

**Duke University Department of Theater Studies (08-21-15)**

**145S Acting : Realism (Seminar)\***

**Professor Jeff Storer, Instructor**

**T-TH 1005-1135**

**T-TH 125-255**

**Location: Bryan Center Rehearsal Studio, 127**

**Office Hours: Page Auditorium O3D (enter below: off Bryan Center Walkway; or enter from the entrance of Page , turn right and go downstairs.) Office Hours: T TH 9:00-10:00, 12:00-1:00, 3:00-4:00, or by appointment. Contact instructor at [jmsheepdog@gmail.com](mailto:jmsheepdog@gmail.com) to schedule appointment.**

**\*Please Note: This class will count for the Acting Requirement for the major should you decide to take a Department of Theater Studies Major or Minor.**

**Course Description:**

**(AL)(CCI) Using the writings of Stanislavsky, Strindberg and Chekhov students will explore the fundamentals of acting realism through exercises, scene study, and text analysis. A balance between weekly reading assignments, writing and performance comprise the work required in this course. Introductions to warm-ups, voice and movement training for the actor will be included. Theory and text analysis will be studied in their historical context as well as to their contemporary relevance.**

**This course will focus on the seminal book, An Actor Prepares by Constantin Stanislavski. Acting Realism will cover the following topics: dramatic action, given circumstances, the actor's imagination, focus (centers of attention and targets,) the actor's warm-up, scoring a script: beat/unit/action breakdown, intentions, memory keys, believability and truth in performance.**

**Additional readings will be from August Strindberg and Anton Chekhov.**

**Note: Your finals for Introduction to Acting are scheduled as follows:**

**1005-1135 class    Saturday, May 3 200-500  
125-255    class    Tuesday, April 29 200-500**

**All travel plans should be made accordingly. There will be no excused absences for missing these classes. Your grade will be affected.**

## **Requirements/Grade Breakdown**

**-Participation: Attendance, collegiality and the willingness to engage in class activities will be key to your participation grade (worth 40 points.) Note that there are no approved absences without prior consent of the instructor. If the instructor and student agree upon an approved absence (this includes all religious holidays, dean's and athletic excuses) all work must still be completed and shown in class.**

**Failure to meet fellow students for scheduled outside of class rehearsals will also affect this grade.**

**When in doubt, ask. In the event you are not able to speak to me you may leave a message on my voice mail (660-3350.) Attendance and lateness to class will figure prominently in Participation grade.**

**-Written Work: During the course of the semester you will turn in 3 Journal Entries and 2 Performance Reviews that will be graded. The 4<sup>th</sup> journal entry will be your self-evaluation and letter grade, due on the last day of class.**

**-Journal Entries: Each entry will consist of a written assignment that covers specific topics to be assigned by the instructor. Each entry should be approximately 2-3 pages, double-spaced, and typed (use Microsoft Word for all assignments.) Any late papers will result in the loss of a letter grade, regardless the quality of the work. ALL JOURNAL ENTRIES, PERFORMANCE REVIEWS and SELF EVALUATION should be emailed to the instructor ([jmsheepdog@gmail.com](mailto:jmsheepdog@gmail.com)) as well as turned in at class as hard copy on the day that it is due.**

**-On and Off campus performances/Performance Reviews: Students will be required to attend at least two on or off campus performances and write a 2 page (double spaced, and typed - use Microsoft Word for all assignments) review of the event. These performance reaction papers will be DUE WITHIN A WEEK OF ATTENDING THE EVENT. These events can be on campus events: a part of the Duke Performances Series, productions produced by Department of Theater Studies, Dance, Music or Hoof and Horn or area professional companies : i.e. Little Green Pig Theatrical Concern, Manbites Dog Theater, Playmaker's Repertory in Chapel Hill, DPAC, etc. These two events should be exposures to two different organizations or companies. (i.e. Don't review two performances from Duke Drama, Manbites, etc.)**

**-Performance Assignments: Full participation in class exercises and completion of all assigned performance studies is required. Any late work will result in the loss of a letter grade, regardless the quality of the work.**

