

## **ACTING FOR FILMMAKERS DC 349 – Spring Quarter 2016**

DC 349/449

CDM Building 243 Wabash - Room 924

Thursday 5:45 – 9:00 pm

Instructor: Lee Madsen

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Office Hours: TBA (email is the best way to reach me)

### **Course Description from the Catalog:**

This course is designed to provide students who plan to work with actors in any aspect of cinema or interactive media, with a foundation in the actor's craft. This will be a hands-on, practical class in which all students will be required to participate fully in the exercises and scene work. Topics to be covered include: relaxation, concentration, trust, listening, sensory work, physical actions, improvisation, imagination, needs, circumstances, objectives, obstacles, scene analysis and scene work. The course will culminate in a staged scene to be presented in class. In addition, an introduction and overview of some of the major actor training techniques and vocabulary will be covered.

### **Prerequisites:**

None

### **Course Philosophy:**

A deep understanding of the actor's craft and process is an invaluable asset to screenwriters, directors, and any aspiring filmmaker or craftsperson who wishes to master the art of cinematic storytelling. The best way to learn how to direct actors and to harness actors' creativity as a contributing element in one's own work, is learn about acting itself. The best way to learn about acting is by doing it. This includes an experiential groundwork of exercises designed to develop one's abilities to create the conditions in which the actor's work can thrive. These include relaxation, concentration, trust, listening, and technical work on the breath, the voice, the body, the face, as well as the imagination. The course will expose students to several of the most influential techniques which have informed acting technique over the past century and have influence countless screen actors.

### **Course Objectives:**

To gain a practical understanding of the following:

- A practical understanding of acting and directing terminology

- Improvisation
- Script and scene analysis for the actor and the director (Actor's and Director's Homework)
- Building a character
- Personalization
- Using the Rehearsal Process for Discovery and Deepening of Character and Conflict/Tension

**Required Text:**

Acting: The Basics by Bella Merlin. Additional hands as provided by instructor.

**Recommended Texts:**

Ball, William - A Sense of Direction

Stanislavski, Constantin - An Actor Prepares, Building a Character, Creating a Role  
Directing Actors

Meisner, Sanford & Dennis Longwell - Creating A Role

**Course Requirements and Policies:**

This will be a challenging and intensive course. If you give it your full commitment you will learn a great deal about acting, directing, cinema, and the creative potential of cinematic storytelling and also have fun in the process. Here is what I will expect from you:

Get to class on time.

Come to class prepared and complete readings in advance.

Participate in all in--class activities and discussions.

Challenge yourself to overcome blocks and inhibitions.

Respect one another.

Do not interact with any electronic devices during class without prior permission.

Do not consume food and beverages during class, other than hydration from a water bottle.

Share your honest opinions but also be prepared to justify and analyze them.

Commit yourself fully to the projects and assignments.

Students are required to rehearse with partners outside of class for a minimum 30 minutes per week for final 6 weeks of class.

**Recommended:** Keep a private journal during this class to record your discoveries.

**Syllabus or Content Changes:** This syllabus is subject to change as necessary during the quarter. If a change occurs, it will be addressed during class, posted under Announcements in D2L and sent via email.

### **ATTENDANCE and LATENESS POLICY:**

Because this course is scheduled to meet only once a week for over 3 hours, each session will be broken into two parts. We will break for 15 minutes approximately mid-way through the session. Roll will be called (or a roll sheet passed around) twice: at the beginning of the class and after the break. I will inform you of the time we will resume. It is your responsibility to be back in class by that appointed time.

Each time you are not present during roll or when the roll sheet is passed around, you will receive a half--absence. Each student will be allowed one full absence (or two half--absences) during the quarter with no negative impact on his or her grade. **All subsequent absences will result in a grade reduction of 10 points for a full absence and 5 points for each half--absence deducted from your participation grade.** However, any student who has perfect attendance at the end of the term will receive 5 points added to his or her participation grade.

Being absent is designated as not showing up for class, showing up after roll has been called, or leaving class while class is still in session. Please take care of personal needs before class begins, during the break, or after class. If attendance and lateness are not problematic issues in the class (as I hope will be the case), and it is clear that all are present, I may dispense with roll and/or sign--in sheets at that time.

**Assignments and Exercises:** Assignments must be completed by the date to which they are assigned in the syllabus. Consequently, late work will not be accepted without prior consent of the instructor. Late work, if accepted, will be marked down significantly and under no circumstances will late work ever be accepted more than one week past due.

**Examinations:** Students who do not take exams during the regularly scheduled time will receive a failing grade for exams unless they have contacted the instructor in advance to arrange for a make--up exam.

### **School Policies**

**Online Instructor Evaluation:** Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the

learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over two weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation.

**Email:** Email is the primary means of communication between faculty and students enrolled in this course outside of class time. Students should be sure their email listed under "demographic information" at <http://campusconnect.depaul.edu> is correct.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>.

**Plagiarism:** The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

**Incomplete:** An incomplete grade is given only for an exceptional reason such as a death in the family, a serious illness, etc. Any such reason must be documented. Any incomplete request must be made at least two weeks before the final, and approved by the Dean of the College of Computing and Digital Media. Any consequences resulting from a poor grade for the course will not be considered as valid reasons for such a request.

### **Assignments and Grading Scale:**

Additional assignment requirements and expectations will be provided in class and/or posted on D2L.

<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Scene #1 (including written work)	20
Scene #2 (including written work)	20
Midterm	20
Misc. Written Assignments	10

Participation, Attendance, and Preparation 30

**TOTAL** 100

A = 100-93, A- = 92-90, B+ = 89-88, B = 87-83, B- = 82-80, C+ = 79-78, C = 77-73, C- = 72-70,

D+ = 69-68, D = 67-63, D- = 62-60, F = 59-0.

