

**Furman University**  
**Department of Theatre Arts**  
THA120-02: Acting, 4 Credit Hours  
Spring 2012, TR 2:30-3:45, Studio Theatre at The Playhouse

Instructor: Maegan McNerney Azar

Office Hours: MF 11:00-12:00 noon

Office Location: Green Room at The Playhouse

Office Phone: (864) 294-2127

Email: maegan.azar@furman.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Training in the basic elements of the actor's craft. The course will explore the study and practice of basic principles of realistic acting as outlined by Stanislavski and others. The work will center on modern scene study, company cohesion, exercises, literature, and observation.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- Learn and apply basic principles of acting.
- Establish an informed vocabulary of these principles to use while discussing the craft.
- Develop a complete technical warm-up.
- Relaxation, focus, and trust within the studio setting.
- Develop a personal process of approaching a role.
- Analyze characters from dramatic literature from an actor's perspective.
- Develop professional and effective rehearsal technique.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

- Shurtleff, Michael. *Audition*. (AUD)
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*. (STAN)

*You will also need to find various plays in the library or elsewhere from which monologues and scenes can be chosen.*

**RECOMMENDED TEXT & EXCERPTS ON MOODLE:**

- Kissel, Howard. *Stella Adler the Art of Acting*. (ADL)

**CLASS POLICIES:**

**ATTENDANCE:** You are allowed 3 absences. Any subsequent absence will lower your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. Tardiness is not tolerated, it is a disruption to you and your classmates' processes. Three tardies equal an absence, and therefore a significantly lower grade. If you arrive after 20 minutes from the beginning of class, you are considered absent and will not be graded for the day's activities. **If you are going to miss a presentation day, you must let me and your partner know at least twenty-four hours in advance or receive a grade of zero on the assignment.** For the purpose of this course, there is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence.

**CLOTHING:** Dress appropriately for the situation at hand, the class calendar will outline daily activities. Days that are reserved for presentations and exercises require clothing that allows for free movement. Refrain from tight, restrictive clothing and excessively baggy clothing. No jeans. Appropriate footwear is also necessary; no flip flops, sandals, or high heels. No bulky or dangly jewelry. Pull hair back, out of the face. Hats are not permitted at any time in the acting studio. *Appropriate clothing is important for preparing your mind and body to work. Those that are not dressed appropriately will be given a tardy for the day. Come to class ready to participate.*

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Part of learning the acting process is also learning how to act professionally. Unprofessional conduct will not be tolerated. Furthermore, in order to fully explore the acting process, you are encouraged to take risks in a safe environment. Grotowski suggests that "One must create an atmosphere, a working system, in which the actor feels he can do anything, and that nothing he does will be mocked, that all will be understood," (*Les Lettres francais*). Any student that destroys the safe zone of the acting studio will be asked to reconsider their choice in taking this class.

- No food or drinks are permitted in the acting space.
- Turn off your cell phones; if your phone rings in class, you will receive a tardy for the day.
- Respect your acting space - whether in class or in rehearsal, **strike your furniture.**
- No photography, audio or video recording is permitted without permission from the instructor and each student in class. Posting of these items to the internet requires written permission from all involved.

PERFORMANCE ATTENDANCE: THA120 students are required to attend University Theatre Arts productions. There are two productions during the semester. You are also required to see one of the other productions listed below. **A writing assignment on the production will be completed in your journal and is to be turned in as such.** Do not wait until the last minute to get your tickets. The Furman box office is open Monday through Friday 9:00-5:00 the week prior to the show, ticket prices are \$8 for students.

<b>Furman's <i>Circle Mirror Transformation</i></b>	February 8-11, 15-18 at 8:00 pm, matinee Feb 12 at 3:00 pm
Centre Stage's <i>Rumors</i>	February 16-19, 23-26, March 1-3 (tickets are \$15)
The Warehouse Theatre's <i>Merchant of Venice</i>	March 16-18, 22-25, 29-31 (tickets are \$20)
<b>Furman's <i>Beyond Therapy</i></b>	April 12-14, 18-21 at 8:00 pm, matinee April 15 at 3:00 pm
Clemson Players' <i>Proof</i>	April 16-22 (tickets are \$6)

WRITTEN WORK: All papers and assignments **must be handed in on time.** For each class that the assignment is late, you will receive 5 points off the final grade. You have **one week** to turn in an assignment (with exception for the final paper, which must be completed on time), after that you will receive a grade of zero. Papers must be typed, stapled, and 1.5 or double spaced. Please use Times New Roman or Garamond 12 point font in black ink. Please no title pages. Papers should be free of spelling, grammatical, and compositional errors. Include bibliographical material, annotated where appropriate. MLA style.

