FILM 281 The Art of Screen Acting

"The actor must recreate his work, each time he repeats his part, with sincerity, truth, and directness. It is only on that condition that he will be able to free his art from mechanical and stereotyped acting, from "tricks" and all forms of artificiality. If he accomplishes this, he will have real people and real life all around him on the stage, and living art which has been purified from all debasing elements."

Konstantin Stanislavski

Course Format: ONLINE
Course Duration: Monday, March 29th – Friday, June 11th
            LAST DAY TO ADD CLASSES: MONDAY, APRIL 5TH
            LAST DAY TO DROP CLASSES: (with no penalty) FRIDAY, APRIL 9

Academic Calendar: https://academics.depaul.edu/calendar/Pages/default.aspx

Contact Information

Instructor: JoAnne Zielinski, Associate Professor, School of Cinematic Arts
Office: Virtual
Email: zielinski@cdm.depaul.edu
Email Response: I will respond to your email within 24 hours.
Office Hours: By appointment. For your convenience, rather than hold weekly office hours, I am accepting individual appointments. Use the Zoom link found course homepage for all appointments.
Phone: 312-362-5132
Preferred Contact: via email first

Course Catalogue Description

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.

Arts and Literature Domain 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.

Arts and Literature Learning Domain Objectives
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.

- o Do so with respect to other works of art in terms of defining its place within a broader style or genre.
- o 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.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, however, this is an online course. You will need at minimum:

- o frequent access to a computer that connects to the Internet;
- o a working e-mail account that you check regularly (and that is updated in Campus Connection);
- o 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 another video hosting client;
- o access to a software suite such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Power Point). If you do not have access to Office, you can download a free, open source alternative such as Open Office (http://www.openoffice.org/) that will give you the same basic functionality;
- o and, the ability to view video files, either in a streaming (Flash) or downloadable (mp4, mov.) format.

Course Policies

In addition to DePaul University course policies (see student handbook), the following special policies will apply to this course.

STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPATION

Weekly Modules
The course will be broken into weekly online Modules. Materials and assignments can be completed at your discretion but must be delivered by the assigned due date as indicated in the syllabus.

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.

Changes to Syllabus
This syllabus is subject to change as necessary throughout the term. If a change occurs, I will post it under NEWS on the course homepage.

Required Text
Merlin, Bella, (2018) *Acting The Basics,* New York: Routledge.

Recommended Texts

Bruder, M. Cohn, L.M., Olnek, M., Pollak, N., Previto, R., Zigler, S., (1986) *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*, New York: Vintage.
Caine, M., (1990) *Acting in Film: An Actor's Take on Movie Making*, New York: Applause.
Esper, W., & Dimarco, D., (2008) *The Actor's Art and Craft: William Esper Teaches the Meisner Technique*, Anchor.
Linklater, K. (2006) *Freeing the Natural Voice,* London: Nick Hern Books.
Shurtleff, M. (1978) *Audition,* Walker Publishing Company.
Weston, J., (2003) *The Film Director's Intuition,* Studio City: Michael Weise Productions.
Weston, J., (1999) *Directing Actors,* Studio City: Michael Weise Productions.

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS

Information regarding assignment requirements and expectations will be posted on D2L.

- o **Discussion Board Responses and Required Reading**
  You will be required to write discussion prompts that relate to the lecture and reading materials at four times throughout the term. Prompts are due within the timeframe they are assigned. You will acquire your discussion points through your active participation and your familiarity with the material you've studied*.* Read the Discussion Board Assessment prior to writing a prompt.

- o **Quizzes**
  Quizzes will test your knowledge of key concepts from the Engagement Activities.

- o **Case Study Assignment**
  Based on Merlin's description of the four socio-cultural identities that actors adopt: the magician, storyteller, healer and social changer, write a 2 - 3 page case study about yourself within that context as if you were an actor. Would you consider yourself a magician, storyteller, healer or social changer? Or, choose your favorite actor and explain how you would categorize them as either a magician, storyteller, healer or social changer. Use cited examples from their body of films.

- o **Midterm Exam**
  The midterm exam will cover all Engagement Activities and quizzes from modules 1 – 5. A study guide can be found in Module 6 under Engagement Activities. This exam will use the Respondus/LockDown/Monitor Browser proctoring application. Respondus Monitor is a proctoring application that builds on the LockDown Browser using a webcam to assist with the academic integrity of online exams. When this feature is enabled for a quiz or exam, students are required to use a webcam and microphone with LockDown Browser to ensure that the testing environment facilitates academic honesty. After the exam is complete, instructors have access to a report that shows any students with any flagged issues. Instructors are able to review the reports and associated recordings to determine if a violation occurred.

