

Bergen Community College
Division of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Course Syllabus

Basic Acting Technique THR-110

Date of Most Recent Syllabus Revision: _____
Course Typically Offered: Fall ___ Spring ___ Every Semester X Other _____
Syllabus last reviewed by: BCC General Education Committee October 19, 2010
Curriculum Committee _____

Basic Information About Course and Instructor

Semester and Year:
Course and Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:
Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary:
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

Basic Acting Technique provides an introduction to acting methods for the novice actor, using improvisation, vocal and physical exercises, and scene study. In a supportive environment, new actors are encouraged to develop their talents and learn the basics of the craft of acting. The class culminates in the performance of scene which is open to the public
2 lectures, 2 lab 4 credits
No prerequisites and/or co-requisites.

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements of this course, students will be able to

1. Understand and apply the basic principles of acting
2. Explore various acting methods through improvisation, group projects, and scene work
3. Utilize techniques to create a character
4. Learn to analyze and break down a script into objectives and “beats”
5. Develop vocal and physical technique for acting in live theatre
6. Block and perform a scene, within the context of a rehearsal schedule similar to what is practiced in the rehearsal of a play
7. Appreciate the joy of acting as well as the discipline involved in this craft

In support of the above-mentioned goals, the course will explore various acting methods, using warm-ups, improvisation, group projects, vocal exercises, and the staging, memorization, and performance of a scene. Students also watch and evaluate each other’s work. They will learn traditional blocking techniques and experience the rehearsal of a scene over six weeks culminating in a performance open to the public.

Objectives will be assessed as follows:

1. Group projects, the solo objective activity assignment, and the final scene impart to the students the basic principles of acting for the stage, utilizing the acting methods of Constantine Stanislavsky, Sanford Meisner, and Stella Adler, among others.
2. Improvisation takes place in nearly every class exploring the different aspects of acting, such as sense memory, playing an action, connecting, creating a character, and acting in scenes of high emotion. Group projects involve ensemble work, non-verbal communication, and the dynamics of stage movement. A performance of a scene is the final goal of the course.
3. Students should be able to create a character physically and emotionally through many techniques, including studying the text, understanding the character’s life previous to the scene and his relationships with others, researching the historical context of the scene, identifying the objectives and actions, stage business, costuming the character, and playing fully to discover inner emotional life of the character.
4. Students will break down a script beat by beat in rehearsal, be given specific notes on

their work, and receive feedback from the others in the class. This beat work enables them to discover the objectives, inner monologue, and the arc of the scene.

5. A rehearsal schedule similar to one for a full-length play will guide the students in the development of their scenes, teaching them the rules, discipline, and structure of a professional rehearsal.

6. A classroom dynamic that encourages taking risks and enjoying this art form is established. Ultimately, a close and harmonious ensemble should form over the 15 week semester.

Course Content

Basic Acting Techniques introduces novice actors to the elements of acting including sense memory, stage movement, playing an action, connecting, the inner monologue, substitution, making moments of high emotion, creating a character, blocking, script analysis, beat work, and the building of a scene in a traditional rehearsal schedule. The discipline and professional decorum involved in being an actor is emphasized. Improvisation, solo assignments, group projects ultimately lead to a fully memorized scene that is presented to the public at the final class.

Technological Literacy

Technological literacy and/or information literacy is one expectation of this course. Students will be encouraged to use such technology in group projects.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

Required: At least one of the following or any collection of scenes for the stage:
“Play The Scene, The Ultimate Collection of Contemporary and Classical Scenes and Monologues”, by Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler, St. Martin’s Griffin, New York, N.Y. 2004

“Great Scenes and Monologues for Actors”, by Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler, St. Martin’s Paperbacks, 1998

"Contemporary Scenes for Student Actors", by Michael Schulman & Eva Mekler, Penguin Books, 1980

Recommended:

Acting Is Believing”, by Charles McGaw, Kenneth L. Stilson, & Larry D. Clark
 "Acting: Onstage and Off", by Robert Barton
 "Acting through Exercises", by John L. Greenback-Tedesco
 "Advice to the Players", by Robert Lewis
 "Irreverent Acting", by Eric Morris
 "Respect for Acting", by Uta Hagen
 "Speech for the Stage", by Evangeline Machlin
 "The Actor at Work", by Robert Benedetti
 "The Actor's Scene Book", by Mack Owen
 "The Craftsmen of Dionysus", by Jerome Rockwood
 "Working up a Part", by H.D. Albright

Grading Policy

The final grade in this course will be determined by a student’s overall mastery of the subject matter as evidenced in improvisations, group projects, assignments, rehearsal and performance of a scene, consistent attendance and quality class participation. There will be one mid-term exam, one final exam, 2 final projects, and weekly assignments.

Class improvisations, warm-ups, evaluation of each other's work, and assignments	40%
3 Group Projects	15%
Scene rehearsals in class *	15%
Final scene presentation **	20%
Class participation and class decorum	10%

Criteria for Evaluation: *Attendance and participation*

- consistent attendance**
- participation in warmups, improvisations, and group projects
- completed assignments
- rehearsals and performance of a memorized scene
- quality classroom responses
- overall demonstration of comprehension of the course material

90-100 = A 86-89 = B+ 80-85 = B 76-79 = C+ 70 - 75 = C 65-69 = D
E =Unofficial Withdrawal W =Official Withdrawal INC=Incomplete 0–64 = F

Class participation is an integral part of this class. Students are graded each class for their work in warmups, improvisation, solo assignments, rehearsal and performance of a scene. Their evaluations of other students work are also a part of the grade. Professional decorum,

including punctuality, preparation for assignments and scenes, and focus, are also an element of the grade.

