Course Syllabus, Fall Semester 2019
Theatre 1220 – 001: 1st Year Acting for ATP
Course Instructor: Sarah Shippobotham, Professor

Course time: Mon, Weds & Fri 9.40am – 11.35pm
Classroom: PAB Room 110
Office: PAB 212
Office Hours: By appointment
E-mail: s.shippobotham@utah.edu
Dept. Phone: 801 581 6448
Cell Phone: 801 949 4558 - preferred method of contact

Pre-requisites: you must have been accepted into the Actor Training Program.

Course Description:
Introduces students to elements of acting through the use of self as a basis for investigation and discovery as well as introducing the concepts of playfulness, listening and responding, and acting upon one's partner.

Course Objectives:
My expectation is that at the end of this semester you will:
• Have a deeper understanding of yourself and your humanity.
• Understand the concept of revealing yourself in the work and through the work.
• Be willing to allow for the possibility that openness to failure breeds the probability of success. You will therefore be on the road to eliminating judgment and perfectionism from your work.
• Be more open to hearing your impulses and be more open to following them.
• Understand the importance of committing to being in the work at all times.
• Understand that simplicity is the key.
• Understand the difference between telling the audience what is happening and revealing to them what is happening.
• Understand the need for actions and objectives and be incorporating them into your work.
• Be employing given circumstances as a matter of course.
• Be allowing your imagination to be present as a matter of course.
• Understand the importance of focus and concentration.
• Have an understanding of what to look for when watching the work of your peers and professionals.

Course Overview:
This course is experiential and practical. It will primarily take the form of games and exercises and improvisations. There will be feedback and discussions, and performance projects that are prepared outside of class for in-class presentation. The rationale behind the course is a focus on opening you up so that you work towards a deeper understanding of yourself so that you reconnect to and develop your ability to play actively, with joy and with discipline. For me acting relates directly to playing because when done well they are both impulsive and in the moment. Everything we do will be working towards truth in the moment, presence in the moment, simplicity, and an aliveness and responsiveness to your partner/s. Be aware that you will be asked to delve deeply into yourselves at times and that to work to your best advantage will require an open questioning mind. Be interested in yourself, in how you operate and function, and have the same interest in the world and humanity around you. This class may explore all facets of language and human behaviour.
Teaching and Learning Methods:
- Games and exercises, which will encompass focus, movement, improvisation and communication.
- Monologue/poetry and scene work, which also includes improvisation.
- Discussions.
- Lectures.
- Presentations and performances.
- Written papers and journal work.
- Feedback.
- In and out of class coaching.
- Attendance at all Departmental and Pioneer Theatre Company shows during the semester.

Course Requirements:
- **Be a participant in whatever we do.** Students are expected to be actively involved in all aspects of the work whether sitting observing or performing. Your contribution to the class will be factored into your final grade.

- **Behave appropriately in the classroom.** This means: coming to class prepared with your homework assignments completed in a timely fashion and your texts memorized and ready to work by the set deadlines; no eating in class; no talking while other people are working; paying attention to what is going on while other people are working or performing – i.e. you DO NOT learn your lines or take a nap or do homework for other classes; no cell phone use during class – cell phones will be TURNED OFF at the beginning of class and only turned on again at the end of class – this includes during any breaks we may take so that you stay in the world that class is in; tidy up after yourself – put chairs, props and costumes away and should you have any garbage, throw it away before you leave! **You are required to bring a water bottle – with water in it! – to class at all times.** Once class starts I do not expect you to leave the room.

- **Wear the appropriate clothes to class.** You will need to dress in movement clothes – sweatpants and a T-shirt are best. No hats are to be worn in class – unless essential to a character you are portraying. Neither is gum to be chewed in class – unless it is essential to a character you are playing. In the event that we do scene work you should find clothes appropriate to the character you are playing and wear them whenever you present the scene.

- **Keep a journal.** Your journal will be a useful place to record your development over the term and should be used for reflection. It is a good place in which to get to know yourself better and to note down the questions to which you as yet you have no answers. It is also a good place in which to note your growth. I will take the journals in on: **Friday October 4th** and then again **AFTER YOUR ACTING FINAL**. Please see end of the syllabus for journal format.

- **Regular attendance.** You are allowed 2 absences – excused or unexcused – before your 3rd absence drops your grade a full letter. Your grade will drop by 1/3 letter for each absence after the 3rd. **For example:** If you have earned an “A”, with 5 absences, your final grade will compute to a C+. Presentation work missed in class will receive partial credit when the performance is given.