  - Assessments are displayed full-screen and cannot be minimized.
  - Browser menu and toolbar options are removed, except for Back, Forward, Refresh and Stop.
  - Prevents access to other applications including messaging, screen-sharing, virtual machines, and remote desktops.
  - Printing and screen capture functions are disabled.
  - Copying and pasting anything to or from an assessment is prevented.
  - Right-click menu options, function keys, keyboard shortcuts and task switching are disabled.

- An assessment cannot be exited until the student submits it for grading.

- ○ **Waiting for an Uber Acting Assignment**
  In this assignment you will improvise a scene alone, with no dialogue, based on one of the two scenarios outlined on D2L. This exercise will demonstrate your understanding of the key concepts of given circumstances, emotional preparation.

- ○ **Journaling**
  The basis of this class is understanding the art of screen acting which has a foundation in experiential learning. This class requires you to engage mentally, physically, and emotionally, while turning off that part of your brain that "judges" and "analyzes" what you do. In order for you to fully comprehend the process you are learning; you must take time to *engage* that part of your brain that can sift through and analyze the process. This reflection, or journaling, will bring you to a greater level of understanding of how an actor approaches physical and vocal training and your own process toward appreciating the craft.

- ○ **Everyday Action Exercise**
  In this assignment you will improvise a scene alone, with no dialogue, based on an everyday action outlined on D2L. This exercise will demonstrate your understanding of the key concepts of script analysis, including: given circumstances, action/ intention and obstacles.

- ○ **Monologue Performance and Scene Analysis (Final Exam Choice #1)**
  There are two parts to this assignment, performing a monologue and monologue analysis. You will be choosing a monologue from a film script or play that is close to your age range and type. You will be creating a creating a character biography and analyzing the given circumstances of the scene as outlined in Module 9 under Engagement Activities. This exercise will demonstrate your understanding of the key concepts learned throughout the quarter in performance and script analysis.

- ○ **Actor/Director Technique Final Paper (Final Exam Choice #2)**
  Students will be responsible for a 5 – 7 page final paper thoroughly examining the body of work and artistic technique of an established actor or director. 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. 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 research, course readings, discussion board posts and personal insight.

Course Content

The content, lectures, and discussion in this course will engage deeply with films which may include excessive violence, oppressive language, misogyny, etc. I will note especially graphic/intense content and will do my best to foster a classroom in which we can relate courageously, compassionately, and contemplatively with difficult and important content each week.

Course Assessment

The course is divided into ten (10) modules. Assignments are assigned an individual point value totaling 1,000 points for the quarter. By completing different activities in each module, students earn points.

Learning activities for the entire quarter include the following:

Engagement Activities	Percentage of your Grade
Discussion Board Posts check points (4 check points @ 100 points each in modules 1, 4, 7, and 9)	10%
Case Study Assignment	10%
Quizzes	10%
Midterm	15%
Everyday Action Exercise	10%
Waiting for an Uber	10%
Journaling	5%

Monologue Analysis/Performance (Choice 1 of 2)	30%
Actor/Director Technique Research Paper (Choice 2 of 2)	30%

Grade Scale

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.

Class Participation
Students who are unable to participate in class due to an emergency or personal circumstance **should immediately contact the Dean of Students Office**, which offers a variety of student support services. The Dean of Students can review any supporting documentation and will contact the instructor. Students requesting any adjustment or accommodation from the course schedule must consult with the Dean of Students: https://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/

DePaul University is a community that thrives on open discourse that challenges students, both intellectually and personally, to be Socially Responsible Leaders. It is the expectation that all dialogue in this course is civil and respectful of the dignity of each student. Any instances of disrespect or hostility can jeopardize a student's ability to be successful in the course. The professor will partner with the Dean of Students Office to assist in managing such issues.

CDM College Policies

Changes to 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.

Respect for Diversity and Inclusion at DePaul University as aligned with our Vincentian Values
At DePaul, our mission calls us to explore "what must be done" in order to respect the inherent dignity and identity of each human person. We value diversity because it is part of our history, our traditions and our future. We see diversity as an asset and a strength that adds to the richness of classroom learning. In my course, I strive to include diverse authors, perspectives and teaching pedagogies. I also encourage open dialogue and spaces for students to express their unique identities and perspectives. I am open to having difficult conversations and I will strive to create an

inclusive classroom that values all perspectives. If at any time, the classroom experience does not live up to this expectation, please feel free to contact me via email or during office hours.

