

**ACTING**  
**THEA 1220 Section A**

Class meeting: 2--3:30pm

Instructor : Lenig

Preferred email: lenig@columbiastate.edu

Office: Hickman- 149

Office phone: 931.540.2877

Office Hours: 8-12 noon MWF; 9:30-11am T/R

Texts: Cole: Actors on Acting (required)

Halpern: Truth in Comedy (required)

Other materials/online data/reserve may be assigned at the instructor's discretion

Other information concerning this course is found on line: Go to: <http://webct.columbiastate.edu>

for full details on course requirements and grading.

This part of the syllabus only PARTIALLY describes course requirements and events.

The Basics:

Assignments:

400 points: 4 exams

100 Critical response to acting

400 points: Acting assignments in four mini productions

100 attendance at a performance and critical paper on voice, body, and intellectual performance

1000 points total

a. Improvisational comedy performance

b. Classical performance

c. duo scenes performance

d. contemporary performance

1000 points possible (1000-900:A; 899-800: B; 799-700: C; 699-600: D; 599-below: F)

POLICIES: 1.Attend regular class hours. 2 absences are the maximum. 3 absences: grade dropped 10%; 4 absences: grade dropped 20%;5 absences grade dropped 30%

2. Students MUST RESPOND to oral discussions in class by being prepared and contributing to discussions. The students shall lead many class discussions!!!

3. Perform all assignments to the satisfaction of the instructor.

4. Students must have a WEBCT account and check and respond to assignments /messages.

5. Students must have internet access and be able to use internet resources and websites to complete assignments.

6. Students must be competent in word processing and must be able to complete and submit essays/outlines for communication assignments. All assignments in MLA format.

7. No tardy, early leaving, or disruptive behavior will be tolerated. No warnings. Students not complying will be banned from class.

8. All assignments must be in the instructor's hands by the due date. No late papers.

9. Students who miss two consecutive assignments (two discussions, two quizzes, two essays, two performances) or any combination or other assignments will automatically fail the course.

10. Students must be able to view, read, or pick up materials left on reserve in the LRC or online.

11. SOME ASSIGNMENTS MAY REQUIRE GROUP WORK, rehearsal, DRIVING TO MEET OTHER STUDENTS, TIME AWAY FROM HOME, RESEARCH AT A LIBRARY OR OTHER TIME, TRAVEL, OR MEETING ARRANGEMENTS. Plan ahead for meetings and group assignments. LEARNING IS ACTIVE AND YOU WILL NEED TO BE MOBILE FOR SOME ASSIGNMENTS.

12. no open laptops and cellphones. These are distracting. Do not use in class unless instructed otherwise. No text messages, video games and other distractions in class.

**Discipline: Bad behavior is not tolerated. 1: Verbal warning 2: Written complaint. Visit to Dean of Student Services. 3. Dismissal and grade of F. Don't misbehave. If you are in college for the wrong reasons, leave.**

12. Evaluation of all writing:

Mechanical error (for EACH error)

Spell, punctuation, proofing, minor sentence

5 points

Construction error (EACH error)

Sentence sense, frag, run-on, paragraphing

10 points

Struc/works cited/text notes (EACH error)

Complexity/thesis/exemplification

10/20 points

Shallowness/hyperbole/generalization

Immaturity/off topic/incoherent (EACH error)

auto failure

13. Evaluation of Performance:

Improper rehearsal

10/20 points off

Breaking character/laughing

20/40 points off

Memory loss

10/20 points off

Immaturity

20/40 points off

Failure to take direction

20/40 points off

No improvement in skills

20/40 points off

Erratic work methods/skill

20/40 points off

Complicated/advanced work

10/20 points added

Long memory passages

10/20 points added

Sustained concentration

10/20 points added

Genuine emotion/humor/drama

10/20 points added

Failure to perform  
Insincere/winging it/attitude

F: no makeup  
F: no make-up

**THEA1020 : Tentative Class Schedule:  
Subject to Change**

**This semester acting is a project class.  
Students will work on the Radio Plays.  
This should be fun!**

1/15-2/22: Module 1: Radio shows

**Module II: History Lessons**

**Oral projects on Early Acting: A week of  
Oral projects**

2/26: Read Cole: 3-34: Romans and Greeks/  
Cole: 34-92: Middle ages and Renaissance  
Acting

Greek Acting: Adams, Beaudry, Carlson,  
Diamond, Perry

Roman Acting: Dunlop, Flint, Foster,  
Hedgepeth

2/28: Read Cole: 34-92: Middle ages and  
Renaissance Acting

Acting in the Middle Ages: Johnston, lane,  
mitchell, morrow

Acting in the renaissance: Surratt, Thakkar,  
Thomas, Hannah, Katina Thomas, Young

