

Syllabus
94-801 Acting for Leadership and Communication
F24 Mini 1

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Class meetings: Fall Mini 1: Mon. & Wed. Section A1, 3:30pm –4:50pm, in Rm HBH2008

“It’s all in how you look at it.” --Sandy Murphy

In- Person, Live, Real, Attendance is crucial. That’s where the magic happens. Students on the waitlist will only be considered if they have attended the first two classes.

Office hours

“It is the most unforgettable and interesting OH I ever attended” -- Past Student

I can be available for office hours on Monday and Wednesday before or after each class. For office hours, I will be in Rm HBH 2011 from 2:00 – 3:20 and Rm HBH 2009 5:00 – 6:20 M/W. I have found that my office hours tend to fill up as students begin to realize how helpful they can be, so I have reserved rooms for before and after class. However, I will not always be in both so please make an appointment. I will be in *I strongly encourage all of my students to email me to make an appointment to see me outside of class so that I can give you the personal time and attention that you deserve.* When requesting office hours, please include your section (i.e., B4/C4) and suggested agenda. If you are unable to make an appointment with me during my office hours, I am happy to set up an appointment with you for another time via zoom. Really. You will be glad you did. ☺

Course Overview

“I have realized I have much more potential than I give myself credit for.” – Past Student

Actors use “tools”. Chiefly- among them are voice, body, focus, intention, self-awareness) to convey emotion and connect authentically with audiences. Acting for Leadership and Communication will help you master the actor’s tools to become a more powerful presenter, to feel more confident when communicating with others, to understand yourself and your audience and to cultivate your own wisdom as a compassionate and effective leader. Through in-class exercises, scene work and discussion, you will practice the art of self-reflection and the craft of acting so you can learn how to enhance your abilities as a person, presenter and inspirational leader.

Learning Outcomes

“I have changed like I never imagined. ... And the spectacular thing is that I saw the change in my classmates too.” – Past Student

At the conclusion of this class, you should:

- Be able to define your strengths and your areas for continued work as a presenter, communicator and leader
- Use the actor's tools to enhance your interaction with others, your performances and presentations
- Experience increased confidence in performing and presenting
- See an increase in your willingness to be spontaneous and take risks
- Be able to give honest supportive, encouraging and actionable feedback
- Be able to listen and respond authentically under given circumstances

"... As the weeks passed, I began to understand that this course was much more complex than I could ever imagine." – Past Student

Textbook

"I have learned trust, compassion, confidence, and finding comfort in the uncomfortable. All these qualities and skills will help me be a better person, and definitely a better leader." – Past Student

There is no textbook for this class. You will need scripts from plays for your scene assignments. You can find play scripts at Hunt Library (for free) or you can find them on-line from a variety of sites.

If you are interested in learning more about the art of acting, there are many good books you can read. Here are a few:

"On Acting", Meisner, Sanford and Longwell, Dennis; Vintage Books, August 1987

"The Art of Acting", Adler, Stella; Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2000

"An Actor Prepares"; Stanislavsky, Constantin, 1989 (reprint)

Class Policies

"The class builds trust, authenticity and support, and feels like an acting family." – Past Student

Acting requires a willingness to play, to imagine and to stretch yourself. It can be uncomfortable, which is why the classroom must be a place of support and encouragement for everyone and from everyone.

Let's embrace a willingness to take risks, to explore ourselves and to share the fun of acting.

Cell phones and computers will distract you and others from fully participating in the class. Leave them off **and away** unless I ask you to use them in an exercise or for in-class feedback.

Cheating and Plagiarism

"The notion that trust is crucial for effective communication changed my approach to public speaking in this class and far beyond."—Past Student

It's very hard to cheat or plagiarize in an acting class, but be clear that **all your work must be your own**. Any written assignments must be yours and yours alone. If you use sources, cite them. Violations of this policy will result in a minimum of failure for the assignment with the potential of failure for the course.