**-Additional Assigned readings: To be determined by Instructor.**

**-Keep a hand written journal for this class. Along with your syllabus, bring to class daily. These journals will not be turned in, but you must use them to take notes in class, keep announcements made in class and to keep your rehearsal logs for every outside of class rehearsal. You should show up for every class with this journal and something with which to write.**

**-Grade Breakdown:**

**Grade based on seriousness of approach, ability, effort, growth, the quality of participation, curiosity and passion. A grade will be given for each exercise and written assignment. If students are interested in the grades they are receiving for performance exercises and written work, they should make an appointment to discuss grades with the instructor. As suggested by the University, "A's" will be reserved for "Exceptional" work.**

<b>Participation</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Written Work</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Performance Assignments</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Final</b>	<b>20%</b>

### **Required Reading**

**Miss Julie                      August Strindberg                      1992 Dover**

**An Actor Prepares              Constantin Stanislavski              1964 Routledge**

**The plays of Anton Chekhov, a new translation by Paul Schmidt.**

**1998 Harper Perrenial**

**(focus will be on four major plays: The Seagull, The Cherry Orchard, Three Sisters and Uncle Vanya.)**

**These are the translations we will be using. No substitutes, please.**

**These texts are available at the University Textbook Store.**

## **ASSIGNMENT #1**

**“There are experiences you have in your life: the before and after things, when you are not quite the same after as you were before. Something is included, or something is taken away, or something is added: but it is definitely before and after.” Joseph Chaikin, The Presence of the Actor.**

**Share a moment of your life with the class. This should be a moment after which you were “not quite the same as you were before.” Only share what you feel willing to share with us while attempting to make your choice as pivotal a moment in your life as possible. This does not mean the story has to be a “dramatic” moment. Humorous moments can be just as important and pivotal. Edit the telling of your moment so that you are using just the amount of language you need to communicate to us what you may have felt in that moment. Be specific about the moment. Be aware of choices you are making with your body and your voice. YOU WILL TELL THIS STORY, NOT READ IT OR WRITE IT AND MEMORIZE. (Although it is very helpful to write about your moment or at the very least outline it before telling it in class.)**

**Given Circumstances: The actor and a chair. Do not read or memorize, tell us the story. Beware of rambling. This performance should last no longer than 5 minutes. Analysis will follow.**

**NOTE: Assignments #2, #3 and #6 should be three different characters, from three different Chekov plays.**

## **ASSIGNMENT #2**

**-Character Study and The Empty Room Exercise.**

**This is your first major assignment and consists of 4 parts.**

**Read The Seagull, The Cherry Orchard, Three Sisters and Uncle Vanya.**

**A. 1st person improvisation and research-**

**Choose a character from one of the four Chekov texts (The Cherry Orchard, The Seagull, Three Sisters and Uncle Vanya,) and begin your research. Instructor must approve your final choice. Focus on roles where you might be cast. You should begin by completing the characterization form (See Addendum) in this syllabus for the character you have chosen. In class you will share the following research and an explanation of your choices in a short (5 minutes) introduction/presentation and interview prior to your empty room exercise:**

**1) visual source-a photograph, painting, or object that gives you valuable information about your character or that communicates information about the “world” in which your study may take place. Be aware of period and details that may contribute to the evolution of your character. This can be literal or abstract. You will be graded on the visual source and its relevance to the understanding of your character.**

**2) movement source (sentence)-select a physical action which will be the beginning of a movement vocabulary for your character. Be specific. The action should have a beginning, a middle and an end and exhibit a clear objective (purposefulness.) Your movement source should re-appear in your interview.**

**3) 1st person questions. The class will be allowed to ask you ten questions, which you will answer in first person (as the character). These questions may reflect moments in the public or private life of your character. These questions will be based on the text, your research and the given circumstances. This work will be the basis for the creation of your character.**