PRESENTATION WORK: You are expected to prepare and rehearse scenes and monologues outside of class for in-class evaluation and discussion. Rehearsals are your time to work with partners and share problems that you may be having; those who let their partners down will be let down in the end. **If you are not prepared for in-class presentation, you will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.** Those who have an unexcused absence on the day of a presentation will receive a zero for the assignment, but will be required to make-up the assignment for their partner's sake. If you know you are going to be absent on the day of a presentation, schedule a session ahead of time to present your piece for a grade. You must let me know **twenty-four hours** in advance if you are to be allowed to make-up the presentation for a grade. Also, learning how to constructively interpret classmates' work is vital. You are required to be in attendance on presentation days, even if you are not performing. **Those not in attendance on presentation days will receive 10 points off their class participation grade. Also, you must attend THA120's Finalpalooza night. No exceptions.**

TUTORIALS: THA120 students must meet at least once during the semester with the instructor for a 15- to 20-minute private tutorial. Use this time to discuss your progress in the course, difficulty with acting issues, or concerns regarding specific scene work. It is your time, so be prepared with specific material and/or concerns. Furthermore, your monologues and second scene must have at least one out-of-class rehearsal with the instructor. Feel free to make additional appointments or rehearsals with the instructor throughout the semester to work pieces or discuss grades.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students at Furman University are held to the highest standards of academic integrity. All acts of dishonesty in any work including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, and unacceptable collaboration are violations of Furman's academic integrity standard. The Academic Integrity Policy will be followed in any case of violations. This policy is outlined in *The Helmsman* and the academic integrity portion of the Furman University website.

SENIOR SYNTHESIS MATERIALS: All Senior Theatre Arts majors (beginning with the graduating class of 2013) will be required to complete a Senior Synthesis project. Graded materials from this course may be used and should be saved for these projects.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

An open mind, and the courage to explore it in public.

No talking in class, unless it is in direct response to class work. Nothing your neighbor says could possibly be more important than your own education.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:** This grade is based on your commitment to activities and discussion in class, the creation of a safe working environment for fellow classmates, your carte blanche, your observation, your tutorial and out-of-class coaching attendance, your attendance on presentation days, and your preparedness for presentations and daily exercises.

**REHEARSAL:** Students are expected to prepare and rehearse scenes and monologues outside of class.

**PRESENTATION:** You will have 2 scenes (3-4 minutes in length) and 2 monologues (60-seconds in length) to present in class, plus various other items for exercises (carte blanche and observation). Scene I will be chosen by your instructor. Scene II and the monologues will be of your choosing (within parameters set by the instructor). Each piece will be evaluated several times so that your process as well as your product can be considered. Scenes and monologues will be evaluated on preparation, commitment to action, textual analysis, growth, and ability to incorporate notes into presentation.

**JOURNALS:** Journals should be kept in a bound or spiral notebook. These notebooks will be collected four times throughout the semester. They should be an account of your personal experiences in class and during rehearsals. This is also another opportunity to communicate with your instructor. **No late journals will be accepted.** Journals must include --

- a list of every day's activities/exercises and your response to them (this includes responses to your classmates' scenes/monologues on presentation days)
- guided journal entries and Moodle posts
  - You must **respond** to each forum discussion topic on Moodle. Responses are due each week by 2:30 pm on Thursday. Poor responses may say, for example, "I hated/was bored by/didn't understand/loved this text" and don't give any reason why. This should not be a summary. Better responses will react to an issue in the text or raise a question about the topic *and* try to pose an answer to it. Late responses will not be accepted.
- an account of your out of class rehearsals
- character biographies
- response to theatre performances
- personal analysis of your presentation work

**PLAY RESPONSES:** You will write a response to the 3 productions that you view. This 1-page (2-pages if hand-written), thoughtful response to the production must be based on what you view and hear. The specific topics of the paper on the University Productions will be determined by the instructor. The topic of the outside production is your choice. These responses are due in the Journal following your attendance of the performance. **You must turn in your ticket stub with your response.**

**MIDTERM EXAM:** You will have a midterm exam. It will cover general acting terms and staging essentials. It will benefit your growth as an actor to know and understand this terminology. Attendance is required. **You may only make-up the midterm exam if you have given the instructor 1-week notice of the excused absence.**

**CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES:** These two assignments will be based on information covered in class and will be applied to your scenes. They are to be completed with Journal turn-in #1 and #3 and should coincide with off book day for Scenes I and II. They can be written in your journals. The criteria for these assignments are listed on page 5.