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Students will be evaluated on attendance and participation in class using the following criteria: consistent attendance; evidence of studying text and assignments; completed daily assignments; quality classroom responses.

Bergen Community College Academic Policies:

Bergen Community College is committed to academic integrity – the honest, fair and continuing pursuit of knowledge, free from fraud or deception. Please review the college catalogue or student handbook for further information on this topic.

Bergen Community College has adopted an internal grievance procedure to provide for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by federal regulation implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and

the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. (ADA). Please review the college catalogue for further information on this topic.

Bergen Community College is committed to providing its students and employees with an academic and work environment free from sexual harassment or discrimination.

Please review the policy prohibiting sexual harassment in the college catalog.

Please review the statement on acceptable use of BCC technology in the college catalog.

Faculty hold 3 office hours per week, and as requested by students, by appointment.

Students are encouraged to seek out their faculty member for academic needs.

Student and Faculty Support Services

All students are encouraged to visit and use the BCC Library. There are particularly excellent electronic references in the area of music available to our students.

Students are encouraged to use the student support services of the college. These services include: the Writing Center, the music-computer Lab, the Tutorial Center, and the Office of Specialized Services.

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/owl
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Course Outline:

Note to Students: This Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class

Basic Acting Technique Course Outline:

Week	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1	Course Introduction Improvisations and exercises to begin to explore the basic elements of acting and to build an ensemble	1,2,7	Bring in a pillow and a mat or a blanket for the progressive relaxation exercise in week 2
2	Sense memory as a Basic Element of Acting A progressive relaxation and concentration exercise opens the class leading to improvisations involving the sense memory and its use as an acting technique Early script work to demonstrate sense memory in the text of a play	1,2,5,7	Wear comfortable clothes for a physically vigorous class Write a page or two of a detailed observation of something in life using the five senses
3	Exploration of stage movement, trust, and freeing the body Discuss the areas of the stage, blocking, and physical technique Group Project #1 focusing on non-verbal communication	1,2,3,7	
4	Playing an Action Discuss acting terminology & various methods of acting, including the Stanislavski and Meisner methods Improvisations to understand the above techniques and to learn to play strong objectives and actions Cold readings with discussion of beats and objectives	1,2,4,7	One Activity-One Objective Exercise: Prepare a solo presentation in which the actor performs a series of activities in a specific environment using props, without communication with another person(s) by phone or computer
5	Playing an Action, continued “One Activity/One Objective” assignment due More improvisations for playing an objectives, scenes of high emotion,	1,2,4,7	Observe people in a public place and how they communicate or cover their inner monologues; be prepared

	<p>and the importance of the detailed setting</p> <p>More cold readings also about this subject</p>		<p>to discuss what dynamic and physical behavior was observed</p>
6	<p>Connecting and the Meisner technique</p> <p>Improvisations demonstrating moment to moment communication, concentration, the inner monologue (subtext) and the Repetition Exercise</p> <p>Script work with open-ended scenes and longer scenes dealing with a strong subtext</p>	1,2,4,7	<p>Bring in scene books in order to select a partner and a scene for the final presentation</p>
7	<p>Creating a character</p> <p>Techniques for the development of a character are discussed and explored through improvisations and group work</p> <p>Select partners and scenes for the final presentation and draw up a floor plan and list props needed for the scene</p> <p>The first read-through of these scenes as the first step of the rehearsal process begins</p>	1,2,3,4,6	<p>Prepare an animal or real life study</p> <p>From here to the end, always bring the scenes for rehearsal</p>
8	<p>Continue work on character</p> <p>Animal or real life studies due</p> <p>Complete first read-through and discuss how to create blocking for a scene</p> <p>Outline what happens in a regular rehearsal schedule and the responsibilities of the actor</p> <p>Block more advanced open-ended scenes</p>	1,2,3,4,6	<p>Bring rehearsal props for the scenes for the next class</p>
9	<p>Physical technique & stage movement</p> <p>Group Project #2</p> <p>Block the scenes</p> <p>Begin to see all of them in the early stages of rehearsal, emphasizing blocking and how it relates to the relationships and the objectives of the characters</p>	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	<p>Rehearse outside of class</p>
10	<p>More advanced improvisations dealing with organic blocking involving business, the use of props, and "picturization"</p> <p>See the rest of the scenes and rehearse</p>	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	<p>Begin to memorize lines and blocking</p>

	again using the instructor's notes and the students' observation to improve the scenes Discover the beats within the scenes		
11	Vocal workshop to work on strong vocal technique Scene rehearsal continues and advanced improvisations	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	Be off book for the scenes
12	Scene work and second presentation of scenes with more notes No books for the scenes	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	Rehearse outside of class Bring in suggestion of costumes
13	More scene work Group project #3 – blocking scenes from “Story Theatre”	3,6,7	Bring all costumes for the dress rehearsal
14	Dress rehearsal of the scenes with all final props and costume pieces	6,7	Rehearse outside of class Bring a copy of scenes for the instructor in order to assist the lighting technician who will be manning the lighting board during the final performance
15	Presentation & evaluation of the scenes open to the public	1,6,7	