#### **B. The Empty Room-**

**Using your chosen character create a scene approximately five minutes in length. These are moments in the private life of your character. You may use no more than three words. You may use elements of sound or music. Your scene should explore character, given circumstance, circles of attention (small, medium and large), objective, action, urgency and obstacle by answering the following focus questions:**

#### **FOCUS QUESTIONS**

##### **A. SITUATION (Given Circumstances; The "moment before.")**

**What just happened?**

##### **B. PREPARATION**

**How does that make me feel?**

##### **C. OBJECTIVE**

**What do I need/or want? (based on how I feel about this situation.)**

##### **D. ACTION (The How; Tactics)**

**How am I going to get what I want?**

**E. URGENCY (Literally and Emotionally)**

**What will happen to me if I don't get what I want?**

**F. OBSTACLE**

**What is in the way of my getting what I want?**

**G. RELATIONSHIP**

**In what ways do I know this other person? (family, lovers, acquaintances, business, brought together by a crisis, first meeting.)  
How does this affect TACTICS and URGENCY?**

**You should explore an off or onstage moment from your characters life. You must first establish a ground plan for your study. Your room may include an invisible stationary window and/or mirror. Nothing else should be mimed. You may use any of the following: actual props: a bed (built by studio blocks,) a chair, a table, a chest of drawers, a book, a suitcase, some clothing, one additional prop and a picture frame. Your study should have an entrance or an exit from the room and a beginning, middle and end.**

**ASSIGNMENT # 3**

**Scene Work/Text Analysis 1<sup>st</sup> showing- Your scene will be chosen from one of the four main Chekov texts. You may NOT use the same character you will be using in your Assignment #2 study or your final monologue.**

**Scenes are each viewed twice; prepared with a scene partner. Instructor must approve scenes. Your work will include: reading the plays and written play and character analysis. (due as scheduled on the calendar) All rehearsals for scene work will be completed outside of class. A rehearsal log should be kept for each rehearsal-these logs should be recorded in your hand written journal. (Rehearsal log form included in the syllabus.) Analysis will follow each in class showing.**

**ASSIGNMENT # 4**

**Instructor Tutorial. You and your scene partner will have a private tutorial with instructor between the 1st and 2nd showing of your first scene.**

**ASSIGNMENT #5**

**Scene One - There will be a 2nd Showing of scene with your partner in class. Analysis will follow.**

## **ASSIGNMENT #6/Final**

**A final monologue should be prepared. This should be prepared for the scheduled final class period. The monologue must be from the Schmidt collection of Chekov translations. You may explore other Chekhov texts in this volume, or stick with monologues from the four plays we have been using this term. Instructor should approve the monologue. When performed, the monologue should be between 1 1/2 - 2 minutes in length. You must read the play, complete written character and play analysis, which will be due the day of finals. This monologue should be performed as if for a professional audition. Instructor will lecture on audition protocol in the second half of the semester.**

### **NOTE:**

**Character Study/Empty Room, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> showing on scene and final monologues must all be from three different Chekhov plays, three different characters.**

### **NOTE:**

**Your finals for Introduction to Acting are scheduled as follows:**

**1005-1135 class    Saturday, May 3 200-500  
125-255    class    Tuesday, April 29 200-500**

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## **SAMPLE CALENDAR 2014**

### **Fall 2014 Dates**

**Acting Tuesday/Thursday 1005-1135**

#### **Week One**

#### **READING:**

**Four Chekhov Plays, Uncle Vanya,  
Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard and  
The Sea Gull**

**Tuesday, August 26**

**Review Syllabus, Discuss Assignment #1,  
Draw Lots for Before/After exercise.  
Assign Reading: Four Chekov plays.  
Assign Before/After Journal Entry #1.**

Thursday, August 28

**Warm-ups. Before and After exercises (1-4) Draw Lots for Assignment #2.**

**Week Two**

**READING:**

**Four Chekhov Plays, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard and The Sea Gull**

**READING:**

**An Actor Prepares, Note by the translator and Chapters 1-4, pages 1-71. Be prepared for discussion.**

Tuesday, September 2

**Warm-ups, Before and After exercises (5-9) Choose Chekov Character. Journal Entry #1 due. Assign Exercise #2.**

**Note: Before you can choose your character you must have finished reading all plays by Thursday's class.**

Thursday, September 4

**Warm-ups, Before and After exercises (10-14.) Choose scene and scene partner. This must be a different character than you use for Exercise #2. Draw lots for Exercise #2.**