Students may NOT use Generative AI in any form (not even grammarly or the like)

“I have learned how to be true to myself and being that way has made me a better communicator with others.” – Past Student

I expect that all work and words students submit for this course will be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your achievement of the learning objectives in this course. In instances when collaborative work is assigned, I expect for the submitted work to list all team members who participated. **I specifically forbid the use of ChatGPT or any other generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools at all stages of the work process, including brainstorming.** Deviations from these guidelines will be considered violations of [CMU's academic integrity policy](#). Note that expectations for “plagiarism, cheating, and acceptable assistance” on student work may vary across your courses and instructors. Please ask me if you have questions regarding what is permissible and not for a particular course or assignment.

Attendance and Participation

“I have to admit that I initially came with low expectations, thinking that I could use a “fun course” to escape from the fatigue of the all the coding assignments and projects. However, I ended up investing a lot of time and enjoying every moment of it. :D” – Past Student

This is an interactive class, with almost all of the work being done in class. You cannot learn if you are not present. Nor can your scene partners learn because they will be relying on you to give them what they need to respond to. Students who wish to earn an A in the class need to attend all classes and participate wholeheartedly in all in-class exercises. Missing 2 classes will result in the lowering of your final grade by one. If you miss more than 2 classes, you likely will not pass this class. If you need miss a class for a scheduled interview, you will be required to submit documentation of the appointment. If you miss class for health reasons, please submit a report from a medical professional. An important part of participating in this class is providing feedback to your peers and giving them your undivided attention during their performances. Since feedback is the mechanism by which we can improve, you will provide feedback to your classmates (and they to you) in a constructive and supportive manner. I will ask you to reflect on your own performances so you can see where you have developed your skills and where you might still need to develop them.

Wear comfortable clothing that you can move in. This class requires physical activity and your clothing should allow you to work without inhibition.

Be on time. Entering the class late disrupts everyone's concentration. We will begin promptly at the class's designated start time. **Do not enter the classroom while another student is performing.** Wait until the performance is over and then you can enter.

Assignments

“Those little but crucial achievements from acting really gave me the energy to feel alive and the courage to switch back to doing homework and job searching.” – Past Student

Your assignments will be performances, either alone or with a teammate. You must memorize your lines for scene performances. But don't worry if you happen to momentarily forget. We will have someone “on-book” for you at all times. For performances, wear clothing appropriate to the scene (a costume) and bring any necessary props. You can choose any scene that fits the theme of the assignment. You do not need to adhere to age or gender in the script (e.g., a woman can play Hamlet and a man can play Blanche DuBois) as long as it fits the intent of the scene. Please be bold in your choices and choose scenes that are meaningful to you and with which you can stretch yourself and have fun. I will post grades for your assignments in Canvas.

Grading

“I believe this will be invaluable in my professional life as I am more inclined to seize unexpected opportunities now.” – Past Student

Course grades reflect your commitment and willingness to take risks, your preparation of assignments and your mastery of the material we cover.

Your participation grade is based on the quantity and quality of your contribution to class discussions, your commitment and willingness to undertake the in-class work, and your attention and feedback to your classmates.

Participation and in-class exercises = 40 points

“Today, I step onto the stage with newfound confidence and ease.” – Past Student

Giving and receiving feedback is an important skill, which is not often mastered. Because it is critical to your future success, we will give and receive feedback at almost every class to allow you to practice this skill in class. You will receive points for providing feedback to your peers, as follows: if you provide comprehensive, constructive, actionable feedback you will receive 1 point. If you provide no feedback or feedback that is vague, incomplete or cannot be acted on, you will receive 0 points.