PLAY CARDS: It is important for an actor to have a library of monologues from a variety of writers. You are required to turn in 8 monologues throughout the semester. You should read a play (full-length, non-musical) and choose a monologue from the material for either you or one of your classmates. It should be appropriate to age and type. These assignments are written assignments and should be completed as such. Play title, playwright, character name, and brief synopsis (4-6 sentences) of the play should be at the top of the page. Type the monologue below. Try for one page please.

PERSONAL APPROACH PAPER: Use your journal as a source to synthesize the work of the semester. What is your approach to a role? What steps do you take in preparing yourself? Warm-ups? Research? Biographies? Script work? If you were cast in a role tomorrow, how would you go about the process? Be complete. This paper should be no more than six pages long; there will be a first and final draft due.

GRADING/EVALUATION:

Class Participation	104 points
4 Journal Collections @ 25 points each	100 points
8 Play Cards @ 12 points each	96 points
2 Character Biographies @ 75 points each	150 points
3 Play Responses @ 25 points each	75 points
Scene I Presentation One	25 points
Scene I Presentation Two	50 points
Midterm Exam	25 points
Monologue Presentation One	50 points
Monologue Presentation Two	50 points
Scene II Presentation One	75 points
Final Presentation of Scene II	100 points
<u>Personal Approach Paper</u>	<u>100 points</u>
TOTAL	1000 points

GRADE SCALE:

98-100 = A+	88-89 = B+	78-79 = C+	68-69 = D+	0-59 = F
93-97 = A	83-87 = B	73-77 = C	63-67 = D	
90-92 = A -	80-82 = B -	70-72 = C -	60-62 = D -	

DISABILITIES:

To request disability accommodations, please contact the University's Disability Services Coordinator at (864) 294-2320 or visit [www.furman.edu/disability](http://www.furman.edu/disability). After initial arrangements are made with this office, contact this course's instructor.

## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHY

*The following twenty questions should be answered to the fullest extent possible using the given circumstances from the play and your imagination to fill in the gaps. There is no page requirement, but answer the questions fully.*

1. Actor's name
2. Name of the production
3. Character actor is playing
4. Character's sex
5. Character's emotional strengths and weaknesses
6. Character's physical features
7. Character's level of intelligence
8. Character's nationality
9. Character's economic status
10. Character's moral viewpoint

*Answer the following questions about your character in the first person. Be very specific and complete.*

11. Who am I? (character)
12. What time is it? (century, year, season, day, hour, minute)
13. Where am I? (country, city, house, room, area of the room)
14. What surrounds me? (animate and inanimate objects, use your senses)
15. What are the given circumstances? (past, present, and future events)
16. What is my relationship? (relation to total events, to other characters, and to objects)
17. What do I want? (Super-objective, objective for the scene, and mini-objectives)
18. What is in my way? (obstacles to each objective)
19. What do I do to get what I want? (actions)
20. Write a detailed autobiography of your character up to the moment your scene begins.

## TERMS AND PHRASES FOR ACTORS

Body positions		Action (Tactic)	Magic If
Full front		Objective	Super-Objective
Full back		Obstacle	Moment Before
Quarter		Given Circumstances	Stimulus
Profile/half		Beat	Resolution
Three quarters		Stakes	
Above	Aside	Ad lib	Apron
Business	Endowment	Build	Bomb
Blend	Blank	Below	Backstage
Call	Call Board	Cattle Call	Understudy
Clear Stage	Close in	Come Down	Counter
Cover	Cross	Topping Cues	X
Cue	Curtain coming in	Curtain going out	Downstage
Ensemble	Actor's Equity (AEA)	SAG	AFTRA
Flats	Flies	Focus	Fourth Wall
Give	Green Room	Grips	Ham
Hold	House	Ingenué	Diaphragm
Improvisation	Improvise	Kill	Thrust Stage
Off Stage	On Stage	Upstage	Upstaging
Places	Plant	Proscenium	Prompt Book
Props	Habit	Runthrough	Schtick
Stage Hands	Stage Directions	Stage Left	Stage Manager
Stage Right	Stage Superstitions	Stage Whisper	Take Stage
Pick-up Cues	Blocking	Arena Stage	Black Box

