



**Spring 2019: Improvisation for Comedic Storytellers II**

**Instructor:** Matt Hovde

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**Class Time & Day:** Tuesdays, 1:30pm - 4:45pm, Room 207

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 12pm - 1:30pm (Second City Training Center, 4th floor)

**Course Description and Overview:**

Strong character work is essential to creating memorable comedic content. This course gives students a wealth of tools to create a variety of cinematic characters, and will build confidence in improvising them. Additionally, the course will help students understand how to describe characters for written treatments common in the business. They will continue to build on the fundamental skills of collaboration, play, and active listening while bringing more of themselves into their filmmaking.

This is an experiential class - meaning the skills are best learned in action. There will be discussion on the theory behind the fundamentals, but to learn creation one must...create. The environment is supportive, constructive, and playful, and feedback is often offered in real-time. We will put an emphasis on process as opposed to product, so while laughter is our currency, there is no pressure to "be funny." Instead, we will practice and develop skills in how to use this art form to explore the human condition through a series of theatrical exercises, scenes, and games. The approach will honor the original work developed by Viola Spolin while incorporating modern technique and perspective.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Create characters from a variety of starting points and techniques, including external and internal foci
- Demonstrate sustainable characters that are based in truth and have a three-dimensional emotional life
- Distinguish between a character's point of view, the actor's point of view, and the scene's point of view
- Recognize the difference between roles and behaviors in scenes

- Develop a repertoire of characters that can be integrated into scenes

**Textbooks:** There is no required textbook needed for this course.

## **D2L**

You will be using D2L for this course. To log on, go to:

<https://d2l.depaul.edu/d2l/home/650286> and enter using your campus connect login and password. Once you are logged on, click on the course number link and you will find links to the syllabus, weekly assignments, etc.

## **Grading:**

Class Attendance and Participation:	30 points
Assignments:	40 points
Final In-Class Demonstration and Paper	30 points

A 100-93

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D 69-60

F 0-59

## **Attendance:**

In class attendance and participation is mandatory for this class. An unexcused absence will result in a reduction in the overall grade. Two instances of tardiness (arriving more than 15 minutes late or departing before class is finished) will count as one absence. If you are ill and contagious, please do not come to class, but you must notify the instructor prior to the class in order for that absence to be excused. You get one of those, if needed. If you have longer term health issues, please reach out to the Dean of Students office to discuss options. Excuses provided after the fact will not be accepted.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1:** Ensemble, Introduction to Character, Emotion

Exploration of:

Defining Character

Role vs Behavior

Emotion  
Subtext  
Scene skills diagnostic

**Week 2:** External Characters, TV/Film Character Bibles

Body Part  
Adjective  
Energy  
Mirror  
TV Pilot Character breakdown

**ASSIGNMENT:** Write a character breakdown of an existing TV show. (10 points)

**Week 3:** External Characters Pt 2

Appearance  
Lay Ons  
Props  
Rules  
Voices

**Week 4:** Internal Characters, TV/Film Ensembles

Playing as Self  
Exaggerating self  
Status  
Examine TV/Film show ensembles

**IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT:** Create an ensemble show and improvise scenes from it. (10 pts)

**Week 5:** Internal Characters Pt 2

More Status  
Wants/Needs  
Emotion Review

**Week 6:** Point of View

Satire  
POV - author, character, scene  
I believe (or not)

Monologue Structure

**ASSIGNMENT:** 2 Written Character Monologues (10 pts)

**Week 7:** Genre

Tropes

Physicality

Cliche

Breaking Cliche

**Week 8:** Persona Characters

Characters with a leading thing

Characters you know

Characters you love/hate

Characters over time

“Call In” style games

**ASSIGNMENT:** “Call In” character recording (10 points)

**Week 9:** Flex and Reps.

Review concepts

Extra reps in areas of need

Pushing your range

Starting Scenes

**Week 10:** Putting it all together, Final Demonstration

Additional Character reps

Final Demonstration (to be outlined by Instructor)

**Assignments (40% of final grade)**

There are four assignments that must be completed, each worth 10 points. They must be turned in before the next class begins. Late submissions will not be accepted. Documents must then be saved as a PDF and submitted to the corresponding D2L Dropbox link. If there is a communication or problem with D2L, please inform instructor immediately to rectify.

**Attendance, Collaboration and Participation (30% of final grade)**

Attendance has been covered. Collaboration is contingent to your commitment to the process and working successfully with your peers. Lack of participation is not acceptable. Sharing your voice by asking questions and supporting your peers during improvisation group work engages

you in the process as an active participant. Negative, destructive, or disrespectful behavior toward the ensemble or individuals will result in a lowered grade. Feedback on these issues will be offered in real time.

### **Final Term Project (30% of final grade)**

There are two components to your final project:

1. An in-class demonstration outlined by the instructor during week 10 (15 points)
2. A written assignment that will be due the day of the scheduled final exam (there will be no final exam). (15 points)

### **Changes to the Syllabus**

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

### **Online Course Evaluations**

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 three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Please see <https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/Pages/online-teaching-evaluations.aspx> for additional information.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the university's academic integrity policy. More information can be found at

<https://offices.depaul.edu/oaafaculty-resources/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx>.

### **Academic Policies**

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar.

Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at:

<http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/PoliciesandProcedures.aspx>

### **Original Work**

All assignments are to be completed by students in their own words and voice. You may not copy from the internet or any other source. Plagiarism is never acceptable, and in the world of comedy it is especially egregious, as the whole point is to develop your own comedic voice. If your work is found to be taken from someone else, you will earn a zero for that assignment and must meet with the instructor before continuing the class.

## **Withdrawal**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

## **Retroactive Withdrawal**

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter  
Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter  
Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter  
Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

## **Students with Disabilities**

DePaul University is committed to ensuring equal access to its educational and extracurricular opportunities for students with disabilities. The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) offers reasonable academic accommodations and services to support our students. We also serve as a resource to the many university departments that have a responsibility to accommodate students.

Please see <https://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/about/departments/Pages/csd.aspx> for Services and Contact Information.