**Module III: Gatsby: 2/22-321**

**Module IV: Student plays 4 /17 and 18  
3/25: improv**

Improv readings: Chapter 1 and 2: Being  
Funny and Connections

forming teams: Young, H Thomas, Beaudry,  
Johnston team one

K thomas, Adams, Lane: team two

Diamond, Flint, Morrow: team three

Dunlop, Foster, Surratt, hedgepeth: team  
four

3/27: Improv readings: Chapter 3 and 4: Trust  
and Agreement

forming the early herald

4/1: chapters 5/6: Games and Moment to  
Moment

chapter 7/8: scenes and one mind acting

4/3: chapter 9/10: Thinking of the  
environment

chapter 11/12: The herald in Performance

**4/8: Improv performance**

4/10: Rehearsal for student plays

4/15: Rehearsal student plays

4/17/18: Student plays

**Module IV: Recent Acting History Oral  
Presentations**

**4/22:** 18th c./19th century melodrama

Read: Cole: 92-187; 254-282: English,  
German, French acting

Watch: Black

Adder/Restoration/Ridicule/Les Laisons

Read: Realism: Late 19th century acting,

Cole: 284-299; 475-536: German and Soviet  
Acting

4/24(1) Oral report: melodrama and 19th  
century romantic acting

hedgepeth, adams, diamond, flint, lane

(2) oral report on german and soviet/russian  
acting

Beaudry, dunlop, foster, mitchell

4/29: modern acting

read: Cole: 299-321, Cole: 591-623

American Method and Realism

(1) Oral report: realism in acting

young, thomas, thomas, surratt, Thakkar

(2) oral report: actors studio and realism

morrow, carlson, foster, hedgepeth, adams

**4/30: Final Exam Objective exam:**

**Performance: Realism Scenes 2-4pm  
Audience**

**Description of the performances: Altogether you may be on stage for all of 20/30 minutes for the whole semester, so you have nothing to fear.**

WARNING: Bad actors need never fear. I will never want to put bad acting before an audience. I'd rather watch repeats of Jerry Springer. If you are awful, I will do everything in my power to hide your dreadful work. If there is any value to your work. If it is creative, emotional, sincere, notable, or viewable by others I will encourage you to progress and grow. Sadly, a lot of young people can't take acting seriously. That usually means an F for them and a boring time for me and the rest of the class.

**a. Improvisational comedy performance 2-5 minutes due: 2/3 (solo)**

We've all seen Jerry Seinfeld or SNL or Chris Farley or Adam Sandler do a schtick (bit or routine) on stage. Many of us watch stand up or comedy central and we receive a regular dose of comedy. (If you don't this is a mandatory assignment for this class. Watch some other actors especially comedians carefully!) Decide on a bit or routine that you do well for you. Something you think is entertaining and funny or at least interesting. CAUTION: I have seen a lot of bad bits go down in flames because the actor/comedian kept on doing the same thing with no variation. Comedy demands variation, it demands variety and it demands surprise. Read Halpern and Close's book carefully. Think about your bit. It should: 1. Have variety 2. Be physical and verbal. 3. Address a single theme 4. Express your particular skills and talents 5. Be loud and confident 6. Be original (don't be Belushi or Candy or Farley..they're dead....think about it....) 7. Seek to blend verbal and physical humor. 8. Use surprise. 9. Don't try to be 'funny' This makes everyone become defensive, audience and performer...harder to crack uptight people

**b. Classical performance: 2-5 minutes. Due: 2/24 (solo)**

Memorize about 2 minutes of classical dialogue: Greek, Roman, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Restoration. THEN see how you can act it. If you get up and simply say words in the manner of someone dead or ancient you will get an F. So think about what to do to make that classical work good. Look at an Olivier, Branugh, Mel Gibson, Hopkins, Emma Thompson, Kevin Kline, Michelle Pfeiffer or some other person's take on a classical script and see how they make it come alive. 1. Make it clear and understandable. There is nothing more boring than watching someone who doesn't know what they are saying. 2. Make it active. 3. Do not use words only. Act the scene with the whole body. You only have 2 minutes of dialogue. How can you make it into a MOVING 5 minutes of action? 4. What can you do to make the scene STILL classical but meaningful to people today. How does Shakespeare still work? Because emotions and ideas are still genuine and real.