CLASS CALENDAR

SUBJECT TO CHANGE

ASSIGNMENTS

**WEEK ONE** - *What is acting?*

T Jan 10 Course Introductions/Syllabus & Get-to-Know-You  
R Jan 12 **Present Carte Blanche**, Warming Up

AUD PRO &  
STAN CH 5

**WEEK TWO** – *Moodle: observation...*

T Jan 17 Private Space/Company Cohesion  
R Jan 19 Partner Work

**Play Card #1**  
STAN CH 8

**WEEK THREE** - *List 25 things you want to do before you die.*

T Jan 24 **Present Observation**  
R Jan 26 Physical Awareness

STAN CH 4  
AUD CH 2 (1-6)

**WEEK FOUR** - *List 25 plays you want to read.*

T Jan 31 Vocal Awareness  
R Feb 2 Readthrough Scene I, Stanislavski System

**Play Card #2**  
STAN CH 7

**WEEK FIVE** – *Moodle: 12 Guideposts...*

T Feb 7 Stanislavski System, Blocking & Staging/Stage Picture  
R Feb 9 **Presentation One of Scene I** (off book)

Furman Theatre's *Circle Mirror Transformation* opens February 8

AUD CH 2 (7-12)  
**Journal #1 &  
Character Bio**

**WEEK SIX** - *What do you want out of this class in the next 2 months?*

T Feb 14 Theatre Games - The Where, The What, The Who  
R Feb 16 Workshop Scene I

Centre Stage's *Rumors* opens February 16

**Play Card #3**  
ADL CL 3

**WEEK SEVEN** - *Who is your biggest supporter? Why?*

T Feb 21 Workshop Scene I  
R Feb 23 Discuss *Circle Mirror Trans*, **Midterm Exam** (last day to drop)

**Play Card #4**

**WEEK EIGHT** – *Moodle: Stella Adler...*

T Feb 28 **Presentation Two of Scene I**  
R Mar 1 Action/Gibberish Exercises [Monologue Approval Deadline]

ADL CL 15  
**Journal #2**

Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC) March 7-11 in Chattanooga, Tennessee

T Mar 6 Spring Break  
R Mar 8 Spring Break

**WEEK NINE** - *Moodle: Shurtleff and auditions...*

T Mar 13 Readthrough Monologues/Audition Technique  
R Mar 15 **Presentation of Monologues**

The Warehouse Theatre's *Merchant of Venice* opens March 16

AUD CH 1 & 5  
**Play Card #5**

**WEEK TEN** – *What actor/actress do you admire? Why?*

T Mar 20 Workshop Monologues [Scene Approval Deadline]  
R Mar 22 Workshop Monologues

STAN CH 3  
**Play Card #6**

**WEEK ELEVEN** - *What were you like as a child?*

T Mar 27 TBA

R Mar 29 no class due to Furman Engaged!

**WEEK TWELVE** – *Moodle: Personal Approach preparation...*

T Apr 3 **Presentation of Monologues**, Readthrough Scene II

**Play Card #7**

R Apr 5 Workshop Scene II - Line Feeding/Line Touching/Repetition

ADL CL 10

**WEEK THIRTEEN** – *Have you gotten all that you can out of this class?*

Furman Theatre's *Beyond Therapy* opens April 12

T Apr 10 **Presentation One of Scene II** (off book)

**Journal #3 &  
Character Bio**

R Apr 12 Workshop Scene II - Normal/Slow/Fast Exercises

ADL CL 6

**WEEK FOURTEEN** – *Moodle: Stanislavski...*

Clemson Players' *Proof* opens April 16

Furman Theatre's Stage Combat Intensive with Cliff Williams April 20-21

T Apr 17 Business of Acting Discussion

**PA Draft Due**

R Apr 19 Partner Work on Givens

**Play Card #8**

*What does the author say about me, what do other characters say about me, what do I say about myself, how is this character similar and different from me, internal and external circumstances with scene partners.*

**WEEK FIFTEEN – Finalpalooza April 23 & 24 at 7:00 pm**

T Apr 24 **Last Day of Class** – Discuss *BT*, Sense Memory Exercises

STAN CH 9

**Journal #4, Personal Approach Paper, and Final Scene Presentation due** at Finalpalooza

**Final and Discussion** Friday, April 27 3:30-6:00 pm