- **Be punctual.** Class starts on time. If you are late you may enter the room up until 5 minutes after the starting time, however you will be marked down as late. 3 lates
equal one absence. If you arrive more than 5 minutes after the class has started – and the time is taken from the “greenroom” clock – DO NOT ENTER THE ROOM. You will be marked absent. I suggest that you keep your absences for illness. I also strongly recommend that when you are ill you get a doctor’s note. In extraordinary circumstances – e.g. a family bereavement or a serious illness – then exceptions may be made.

- **Attendance at ATP Finals:** This is mandatory for everyone unless you have another class during the time of the ATP finals – in which case you are expected to attend your class. If you work during the times of the finals I would strongly encourage you to rearrange your work schedule for that week. If this proves to be impossible, please talk to me about it before ATP/MTP finals week. **Failure to appear at any ATP finals held during your ATP class time is counted as an absence.**

- **Attendance at ALL Departmental productions and ALL Pioneer Theatre Company (PTC) Productions.** We will be discussing each departmental production in class after the production closes. You are required to hand in two, two page papers on the two PTC productions you see. We will discuss the essay requirements in class.

  - I RECOMMEND THAT YOU GET YOUR TICKETS EARLY AS SHOWS SOLD OUT LAST YEAR. FAILURE TO SEE THE SHOW BECAUSE YOU LEFT IT TOO LATE TO GET TICKETS IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE REASON FOR NOT SEEING THE SHOW.
  - **FAILURE TO COMPLETE THESE PAPERS WILL RESULT IN YOU GETTING AN ‘E’ IN THAT ASSIGNMENT.** Handing in the assignment late will also adversely affect your grade in this portion of the class.

IF YOU ARE ABSENT DO NOT EXPECT ME TO MAKE UP THE TIME YOU MISSED. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND OUT FROM ONE OF YOUR PEERS WHAT YOU MISSED AND TO MAKE UP THE WORK.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT IN SCENE WORK YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE TO YOUR PARTNER AND YOU SHOULD TURN UP ON TIME AND PREPARED FOR ALL MUTUALLY SCHEDULED REHEARSAL TIMES AS WELL AS TO CLASS.

**Evaluation:**
The final grade will be determined as follows:
Performance and professionalism in class...........200 points
Presentations..............................................................200 points
Journal and written work........................................200 points

Performance in class will be based on your participation, attitude, willingness to work co-operatively, attendance and professionalism.

Evaluation is not based on talent. You are evaluated and graded on your commitment to the required work and how well you achieve the objectives of the class, based on your own capacity. You are only in competition with yourself! Please remember that the main aim of this class is to open you up to yourself and the world and to start you on the road to becoming an actor. Please also be advised that you will only grow and develop if you **PUT IN THE TIME TO PRACTISE THE WORK OUTSIDE OF CLASS. ACTING IS A VOCATION.**
Please keep me advised of your production commitments, course load, job responsibilities, and any other things that may affect your work in the classroom.

"Note: The syllabus is not a binding legal contract. It may be modified by the instructor when the student is given reasonable notice of the modification."

Important Dates for your Calendars: University Dates:

- **August 23**nd: Last day to register for classes without a permission code
- **August 30**th: Last day to add, drop, elect CR?NC, or audit classes AND TUITION PAYMENT DUE
- **September 2**nd: Labor Day Holiday
- **October 4**th: Journals handed in
- **October 6**th – **13**th: Fall Break
- **October 18**th: Last day to withdraw from term-length classes
- **November 28**th to **Dec 1**st: Thanksgiving Break
- **December 5**th: Classes end and Journals handed in
- **December 6**th: Reading Day
- **December 9**th to **13**th: University Finals

**Make-up Policy:** Course work will be allowed to be made up only under extraordinary extenuating circumstances at the judgment of the instructor. Because the course depends on the collaboration of students in exercise and scene-work, each student is expected to be in class and on time. Acting is process work. Each class builds on the previous class' progress. Respect and consideration are necessary components of the process.

**Faculty Responsibilities**

“All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviour, and I will do so, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behaviour Committee.”

"Faculty must strive in the classroom to maintain a climate conducive to thinking and learning." PPM 8–12.3, B. “Students have a right to support and assistance from the University in maintaining a climate conducive to thinking and learning." PPM 8–10, II. A.

**Students with Disabilities**

"The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581–5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations." (www.hr.utah.edu/oep/ada/guide/faculty/)
Non-discrimination
The University of Utah is fully committed to affirmative action and to its policies of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in all programs, activities, and employment with regard to race, colour, national origin, sex, age, status as a person with a disability, religion, sexual orientation, and status as a veteran or disabled veteran.

Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment is unwanted, unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. It is a form of discrimination and a violation of University policy, Student and Faculty Codes, and state and federal laws. Report any sexual harassment of which you become aware, and be sensitive to how others view what you say and do. If you feel you are being sexually harassed or are uncertain about whether you are experiencing sexual harassment, talk to a faculty member, University official, or contact the Office of Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 581-8365 (V/TDD).

It is the policy of the University of Utah to maintain an academic and work environment free of sexual harassment for students, faculty, staff and participants. Any student, staff, faculty member or participant in university services or activities who believes that there is or has been any sexual harassment should contact any of the following:

1) Cognizant academic chair of the department or dean of the college within which the conduct occurred;
2) Immediate supervisor or director of the operational unit within which the conduct occurred;
3) Human Resources Division;
4) Directors or deans of Student Affairs and Services;
or
5) Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

Accommodations Policy
Some of the writings, lectures, films or presentations in this course may include material that conflicts with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to see if the course is one that you are committed to taking. If you have a concern, please discuss it with me at your earliest convenience.

Respect for Diversity
We intend that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that the students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit.

PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE FOR JOURNAL FORMAT:

Freshman Journal Format:
Your journal will be presented in the following way:
A record of:

- The exercises and explorations we do in class.
- Your observations and experiences as a result of doing those exercises and explorations. Allow your observations to include how you felt physically and how you felt emotionally.
- Questions you might have in relation to your observations. These may be questions about – but not limited to – the reasons behind an exercise or game or your response to a particular exercise or game.
- Your discoveries as they relate to your knowledge of yourself and your development as an actor.
- Your reactions to what you are learning about yourself and the art and craft of acting.
- Any questions you may have about your responses.

Example of a good journal entry:

August 24th

First day of class!

We played “Stuck in the Mud” and we did an exercise called “I am…this is/these are my friend/s………….We also moved to music at the end of class exploring the space with different parts of our bodies leading and then we found a partner, moved with them, attached right hand to right hand, finally freezing in a finishing pose. Half of the class looked at the other half’s final position and then we reversed. We also played Giants, Wizards, Dwarves.

When I first walked in to class I noticed that my stomach felt like it had knots in it and that I had a hard time breathing. My shoulders were tight, up around my ears and my palms were sweaty. By the end of class I noticed that breathing was easier and using more of my body – in fact it was easier first after we played Stuck in the Mud – perhaps because of the running around. At the end of SitM when we lay on the floor I noticed that my breathing calmed down a lot and that I felt a sense of space in my torso that I hadn’t noticed before. My palms stopped sweating at the end of SitM and my feet were hot – what could that be about?

I was surprised to notice that although I was nervous for the first day of class – what will I think of my classmates and what will they think of me? – once I started running around, I forgot to be worried. I think this was because I began to focus on the other people in the class and not myself. I focused on my partners and then my fear went away. I got caught many times and although at first I didn’t enjoy it because I felt like I was failing at the game, ultimately I realized I had more fun if I allowed myself to ‘fail’ – get caught – because then I had people come and rescue me so I got to interact with more people from class.

At first when we played Giants, Wizards, Dwarves I found it hard to commit to being silly like that. What does this have to do with acting? However, once I let myself go and committed my body to the shapes my group created I had a great time and I found myself laughing so hard that I almost couldn’t stop. When we sat in our groups of four and talked about what we had done today, someone mentioned that they thought G,W,D was about being in the moment – I have to pay attention to know whether I am chasing or being chased and that it could be about having the courage to make big choices and
to believe in them. When I thought about those comments I could see that that could be the purpose of the exercise.

The movement at the end of class was interesting. I noticed that I had a hard time letting go of judgment. I was constantly worried about being good enough and what other people were doing. I noticed that I was focused on wanting to be the best and that that got in my way. There were moments though when I could let go of that and just allow the music to take me over. I got really interested in leading with my right elbow. I have never really been aware of that part of my body before. I noticed that leading with my elbow made the movements angular and sharp, which didn’t always go with the music that Sarah played. Once I let go of being worried about being wrong though, I enjoyed following my elbow and moving in ways that are very different to how I normally move. When we had to find a partner and move with them – joined by the hand – I again got worried that what I was doing wouldn’t be good enough and that I would let my partner down. I was amazed though by the energy that my partner put out towards me. I felt him/her pulling me in to them and asking me to create with them as opposed to against them and then the stuff that came up was amazing. I felt a story being created. In my head s/he was my long lost lover and we had just re–found each other and we were trying to work out our new relationship. I began to feel really warm towards someone I don’t even know and when at one point s/he seemed to be moving away from me I actually started to feel lost and sad. That was really surprising.

**Example of a bad journal entry:**

We played games – stuck in the mud, Giants, Wizards, Dwarves, a name game and we did some dancing. I really liked it. I had fun.