique and varied. We celebrate difference. We believe identifying difference is a way to embrace how we can all show up on stage as our fullest, most authentic selves without shame. We acknowledge and embrace those things that are varied in us and in turn within our characters.

**We expect and accept DISCOMFORT.**

The work of the actor is to be a mirror for humanity. This is not always easy.

**We assume the BEST about one another.**

Acting is hard. Be patient with yourself, with your colleagues and with me.

From the work of Sonya Renee Taylor’s, *The Body Is Not An Apology*

**Section One: Getting to Know You**

September 6, 11 and 13

In these classes we will begin to create our ensemble. We will thoroughly go over our antiracist classroom statement, community agreements, the syllabus and essay assignments. We will also learn about the practice of “de-Role-ing”, begin mindfulness exercises and complete a check-in with each other at the start of each class. We will play games, begin some improv work, and have discussions about acting, theater and our lives.

**Assignments this week**: Listen to one of the podcasts from our collective list and be prepared to discuss what you have learned and are curious about. Begin rehearsal on the Private Moment Exercise or the Dinner Scene Exercise, to be further explained in class (see Moodle for podcast list).

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**Section Two: Private Moment/Dinner Scene**

September 18 and 20

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will perform either the Private Moment Exercise or the Dinner Scene Exercise, to be explained in class. We will practice ‘de-roling”.

**Assignments this week**: *Read A Practical Handbook for the Actor* and be prepared to discuss what you have learned and are curious about. Begin rehearsal for the Scene without words, to be further explained in class. (See Moodle for reading pdf)

**Paper 1 due at the start of class on September 20 (see Moodle for assignment).**

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**Section Three: Scene Without Words**

September 25, 27 and October 2

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will perform and work on our Scene Without Words.

**Assignments this week**: Read *Advice to the Players* and be prepared to discuss what you have learned and are curious about. Begin rehearsal for the Neutral Scene, to be further explained in class.

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**Section Four: Neutral Scene**

October 11 and 16

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will perform and work the Neutral Scene. On October 11 we will attend a circus masterclass with Jeff Raz, in connection with Tandy Beal’s production of Joy!

**Assignments this week**: Listen to one of the podcasts from our collective list and be prepared to discuss what you have learned and are curious about.

**Paper 2 due at the start of class on October 11 (see Moodle for assignment).**

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**Section Five: The Viewpoints**

October 18 and 23

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will begin work on The Viewpoints. Wear comfortable clothing to class and be prepared to move your body.

**Assignments due this week**: Listen to one of the podcasts from our collective list and be prepared to discuss what you have learned and are curious about. Select either the Animal Exercise or Ordinary Task to work on, to be further explained in class.

**Section Six: Animal Exercise/Ordinary Task**

October 25 and 30

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will begin work performing and working the Animal Exercise or Ordinary Task.

**Assignments due this week**: Select and memorize a joke for the Mini Ring of Fire. Read *Stage Secret* from The New Yorker Magazineand be prepared to discuss what you have learned and are curious about (see Moodle for reading pdf).

**Section Seven: (Mini) Ring of Fire**

November 1 and 6

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will perform the Ring of Fire (mini). We will discuss the reading *Stage Secret* from the New Yorker on actor John Douglas Thompson.

**Assignments due this week: Read Stage Secret from The New Yorker on actor John Douglas Thompson. Select a monologue to work on.**

**Paper #3 due at the start of class on November 1 (see Moodle for assignment).**

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**Section Eight: Monologues and EF’s Visit to a Small Planet**

November 8 and 13

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will begin work on our monologues and learn about the work of Elinor Fuchs. We will apply the lessons from “EF’s Visit to a Small Planet; Some Questions to Ask a Play” to our monologue rehearsal (see Moodle for reading).

**Section Nine: Monologue Rehearsal and Presentation**

November 15 and 20

In these classes we will complete a mindfulness exercise and a check in. We will warm up with improv and games. In the second half of class, we will rehearse and then perform our monologues.

**Assignments: Watch the video of Forbes Masson, Zawe Ashton and Harriet Walter performing Jacques’ monologue “All the World’s a Stage…” from *As You Like It*. Watch the video of Ray Fearon and Damian Lewis performing Mark Anthony’s monologue “Friends, Romans, Countrymen….” from *Julius Caesar*. Respond to questions found on Moodle about these performances.**

**Section Ten: One-Act and Ten-Minute Plays**

November 27, 29, December 4 and 6

These are rehearsal days for your ten-minute or one act plays. You will work with your partner or group and sometimes with Michelle, who will rotate between the casts. On Dec 11 we will present our work to the class and celebrate our work.

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**Last Class**

December 11

In this final class we will review what we have learned and discuss how we might take our lessons into the world and future rehearsal halls. We will play all our favorite games!