In the wake of recent national conversations around anti-Black racism, sexual violence, the immigration crisis, and the impact of the pandemic on marginalized people, I am more awake to the systemic inequities and injustices in our institutions, including DePaul University and the College of Computing and Digital Media, where I teach and serve. I recognize the rich diversity of our campus community and seek to offer all members of my class an equitable, inclusive, welcoming, secure, responsive and affirming environment that fosters mutual respect, empathy and trust.

Preferred Name & Gender Pronouns
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. Please also note that students may choose to identify within the University community with a preferred first name that differs from their legal name and may also update their gender. The preferred first name will appear in University related systems and documents except where the use of the legal name is necessitated or required by University business or legal need. For more information and instructions on how to do so, please see the Student Preferred Name and Gender Policy at http://policies.depaul.edu/policy/policy.aspx?pid=332.

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://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching/academic-integrity/Pages/default.aspx.

Posting work on online sites, such as Hero
All students are expected to abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy which prohibits cheating and other misconduct in student coursework.   Publicly sharing or posting online any prior or current materials from this course (including exam questions or answers), is considered to be providing unauthorized assistance prohibited by the policy. Both students who share/post and students who access or use such materials are considered to be cheating under the Policy and will be subject to sanctions for violations of Academic Integrity.

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:

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval. Information about the Incomplete Grades policy can be found at http://www.cdm.depaul.edu/Current%20Students/Pages/Grading-Policies.aspx

Students with Disabilities

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling them to access accommodations and support services to assist with their success. There are two office locations:

- Loop Campus (312) 362-8002
- Lincoln Park Campus (773) 325-1677
- Email: csd@depaul.edu

Students who register with the Center for Students with Disabilities are also invited to contact Dr. Gregory Moorhead, Director of the Center, privately to discuss how he may assist in facilitating the accommodations to be used in a course. This is best done early in the term. The conversation will remain confidential to the extent possible.

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

Course Schedule

Week 1
March 27th – April 2nd

All assignments and quizzes are due at the end of each week by 11:59 pm unless otherwise noted in each module.

Module 1		Introduction to course, organization, assignments
Engagement Activities:	Media:	Lecture 1, Sophie's Choice, supplemental videos
	Reading:	Merlin, Chap. 1
	Discussion Board Post:	DB Mod. 1
	Writing Assignment:	Case Study (Due on Friday, April 9th)
	Quiz Module 1	

Week 2
April 3rd – April 9th

Module 2
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 2, <u>A Streetcar Named Desire</u>, supplemental videos
             Reading: Merlin, Chap. 2 & 3
             Quiz Module 2

Week 3
April 10th – April 16th

Module 3
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 3, <u>Citizen Kane</u>, supplemental video
             Quiz Module 3

Week 4
April 17th – April 23rd

Module 4
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 4, <u>The Godfather Part 1</u>
             Discussion Board Post: DB Mod. 4
             Quiz Module 4

Week 5
April 24th – April 30th

Module 5
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 5
             Quiz Module 5
             Midterm Study Guide

Week 6
May 1st – May 7th

Module 6
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 6, <u>Philadelphia</u>, supplemental videos
             Reading: Merlin, Chap. 4
             Acting Assignment: Research and Upload your Monologue Choice (in lieu of Final Paper)
             Midterm Exam

Week 7

May 8th – May 14th

Module 7
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 7, supplemental videos
         Reading: Merlin Chapter 5
         Acting Assignment: Do Movement/Voice Exercises, Record Waiting for an Uber Assignment
         Discussion Board Post: DB Mod. 7
         Quiz Module 7
         Journal

Week 8
May 15th – May 21st

Module 8
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 8, supplemental videos
         Acting Assignment: Record Everyday Action Exercise
         Quiz Module 8

Week 9
May 22nd – June 4th

Module 9
Engagement Activities: Media: Lecture 9, supplemental videos
         Reading: Merlin Chapter 6
         Discussion Board Post: DB Mod. 9
         Quiz Module 9

Week 10
June 5th – 11th

Module 10   Engagement Activities: Media: Supplemental videos
         Quiz Module 10
         Journal
         Actor/Director Final Research Paper OR Monologue Analysis/Performance Assignment Due