You will also receive points for the in-class exercises. There are four rubrics for in-class work, each with a 2-point grading scale (you can find them at the end of this syllabus). We will use one of these rubrics for each in-class exercise. You will receive feedback from your peers to help you reflect on your performance. I will also provide you with feedback and ratings. My ratings

will determine the points you receive for that day's work. The rubrics are focused on four topic areas that are important to an actor's work:

- Use of body and voice
- Focus and Listening
- Commitment and risk taking
- Spontaneity

You may be permitted to make up one in-class exercise in the case of an absence if, and only if, subsequent class time permits. Any written assignments are due on the date stated. If your assignment is turned in late, you will lose points. If you must miss class on the date of a prepared scene, you should contact me to discuss options for completing the assignment. In general, I will allow you to make up one prepared performance for **documented** severe illness or interviews only. If you miss 2 classes, your grade will be lowered by one full grade. If you miss 3 classes, you will not be able to pass the class.

Presentations/scenes – 4 at 10% each = 40 points

“Align my thoughts with my physical body.

This helps me lead my genuine life with ease, being more productive” -- Past Student

You will be rated on prepared scene work using a comprehensive rubric that includes the above four elements plus one more focused on your level of preparation. (Included at the end of this syllabus.) Your peers will provide feedback as will I. My ratings will determine the points you receive for the assignment. As part of this preparation, you will conduct a written analysis of your scene, due before your performance, and will receive 3 points for each analysis.

Final scene presentation = 20 points

“I let go and left my "safe zone" to find there is no such thing as a safe zone. Your safe zone is the world when you are content with who you are and have accepted yourself entirely.”

– Past Student

Your final scene will be graded using the same rubric as for the prepared scene work above.

Your grade for the course will consist of your scores on the above elements converted to letter grades using the following scale:

A+	98% - 100%	Superior
A	94% - 97.99%	Outstanding
A-	90% - 93.99%	Excellent
B+	86% - 89.99%	Very Good
B	82% - 85.99%	Good
B-	78% - 81.99%	Acceptable
C+	74% - 77.99%	Poor
C	70% - 73.99%	Very Poor
C-	67% - 69.99%	Lowest passing
R	Below 67%	Failing

The grade you earn is the grade you will be assigned. **Please do not ask me to increase your final grade so you can improve your GPA or to give you the opportunity to do an extra assignment to improve your final grade.** I will not provide additional opportunities for grade improvement.

Course Outline

“I have gone from a person who used to feel like the ‘Fake it till you make it’ to someone who feels that I actually have ‘Made it’. This means that I feel more comfortable in my own skin, satisfied with my own self and not afraid to show others what I have got.” -- Past Student

Week 1

Monday, Aug 26 - Lecture 1: Introduction and class overview. Introduction Exercise.
Record student introductions for first assignment.

Wednesday, Aug 28 – Lecture 2: Introduction to the actor’s tools: Body, Voice, Focus and Intention

Friday, Aug 30 - Assignment: Personal Learning Goals.
See complete assignment description on Canvas.

Week 2

Monday, Sept. 2 – LABOR DAY – NO CLASSES

Wednesday, Sept. 4 – Lecture 3: Response to your Learning Goals.

Friday, Sept. 6 at 11:59 – Assignment: Observation Analysis
See Detailed assignment description on Canvas

Week 3

Monday, Sept. 9 – Lecture 4: What Actors do - Script Analysis.

Wednesday, Sept. 11 - Observation Performance.
See detailed assignment description on Canvas

Friday, Sept. 13 11:59pm - Assignment: Teamwork Script Analysis
Analyze the script for your Teamwork Script using the methodology learned in class
See Detailed assignment description on Canvas

Week 4

Monday, Sept. 16 – Lecture 5: Team Cultivation. In-class exercises and discussion.
In-class exercises will be rated using the Rubric for Spontaneity.