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**Requirements:**

There are two Theater and Dance performances that you must attend. Pick two from this list:

1. **Joy** Directed by Tandy Beal Friday Oct 13 @7:30, Saturday Oct 14 @2 and 7:30 Goodwin Theater AAC
2. **Machinal** Directed by Teri Incampo Thursday Nov 30-Saturday Dec 2 @7:30 Goodwin Theater AAC
3. **Senior Thesis** Arouba Swaray Thursday Dec 7 @7:30 Performance Lab/Trinity Commons
4. **Last Night** Monday Dec 11 @ 5:30 Performance Lab/ Trinity Commons
5. **Trinity LaMama Showcase** Wednesday Dec 13 @4:30 and 7:30 Performance Lab/ Trinity Commons

**Specifications Grading**

In this class we will be using principles of Specifications Grading to calculate your final letter grade for the semester. Also called Contract Grading or Ungrading, these tools for evaluation center growth mindset, learning, collaboration and positive relationships between students and professors. There are many ways that teachers can approach alternative ways to grade. This class will focus on these tools:

**Contract Grading:**

You, the student, will decide how much work you wish to do for this class and by such also the grade you wish to earn. You will contract a grade for yourself and adhere to the qualifications for such a grade. We will begin by using a standardized model for this, and students will edit, with my help, according to what they need and want for the class. This contract will be created by the student, approved by me, and will specify in advance (by our third class) the requirements as well as the penalties for completing or not completing the mandate/s of your contract. This will be further explained and created in class. Contract grading models for each letter grade are below, and these will be our starting place.

**Peer Review:**

In our class, peer review will establish guidelines for what will constitute satisfactory work for the written components of the class. Groups of three will work together to write and present an essay at three different points in the semester (for a combined total of three different essays) to be further explained in class. Each group will hold the responsibility for evaluating each other, using our collaborative guidelines, and determining if a body of written work has been completed with satisfaction or will need to be edited further. We will use these questions as a starting place:

-Was your peer present for class during the time when this essay was discussed/presented?

-Had your peer done the readings necessary to be a valid contributor?

-Was your peer a good listener?

-Was your peer a good volunteer?

-What else would you like to share about this group member’s participation?

-What grade do you think your peer earned for participation in group work?

**Self- Evaluation:**

You the student will reflect on the following questions and be prepared to discuss them as we evaluate the final project.

1. Were you present for the in-class rehearsals and for the performance at Last Night?
2. Were you a good listener?
3. Were you a good volunteer? Did you make contributions to the conversations and rehearsals?
4. What else would you like to share about your rehearsal process? This can include what has prevented you from being an ideal collaborator- nobody is perfect, and we are all striving to become better students, even teachers!
5. What grade do you think you earned for the final project?

**CONTRACT MODELS**

**Requirements for a grade of A**

Class attendance is required. If you contract for an A in this course, you may miss two classes in total. If you have more than two absences, your grade for the entire class will drop by 5 points. If you miss 4 classes, it will drop by one letter grade. Attendance at three Theater and Dance events, including Last Night, is required as well.

There are 10 sections to this course. Each section is worth 5 points. To successfully earn the 5 points, you will have done the readings for the section, be prepared to participate in class discussions and be a contributor to the rehearsals. I will evaluate these sections.

There are three collective papers in this class. You will work in a group of three to create these essays. You may not use ChatGPT. They will be peer evaluated. Each paper is worth ten points.

Peer evaluation is a part of this course, and you will take it seriously. The evaluation requires honesty, courage, mindful assessment, and there is a written component. Peer evaluation is worth 4 points and will be evaluated by me.

Breakdown:

Ten Sections- 50 points (5 points each)

Papers- 30 points (10 points each)

Peer Evaluation- 12 points

Attendance at (2) Theater and Dance events, including Last Night- 8 points

**Requirements for a grade of B**

The requirements for this grade will be the same as the above, with the exception that you may opt out of one of the papers and you may miss up to three classes.

**Requirements for a grade of C**

The requirements for this grade will be the same as the above grade for an A, with the exception that you may opt out of two of the papers and you may miss up to four classes.

**A Note on D and F Grades**

I reserve the right to award a grade of D or F to anyone who fails to meet a contractual obligation in a systematic way. A grade of D denotes some minimal fulfilment of the contract, to warrant the passing of the course. An F grade is the absence of enough satisfactory work, as contracted, and does not warrant the passing of the course. Both a D and F grade denote a breakdown of the contractual relationship implied by signing any of the contracts above.

Adapted from the book *UNgrading* by Susan Blum

**ADVICE:**

Please talk to me if anything is on your mind. **I’m looking forward to a great semester learning with you!**