**FILM 281-501 (25696) – The Art of Screen Acting**

Winter 2019-2020

Tuesday 1:30-4:45

CDM 924

Instructor: Robert Puccinelli (rpuccine@depaul.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:45-6:15 Classroom or CDM 515

**Summary of Course**

This course will examine the role of acting, actors, and actor-director collaboration in the development of narrative cinema. The screen demanded a new approach to acting that differed markedly from the theatrical traditions that preceded it. Seminal practitioners of actor training such as Constantin Stanislavski and his American interpreters Lee Strasberg, Sanford Meisner, and Stella Adler and their students (such as Brando, Pacino, DeNiro, Hoffman, and Duvall) have had an incalculable influence on how screen actors prepare for a role and work with directors. This course will survey the major acting techniques and approaches, examine major films as case studies, and explore contemporary approaches to screen acting and actor-director collaboration in the cinema. This course carries Liberal Studies Arts and Literature Domain Credit.

This particular section of the course will have the following additional agenda:

From Marilyn Monroe to Meryl Streep to Viola Davis; from Marlon Brando to Daniel Day Lewis to Timothee Chalamet – nothing in cinema connects with the audience as directly as acting. The best way to understand the secret of acting is not simply to study it, but to do it.

Because this session of FILM 281-501 will be taught by an actor, not only will you watch and discuss the greatest actors of all time and the secrets of their charisma, you will also apply what you observe. You will learn how to create presence onstage and onscreen and how to communicate best with actors by being one.

Kim Gordon said, “People pay money to see others believe in themselves.” We will create a safe space free from judgment designed to help you reach your potential. Acting is empowering, and through the various acting exercises taught each week, you will build confidence in yourself by taking chances as you learn from the freedom the art of acting grants its practitioners.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to explain, in well-written prose, variations in acting technique and the influence the form has on the art of narrative cinema. Students will understand the psychological, physical, social factors that influence the practice of acting. Writing in the class focuses on students’ understanding of Acting Technique, Key Practitioners, and On-screen Performance.

Students will be able to comment directly on how the acting form relates to the content that appears on screen. They will learn the expectations of acting in film, explore what makes a “good or bad” acting performance, and examine how the acting choices influence audience interpretation of character and the character’s intent. This framework will allow them to delve deeper into nuanced impact on character, tension, story, and theme. We will examine these relationships through in-class discussions, short writing assignments, and a longer final paper. To truly understand the craft, students will learn the techniques of global practitioners and utilize them during lab sessions. Students will prepare their own theatrical scenes which they will present to the class as actors. They will also direct scenes and craft a short film utilizing the knowledge they’ve gained to create a permanent record of their work.

Students will be able to assess the formal aspects of their subject and put these qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings. To better equip them in their analysis of Acting on Screen students will learn a mix of common cinematic and literary language in addition to specialized filmmaking and acting vernacular. This language will be employed in class discussions, exams, and papers.

Where appropriate, students will be able to consider the original audience to witness a work of art and consider how their expectations differ from our own. This examination may include the elements of form, rhythm, and style as well as the visual materials and aesthetics of its time. Students will be able to articulate a subject as well as write about it, explaining how narrative and aesthetic elements comprise a particular style of acting. Students will learn about the context in which each performance was crafted and how this context affected its original reception. Students will also learn about the craft of acting, and how it has evolved over time and the influences shaping the art form today.

**Prerequisites**

There are no required pre-requisites for this course.

**Technical Requirements**

Students should have an understanding of basic computer functions such as email, word processing, and general web usage. Students will be required to capture video of themselves via computer, camera, or cell phone and upload this video to the web via YouTube or other video hosting client. Students will be required to edit performances.

**Grading Policy**

*Assignments and Grading Scale:*

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

ASSIGNMENTS:

Midterm – 100 pts.

Monologue – 100 pts.

Script Analysis – 100 pts.

Final Paper – 100 pts.

Preparation and Participation in Discussions and Acting Exercises – 100 pts.

Film Directing – 100 pts.

Acting Performance – 100 pts.

*Evaluation - Students work will be evaluated on the following criteria:*

• Participation and Acting Exercises: Proper and timely completion of assignments, discussions, and exercises based on given instructions.

• Essay: Proper and timely completion based on given instructions. Proper spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Exhibited knowledge and research on assigned subject matter and material. Fluidity and cohesive nature of writing.