Wednesday, Sept. 18 – “Teamwork” Performance

See detailed assignment on Canvas

Pick a partner and prepare a short scene from a play that demonstrates or focuses on teamwork. The scene should take place in a professional setting. (I have a very broad definition of “Professional Setting”)

Friday, Sept. 20 at 11:59pm - Assignment: Shakespeare Monologue Script Analysis

Analyze the script for your Shakespeare Monologue using the methodology learned in class. See Detailed assignment description on Canvas

Week 5

Monday, Sept. 23 – Lecture 6: Confidence/Power. In-class exercises and discussion. In-class exercises will be rated using the Rubric for Body and Voice.

Wednesday, Sept 25 – Performances of 1-minute Shakespeare monologues.

See full Assignment description on Canvas

Friday, Sept 27 at 11:59pm – Assignment to be completed: Conflict Script analysis

Analyze the script for your Conflict Scene using the methodology learned in class.

See full Assignment description on Canvas

Week 6

Monday, Sept. 30 - Lecture 7 – Conflict Resolution. In-class exercises and discussion. In-class exercises will be rated using the Rubric for Commitment and Risk taking.

Wednesday, Oct. 2 – “Conflict” Scene Performance. Performances will be rated using the Prepared Scene Work Rubric.

Fri., Oct. 4 11:59pm - Final Performance Script Analysis

Analyze the script for your Final Scene using the methodology learned in class.

See full Assignment description on Canvas.

Week 7

Monday, Oct 7 - Lecture 8: – Inspiration/Motivation. Inspirational in-class exercise.

Wednesday, Oct 9 -Performance of final scenes. Performances will be rated using the Prepared Scene Work Rubric. **LAST DAY OF CLASSES FOR MINI 1**

Friday Oct. 11 by 11:59 pm - Learning Reflection. *Review the paper on your personal learning goals for this class. With those in mind, write a one-page paper describing what you have accomplished in this class. Consider the feedback you have received from your classmates and me and identify the areas in which you have improved and those you would like to continue to develop. Reflect on how you think the Pledge affected your experience. How will you use what you have learned going forward?*

See full Assignment description on Canvas.

Summary of Assignments:

Assignment	Date Due	Alone or with partner?
Learning Goals*	Aug, 30 at 11:59 pm	Alone
Observation Analysis*	Sept, 6 at 11:59 pm	Alone
Observation Performance	Sept, 11	Alone
“Teamwork” Script Analysis*	Sept, 13 at 11:59 pm	Alone
“Teamwork” Performance	Sept, 18	With partner
Shakespeare Monologue Analysis*	Sept, 20 at 11:59 pm	Alone
Shakespeare Monologue	Sept, 25	Alone
Conflict Script Analysis*	Sept, 27 at 11:59 pm	Alone
Conflict Performance	Oct, 2	With partner
Final Performance Analysis*	Oct, 4 at 11:59 pm	Alone
Final Scene Performance	Oct, 9	With Partner
Learning Goals Reflection*	Oct, 11 at 11:59 pm	Alone

***Asterisked items are written assignments to be submitted through Canvas.**

“I thought we were just going to learn about public speaking.” – Past Student

Distribution of Course Materials

All course materials and performances are provided for the personal, educational use of the student or for all students presently enrolled in the class only, and may not be further copied, distributed, published including web-sites or otherwise used for any other purpose without the express written consent of the copyright owner of the relevant course material.

Some Script Resources for Monologues and Scenes

<https://www.actorama.com/scenesforactors>

<https://www.stagemilk.com/acting-scenes/>

<https://monologueblogger.com/60-contemporary-acting-scenes/>

<https://www.shakespeare-monologues.org/home>

http://www.monologuearchive.com/s/shakespeare_william.html

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability and have an accommodation letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate.

Take care of yourself

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

Every individual must be treated with respect.