Friday, September 5 DROP/ADD Ends

**Week Three**

Tuesday, September 9

**Warm-ups, Before and After exercises (15-17.)**

Thursday, September 11

**Assignment #2. (1-2) Discuss Stanislavsky Introduction and Chapters 1-4.**



THE BEST OF ENEMIES, MANBITES DOG, September 11-27

**Week Four**

**READING:** **An Actor Prepares Chapters 5-8, pages 72-162. Be prepared for discussion.**

Tuesday, September 16 **Assignment #2 (3-5)**

Thursday, September 18 **Assignment #2 (6-7) Discuss Stanislavsky Chapters 5-8**

**Week Five**

Tuesday, September 23 **RUDE MECHANICALS GUEST IN CLASS!**

**RUDE MECHANICALS PERFORMANCES (required)**  
**NOW NOW OH NOW, Sheaffer Lab Theater**  
**Wednesday, September 24-Saturday, September 27**  
**Performances 7pm and 9pm each night**

Thursday, September 25 **Assignment #2 (8-10)**

**Week Six**

**READING:** **Assign Preface to Miss Julie and Miss Julie. Prepare for discussion.**

Tuesday, September 30 **Assignment #2 (11-13)**

Thursday, October 2 **Assignment #2 (14-16)**  
**Assign Journal Entry #2.**  
**Draw Lots for Scenes.**

**Week Seven**

Tuesday, October 7 **Assignment #2 (17). Catch Up.**  
**In class rehearsal. Miss Julie and Text Analysis.**

Thursday, October 9

**Miss Julie and Text Analysis.**

Friday, October 10-Tuesday, October 14 FALL BREAK

**Week Eight**

Thursday, October 16

**In Class Rehearsal in prep for 1<sup>st</sup> showing.**

IF MY FEET HAVE LOST THE GROUND, MANBITES DOG, October 16-Nov 1st

**Week Nine**

**READING:**

**Stanislavsky Chapters 9-12, Pages 163-251. Prepare to Discuss.**

Tuesday, October 21

**1<sup>st</sup> showing of scenes (1-3)  
Journal Entry #2 Due.**

Thursday, October 23

**1<sup>st</sup> showing of scenes (4-6)**

**Week Ten**

Tuesday, October 28

**1<sup>st</sup> showing of scenes (7-8) Discuss  
Stanislavsky Chapters 9-12.**

Thursday, October 30

**Instructor's Tutorials. All Students meet with class and work with their scene partners.  
NOTE: Choose monologues for Final.**

**Week Eleven**

**READING:**

**Stanislavsky Chapters 13-16, Pages 252-313. Prepare to Discuss.**

Tuesday, November 4

**Instructor Tutorials**

Registration Begins November 5-19

Thursday, November 6

**Second showing of Scenes (1-3)**

**Week Twelve**

Tuesday, November 11

**Second showing of Scenes (4-6)**

Thursday, November 13

**Second showing of Scenes (7-8)**

**Week Thirteen**

Tuesday, November 18

**Lecture on Monologue Preparation and Auditioning. Discuss Stanislavsky 13-16**

Thursday, November 20

**1<sup>st</sup> showing of monologues (1-8)**

**Week Fourteen**

Tuesday, November 25

**1<sup>st</sup> showing of monologues (9-16)**

THANKSGIVING Wednesday 26-Sunday November 30

**Week Fifteen**

Tuesday, December 2

**Final showing of monologues (1-8)**

**I AND YOU, MANBITES DOG, December 4-20**

Thursday, December 4

**Final showing of monologues (9-16)**

**FINALS ACTING 1005-1135 FINAL: DECEMBER 13 200-500**