A indicates excellence, B indicates good work, C indicates satisfactory work, D indicates unsatisfactory work, and F is a failure to demonstrate an understanding of course concepts.

## **DC 349 - Acting for Filmmakers - Spring 2016**

### **Course Schedule**

#### **Class #1 - March 31st**

Course Intros & Overview

What is acting? What is good acting?

Differences between stage & screen

Acting Fundamentals: Relaxation, Concentration, Listening, Trust, Doing, Objective, and Obstacles.

Introduction to Improvisation.

Assignment: Read chapter 1 & 2 of Acting: the basics & write a one-page summary (details below).

\*Find a partner. Find a couple 2-4 page scenes from a movie, tv show, or play with characters 'close' in your age range. We will chose which scene you'll rehearse and perform in class for your Scene 1.

#### **Class #2 - April 7th**

Due: One-page summary of Chapter 1 & 2 of Acting the basics.

Brief Overview of Major Training Techniques: Stanislavski and his system. Sensory Work and The Use of Memory and Substitutions. Strasberg's Method. Stella Adler's interpretation of Stanislavski.

## Physical Warm Up & Acting Exercises

Table Read scenes and chose which will be your Scene #1.

Assignments: Read chapter 3 & 4 of Acting the basics & write a One-page summary (details below). Rehearse with your partner once outside of class.

### **Class #3 - April 14th**

Due: One-page summary of Chapters 3 & 4 of Acting the basics

Building a Character: The Actor's Homework. Scene Analysis and Individual Preparation.

Trust, listening and The Meisner technique.

Acting Warm Up - The Word Repetition Game.

Table Read - Rehearse Scenes.

Assignments: Read chapter 5 & 6 of Acting the basics & write a one-page summary (details below). Actor's Homework #1. A written work on the character, circumstances, and analysis of the play (screenplay) and scene you are working on - Due April 21st on D2L.

### **Class #4 - April 21st**

Due: One-page summary of Chapters 5 & 6. Actor's homework #1,

Midterm Review

Acting warm up - The Word Repetition Game

IMPROVISATION

Perform Scenes

Assignments: Write one-page reflection paper on The Word Repetition Game. Also, read the Glossary Terms in Acting the basics (some terms will be in the Mid-Term).

### **Class #5 - April 28th**

Due: Reflection paper on The Word Repetition Game.

Mid Term: Acting Terms and Historical Figures

IMPROVISATION.

Assignment: Find a couple more 2-4 page scenes with your partner. Make 3 copies and bring to next class (third copy is for me).

### **Class #6 - May 5th**

Due: You and your partner need 2 new scenes to choose from and you should bring 3 copies (third one is for me).

Rehearsal Techniques and The Director's Toolkit for Working with Actors. What actors need to prepare for a role and a scene. How directors guide the process.

Table Read Scene choices.

Choose Directors for scenes. \*Optional Camera Coverage - You can shoot the scene!

Assignments: Final Actors Homework: A written work on the character, circumstances, and analysis of the play (screenplay) and scene you are working on - Due June 2nd.

### **Class #7 - May 12th**

Discussion of Active Verbs.

Auditions.

The Word Repetition Game and The Knock

Exploratory Rehearsal - Table Read.

Assignments: Practice with partner

### **Class #8 - May 19th**

Adapting acting technique to the camera and the demands of the set.

Screening: Micheal Caine on Acting

## IMPROVISATION

Exploratory Rehearsal - Table read scenes

Assignments: Practice with partner & Director

### **Class #9 - May 26th**

First staging of your scene. \*Optional Camera Coverage - You can shoot the scene!

Hitting the mark. Finding the light.

Assignments: Practice with partner & Director

### **Class #10 - June 2nd**

Final/Revised Scene Presentation & Critique.

\*Optional Camera Coverage - You can shoot the scene!

Self evaluations.

## **OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Acting the basics** - Three One-page Summary Papers on the Text, Acting: the basics. The summary should be a personal response to the material. Assignments can also be in the form of a 2-5 minute video response, or personal visual representation - drawing, collage or graphic design.

Summary #1 on Chapters 1 & 2 Due: **April 7th**

Summary #2 on Chapters 3 & 4 Due: **April 14th**

Summary #3 on Chapters 5 & 6 Due: **April 21st**

**Scene #1 - April 21st** - You will be assigned *to find* a 2-person scene from a screenplay or stage play to work on with a partner/group. You will present it to the class twice: once as a first/exploratory rehearsal - **April 28th** - and again as a staged scene - **May 5th**. You will also do your own scene analysis/actor's homework as an actor. These should be 3--5 pages in length. A good resource to find scripts on the internet is: [www.script-orama.com](http://www.script-orama.com)

**MidTerm Exam – April 28th** - This will test your knowledge gained from the readings,



lectures, and practical exercise. The Exam will emphasize acting terms, concepts, training techniques, and major historical figures.

**Actor's Homework** – For both scenes you will be required to submit “Actor's Homework” assignments which is written work on the character, circumstances, and analysis of the play/scene you are working on. A template will be provided which should be used as starting point to develop your own interpretation for character and scene work. **Due April 21st:** Actor's Homework Scene #1. **Due May 19th** Actor's Homework Scene 2 (Final Scene).

**Final Scene** -- You will participate as an actor in at least one final scene. This scene will go through a more extensive preparation rehearsal process and will be shown at three times in class: **May 19th** - first an exploratory rehearsal, then as a first staging - **May 26th**, and then as a final/revised staging on the Final Day of Class - **June 2nd**. Students will also submit actors homework per guidelines provided by the instructor.