The ways we are diverse are many and are fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and an inclusive campus community. These include but are not limited to: race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. We at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because it is necessary for excellence and innovation, but because it is just. Therefore, while we are imperfect, we all need to fully commit to work, both inside and outside of our classrooms to increase our commitment to build and sustain a campus community that embraces these core values. It is the responsibility of each of us to create a safer and more inclusive environment. Incidents of bias or discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional in their occurrence, contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. If you experience or observe unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity, we encourage you to speak out for justice and support in the moment and/or share your experience using the following resources:

- Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion: csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150, www.cmu.edu/student-diversity

Page 6of 6

- Report-It online anonymous reporting platform: www.reportit.net; username: tartans; password: plaid.

All reports will be acknowledged, documented, and a determination will be made regarding a course of action. All experiences shared will be used to transform the campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Facial coverings.

CMU no longer requires you to wear facial coverings on campus. However, because your success in this class is dependent on your health and the health of your partners, I ask that you wear a mask if you suspect that there might be even the smallest chance that you might be contagious. I will wear my mask to and from class in areas of high congestion. When I am speaking in front of the class, I would like to remove my mask, but I will only do that if I feel safe. I know this is a great inconvenience. I really do not like wearing masks. I Very, very, very, very much do not like wearing masks. But I will do it gladly if there is even a smallest chance that I may keep others safer.

Stopping the Spread of All Contagious Illnesses.

Stay home if you are symptomatic OF ANY VIRUS (flu, cold, etc) and contact [University Health Services](#)(students)/healthcare provider (faculty & staff) and **test**. Community members should report positive cases using [this form](#). They will be given guidance on isolation and steps to take based on your situation. IF YOU HAVE A NEGATIVE TEST, feel free to re-join class, but, please consider wearing a mask until your symptoms abate.

Rubric for Body & Voice

91-801 Acting for Management

Circle the level of mastery that best describes the actor's work. Then provide three comments for the actor at the bottom of the page. Discuss areas in which the actor is strong and areas for development.

	The actor has not yet mastered this. .5	The actor has mastered about half of this. 1	The actor has mostly mastered this. 1.5	The actor has fully mastered this. 2
Body and Voice <i>The actor controls body and voice and makes conscious decisions about how to use them.</i>	The actor does not have control of body and/or voice.	The actor's body and/or voice are tight and not put to use to further the character. The actor is too aware of his/her physical self.	The actor has good control of body and voice, but occasionally is stiff or unsure about what to do physically. The actor sometimes may forget the physical choices he/she made for the character.	The actor's body and voice are relaxed and put to use as the character. The actor makes choices about gestures and vocal quality to convey the character.

Actor Name: _____

Assignment & Date: _____

Feedback provided by: _____

94-801 Acting for Management
Commitment and Risk-Taking Rubric

Circle the level of mastery that best describes the actor's work. Then provide three comments for the actor at the bottom of the page.
 Discuss both areas in which the actor is strong and areas for development.

	The actor has not yet mastered this. .5	The actor has mastered about half of this. 1	The actor has mostly mastered this. 1.5	The actor has fully mastered this. 2
Commitment <i>The actor takes risks, is not self-conscious and is willing to engage in the exercise.</i>	The actor is not able to embrace the character and unable to make choices. The actor is overly concerned about appearing foolish.	The actor will make an attempt at a big choice, but then pull back out of self-consciousness. The actor does not "let go".	The actor may hold back on occasion or be concerned about looking silly.	The actor is willing to make a big choice, is unconcerned about looking foolish and is fully willing to "play".

Actor Name: _____

Assignment & Date: _____

Feedback provided by: _____

94-801 Acting for Management

Focus Rubric

Circle the level of mastery that best describes the actor's work. Then provide three comments for the actor at the bottom of the page.

Discuss areas in which the actor is strong and areas for development.

	The actor has not yet mastered this. .5	The actor has mastered about half of this. 1	The actor has mostly mastered this. 1.5	The actor has fully mastered this. 2
Focus <i>The actor pays attention to scene partner, listens and thinks only about what is happening in the scene.</i>	The actor does not listen or respond to the partner. The actor has not found the character.	The actor has numerous lapses in listening and responding to the partner. The actor "breaks character" more often than not.	The actor is mostly attentive to the scene and scene partner, but on occasion doesn't listen or respond in character. The actor doesn't make the situation real.	The actor is fully attentive to the actions of the scene and to the scene partner. The actor listens, responds and acts as if the situation were real.