**c. Duo scene performance 5/10 minutes: due 4/8 (duo)**

Pick a simple scene in which both actors have about equal dialogue and action. Choose something from the [Take 10 II](#) books (available for \$14 in the bookstore) or the Best Short Plays Series in our library. Lots of good LITTLE plays there. This does not have to be a full length play. The scene should have a mix of dialogue and action. Look for an interesting situation or plot. 1. The scene should have structure. 2. There should be a distinct beginning middle and end. 3. It may be funny or dramatic. 4. The team should look like a team, not a wild group of unknown individuals bumping into each other. 5. You should produce a blocking chart of acting and movements besides the lines. 6. You should have someone outside your group come and watch and critique you before public performance.

**d. contemporary performance due: 5-15 minutes; 4/30 (group performance: 3 or more)**

This should be a larger play that reveals good parts for all. Equal dialogue and performances for all players. Contemporary material is common but there is no reason why you can't do a classical piece in togas if you all like that more. 1. Invited guest audience. 2. Vigorous memorization and blocking. 3. Responsible for props, costumes, set, and music. You must provide everything you need so keep it simple. 4. Evidence of good and ambitious practice. 5. Critique by fellow classmates. Each group should view another group's work for ideas and to offer constructive criticism.

## **INTRODUCTORY ACTING EXERCISES**

The following is a list of exercises that will help to strengthen your acting troupe in the fundamentals of theater. We started, last article, with getting your people comfortable with each other. This article and next will be exercises to develop strong characters. Then ending, with improvisation games!

### **ICE BREAKERS**

These games are ideal to loosen up an unfamiliar crowd, or get a tight knit group focused and full of energy.

*Soundball:* Have the group stand in a circle facing each other. Establish an imaginary ball. Take turns tossing the ball across the circle, from one person to another. On each toss, the person throwing the ball must accompany it with an original sound. The person receiving the ball must mimic the sound as they are catching it, then throw it to a different person with their own sound, and so on. Make sure that the thrower/receiver make definite eye contact, and that the sounds stay original and are not repeated. This game is good for strengthening eye contact, quick, uncensored thinking, and accepting what a fellow actor gives. The worst thing an actor can do is reject what another actor gives and/or says "no." This will be expanded upon in the improv section.

*Adjective/Action Name game:* Have the group stand in a circle facing each other. Pick one person to start and continue around the circle, one after another. What each person must do is say - "Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_!" In the first blank they must say an adjective that describes them AND starts with the same letter as their name. The second blank is their name. While they are saying their descriptive name, they must also accompany it with an appropriate action. For example, my name is David. If it were my turn, I would draw out a long sword from a sheath as I say - "Hi! My name is Dashing David!" The entire group then repeats the action and says "Hi, Dashing David!" Then it moves to the next person until everyone has done it. Not only is this game good for learning everyone's name, it also gets people moving around and acting silly, while having their ideas accepted by the group. It is a very affirming, positive game. It also encourages creative, unconventional thinking.

*Mirror Game:* Pair off the group and have each couple face each other. Choose one person to be the "mover" and the other is the "mirror." Have them establish eye contact for a minute or so, which they CANNOT break for the duration of the exercise. The mover slowly begins to move, slow movements with the hands and arms, head etc., while the mirror copies exactly what the mover is doing. Again, eye contact cannot be broken. It is not the mover's job to fool the mirror or go so fast that the mirror cannot keep up. The object is for an outside observer not be able to tell who is the mover and who is the mirror. After five minutes or so, switch the mirror/mover in mid motion and continue for another five minutes or so. The strength of this game is getting actors used to making eye contact with each other, without laughing- which may occur the first time this game is played. It also gets actors used to observing and being aware of what fellow actors are doing.

### **TRUST GAMES**

*Trust Circle:* Have the group stand in a tight circle, shoulders touching with one member in the middle. The person in the middle should cross their arms over their chest and stand straight. It is important that the person in the middle, NOT bend their knees. The people in the circle should put their hands up, ready to catch the person in the middle. Now, the person in the middle closes their eyes and falls into the circle. The people in the circle slowly push the middle person around the circle- around and across, while the person in the middle just enjoys the ride. Again, the person in the middle needs to keep their legs and back straight, just pivoting around the ankles. They are trusting the circle to keep them upright and within the circle. (After a minute or so, it is actually very relaxing!) Do this until everyone in the group has been in the middle of the circle.

*Lead by Voice Game:* Split your group in pairs. Have one set of the pairs form a large circle with the others in the middle. Go around the circle and have each person say, "cookie" three times. The corresponding partner must listen very carefully to their partner. The group in the middle closes their eyes and the circle moves briefly so that the ones in the middle are unaware of where their partner is. Then the partner must guide their other half back to them using only their voice, and the word "cookie."