FINAL EXAM: 2:30-4:45 on Tuesday March 17th

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.

DROP DATES

The first day of class is Tuesday January 7th. The last day to add a class is Friday January 10th. The last day to drop classes with no penalty is Friday January 17th. School closed on Monday January 20th. The last day to withdraw is Friday February 21st. The last class day for this class is Tuesday March 10th. Grades posted on March 27th  (or earlier).

**Textbooks and Printed Resources**

Required Text:

*Acting: The Basics* by Bella Merlin

**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:

1. Come to class excited and ready to think and participate.

2. Complete Readings in advance or concurrent to the lecture.

3. Participate in all activities and discussions.

4. Use respectful language.

5. Be open to challenging and different ideas and points of view.

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

7. Commit yourself fully to the projects and assignments.

8. Learn the art of collaboration with your peers.

9. Keep tabs on all due dates and assignments.

10. In cases of emergency, follow up with me as soon as possible.

**STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPATION**

The course will be broken into weekly online Modules. Each module will have a variety of content released at the beginning of that week. Materials and assignments can be completed at your discretion but must be delivered by the assigned date.

Because we will be meeting each Tuesday, you will acquire your discussion points through your active participation during class.

Assignments and Exercises: Assignments must be completed by the date they are due. 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.

**Brief Overview of Major Assignments**

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

**Discussion Responses** - These will be short discussion prompts that relate to our lecture reading materials. Prepare the material due each week. You will acquire your discussion points through your active participation and your familiarity with the material you’ve studied*.*

**Final Paper** – Students will be responsible for a final paper thoroughly examining the body of work and artistic technique of an established Actor.

The paper will analyze multiple works of the selected practitioner, the training and techniques utilized in their creation and the evolution of the artist’s skillset over the course of their career. Students are expected to comment on what makes these practitioner’s exemplary in their field and how their techniques enrich the final product on screen. For example, what does the actor use to bring the character to life beyond just reading the line and performing the required action? What limitations or restrictions may have driven or hindered the actor/director from achieving a particular performance? Analysis should be based on course readings, in class discussions and personal insights.

The paper must be between 5-7 pages double-spaced. Students must list and credit all sources.

**Participation** - A large portion of this class will be a collaborative exploration of what it means to be an actor through interactive exercises and games. Similarly, we will spend a significant amount of time watching and analyzing films in order to discuss the acting and directing techniques used. As such, active participation in our discussions and forums is necessary. Active participation means talking, interacting, collaboration and providing input.

**Midterm, Directing, Acting Performances** – Information regarding above assignment requirements and expectations will be provided in class and posted on D2L.

**Arts and Literature Learning Domain**

DC 250 is an A&L course and our learning objectives will focus on the A&L Learning Outcomes detailed in the Liberal Studies document at the end of this syllabus.

**Online Teaching 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 three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect at <http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>

**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 faculty council rules on the Academic Integrity Policy

**Plagiarism:**

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course, as well as all other courses in which independent research or writing play a vital part in the course requirements, 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 a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report, or other 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.

**University Support and Resources**

DePaul University provides a variety of resources for students to succeed in coursework. These resources can be found in the CONTENT section of our D2L page under STUDENT RESOURCES.

**Resources for Students with Disabilities**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at:

Student Center, LPC, Suite #370

Phone number: (773)325.1677 Fax: (773)325.3720 TTY: (773)325.7296

**Arts and Literature Learning Domain**

**Students who successfully complete the Arts and Literature requirement will be able to:**

* **Explain, in well-written prose, what a work of art is about and/or how it was produced**
	+ - **Articulate and explain the “content” of that work and/or its methodology of production.**
* **Comment on the relationship between form and content in a work.**
	+ - **How does the 14-line sonnet both enable and inhibit its practitioner, for example?**
		- **What are the generic expectations of a particular form?**
		- **How does an artist complicate, enrich, or subvert such expectations?**
* **Assess the formal aspects of their subject and put those qualities into words, using, when appropriate, specialized vocabulary employed in class and readings.**
* **Contextualize a work of art.**
	+ - **Do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre.**
		- **Contextualize a work of art in terms of contemporaneous aesthetic, social, or political concerns, discussing how these might shape the work’s reception and how that reception might differ amongst various peoples and historical periods.​**