Actor Name: _____

Assignment & Date: _____

Feedback provided by: _____

94-801 Acting for Management

Spontaneity Rubric

Circle the level of mastery that best describes the actor's work and provide three comments for the actor at the bottom of the page.

Discuss areas in which the actor is strong and areas for development.

	The actor has not yet mastered this. .5	The actor has mastered about half of this. 1	The actor has mostly mastered this. 1.5	The actor has fully mastered this. 2
Spontaneity <i>The actor is loose and open to the experience their character is having as if it is the first time. The scene seems fresh.</i>	The actor freezes or does not allow the scene to proceed.	About half the time, the actor is thinking about what to do next and not allowing the scene to proceed naturally.	The actor allows the exercise to unfold, but occasionally tightens up or tries to control the outcome when that is not the objective of the scene.	The actor is in the moment and allowing the scene to go where it will.

Actor Name: _____

Assignment & Date: _____

Feedback provided by: _____

Rubric for Prepared Scene work

91-801 Acting for Management

Actor Name: _____

Assignment & Date: _____

	Not yet mastered .5	Somewhat mastered 1	Mostly mastered 1.5	Fully mastered 2	Rating
Spontaneity <i>The actor is loose and open to the experience their character is having as if it is the first time. The scene seems fresh..</i>	The actor freezes or does not allow the scene to proceed.	About half the time, the actor is thinking about what to do next and not allowing the scene to proceed naturally.	The actor allows the exercise to unfold, but occasionally tightens up or tries to control the outcome when that is not the objective of the scene.	The actor is in the moment and allowing the scene to go where it will.	
Body and Voice <i>The actor controls body & voice and makes conscious decisions about how to use them.</i>	The actor does not have control of body and/or voice.	The actor's body and/or voice are tight and not put to use to further the character. The actor is too aware of his/her physical self.	The actor has good control of body and voice, but occasionally is stiff or unsure about what to do physically. The actor sometimes may forget the physical choices he/she made for the character.	The actor's body and voice are relaxed and put to use as the character. The actor makes choices about gestures and vocal quality to convey the character.	
Focus <i>The actor pays attention to scene partner, listens and thinks only about what is happening in the scene.</i>	The actor does not listen or respond to the partner. The actor has not found the character.	The actor has numerous lapses in listening and responding to the partner. The actor "breaks character" more often than not.	The actor is mostly attentive to the scene and scene partner, but on occasion doesn't listen or respond in character. The actor doesn't make the situation real.	The actor is fully attentive to the actions of the scene and to the scene partner. The actor listens, responds and acts as if the situation were real.	
Commitment <i>The actor takes risks, is not self-conscious and is willing to engage in the exercise.</i>	The actor is not able to embrace the character and unable to make choices. The actor is overly concerned about appearing foolish.	The actor will make an attempt at a big choice, but then pull back out of self-consciousness. The actor does not "let go".	The actor may hold back on occasion or be concerned about looking silly.	The actor is willing to make a big choice, is unconcerned about looking foolish and is fully willing to "play".	
Preparation <i>The actor has analyzed the character and scene, made choices about the character and rehearsed the scene.</i>	The actor does not know the character or scene, the lines, or the action to make the scene believable.	The actor needs to better understand the scene and character. The actor often loses direction in delivering lines and building the scene's momentum.	The actor generally understands the actions of the scene and the character's objectives, but may have moments when actions are unclear. The actor is mostly prepared, but may have lapses in delivering lines and actions.	The actor understands the actions of the scene, the character's objectives and made choices that affect his/her behavior and physicality. The actor is prepared by knowing the lines and actions.	

Rater Name: _____