

**THEA 2291—Acting I  
Fall, 2017**

**Tuesday, Thursday**

**9:30a.m.—10:45p.m. Martha Munro**

**Acting Studio, Rm 105**

**Instructor:** Shelly Elman  
**Office:** Martha Munro Rm 207C  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 11:30—12:30; 2:00—5:00, or by appointment  
Wednesdays 2:00—5:00, or by appointment  
Tuesdays, Thursdays 2:00—5:00, or by appointment  
**Phone:** 678.839.4704 (Office & Message)  
**e-mail:** [relman@westga.edu](mailto:relman@westga.edu)  
**Course Den:** <https://westga.view.usg.edu/>; 678.839.6428 (help desk); distance@westga.edu  
**Text:** *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen

This course examines the process toward becoming an actor. Through improvisation, scene study, and monologue work, the student will begin to develop her/his own process toward developing a character.

This course is required for all theatre majors. It is the course that introduces the technique of developing a character. We will use *Respect for Acting* by Uta Hagen, which is a Stanislavski based technique. We will explore Stanislavski's psychologically motivated acting first and foremost. What this course should be is a catalyst for the young actor to develop a process toward creating a character. What has perhaps come to you from instinct, you will now try to harness in order to find your own acting process. What is explored in this class should not stay in the class; that is, once the semester ends, you should continue to explore the techniques and ways of developing your characters.

**THIS COURSE WILL FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING DEGREE OUTCOMES:**

- *Students will express through performance, writing, speaking and other modes of communication the results of research and critical judgment, indicated by a demonstrable ability to reach an audience effectively through at least one of the components of theatrical art.*
- *Students will illustrate awareness of the complex human condition acquired through aesthetic and intellectual perceptions as evidenced in various modes of theatrical production.*
- *Students will express through performance, writing, speaking and other modes of communication the results of research and critical judgment, indicated by a demonstrable ability to reach an audience effectively through at least one of the components of theatrical art.*
- *Students will apply skills learned in courses to a variety of work and social environments.*

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- Students will explain their process for creating a character.
- Students will identify the responsibilities of an actor.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to collaborate with others to create a scene.
- Students will break down a script in order to analyze it from their character's point of view.

**OFFICE HOURS:**

I am available to address matters of concern during my office hours. If those hours are not convenient, please schedule an appointment. If you visit my office at other times, I may not be available because of other duties I must attend to.

If you have problems in the class, it is your responsibility to initiate contact with me. I cannot help you if you do not communicate with me. Let me know of any problems early in the semester. I will not accept excuses for poor performance or missing presentations, especially late in the semester.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- **Clothing:** It's important that proper clothing is worn when attending and participating in class. Proper clothing is defined as that which allows you to move. Tight-fitting clothing, formal clothing that will not allow you to roll around on the floor, and any clothing that makes you self-conscious is not appropriate for this class. Additionally, wearing flip-flops is also inappropriate for our class sessions. In fact, it's extremely unsafe for a minority of students to go barefoot in class while others have shoes on. **Please dress to move; that is, wear clothing that will allow you to move around, do floor work, and that will not make you feel self-conscious. Wear tennis shoes, or shoes that support your feet properly.**
- **Be on time!** Class begins promptly at 9:30 a.m. It is important that scene and/or monologue work is not interrupted by doors opening and closing, by people noisily walking into the room, etc. Warm ups begin the class, if you walk in after warm ups have started you will be considered late. Two lates will count as one absence.

- **Attendance Policy:** Attendance to this class is very important; therefore, you will be required to be present on all presentation days (even when you are not presenting). You are allowed two absences for the semester (not on presentation days). Every absence after the two will result in a three-point deduction of your attendance/participation grade.
- **Active Participation:** You will be expected to comment on your classmates' work. These comments will be constructive and not personal; comments should be couched in positive, non-judgmental terms. This class, like all acting classes, is based on showing a grasp of the knowledge presented and an improvement in the dialogue work. No one will be graded on if they are "good" or "bad". The only results we will be striving for will be those found in formulating a process and improvement from scene to scene. Observation of scenes/monologues is just as important as presenting scenes/monologues. **Willingness to perform, preparatory work outside of class (rehearsals and memorization), attitude and enthusiasm in performing activities as set forth by the instructor will all be taken into consideration when a grade is issued.** Please don't make me coax comments out of you; if you do not participate in the evaluation segment of the course your participation grade may suffer.
- **About being a responsible, generous acting partner:** this course requires that you work with a partner. Being a responsible, generous, and cooperative partner is essential to your success in preparing scenes and characters. This means you will need to work together outside of class time. It also means that you learn how to collaborate with another person. Being a good partner is coming to rehearsals and presentations prepared—working on your character, line memorization, reading the play the scene is in, for example—for rehearsals and presentations. Being a good partner is NOT about directing the other person in your scene, by giving her/him notes, telling her/him they are wrong in their choices, etc. It's about learning how to communicate and get what you need from a partner by working on your own character and the relationship that each character has to the other. It's about agreeing upon what the scene is about and how it fits into the rest of the play. It's about rehearsing and preparing—the process of creating characters and relationships in relation to given circumstances, environment, objectives, and tactics—which should be a passion.
- **Readings:** You will be assigned readings for class. One-page essays answering questions about your process toward creating a character **must** include references to, and application of, exercises and/or techniques as discussed in *Respect for Acting*. It is important that you actually read the material for each class.
- **One-page Essays:** As stated earlier, at certain points in the semester, students will be required to write one-page essays (500 words) answering assigned questions. These essays should be in 12 point font, margins should be no bigger than one-inch, and should be typed single-spaced. The essays should be grammatically correct, should spell words correctly, and should NOT be written in the style of twitter or texting. Your name should be on the document. The assigned questions can be found in a section following this one in this syllabus.
- **Each student is required to see *Godspell* and *The Scarlet Letter* this semester. Performance reports based on the acting in each production will be required as well.**
- **Course Den:** Course Den will be used as a place to keep important information for the course. It should NOT be used to send the instructor email messages or to turn in assignments, unless otherwise directed by the instructor. Please use my UWG email address for correspondences.
- Extra Credit is at the discretion of the instructor. If extra credit is offered, it will be announced in class.
- **Scenes should be memorized for each presentation. NO EXCUSES!!**
- **Character Analysis and Beat work:** will be assigned to each scene. Character Analyses should be prepared in the format provided. Any deviation from the format will result in point deductions. Copies of the scene that show a breakdown of beats (units) in the scene will also be due with each character analysis.
- **Please note: Physical adjustments will be made in this course. The instructor will always identify the area to be touched before making the adjustment.**
- **Always bring copies of your scenes with you to class.**
- **CELL PHONES: Turn them off for class! If cell phones ringing during class becomes a problem throughout the semester, each and every class member will face point deductions from their final grade at the discretion of the instructor.**
- **This syllabus is subject to change. It is your responsibility to get any changes made to it.**

#### ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- **Accessibility Services:** Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only

from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact Accessibility Services.

- **Center for Academic Success:** The Center for Academic Success provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or [cas@westga.edu](mailto:cas@westga.edu)
- **University Writing Center:** The University Writing Center assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or [writing@westga.edu](mailto:writing@westga.edu)

### HONOR CODE

- At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing. The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's conduct record at UWG. Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the Student Handbook

### UWG EMAIL POLICY

- University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

### CREDIT HOUR POLICY

- The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

### SPECIAL NEEDS

- I will make special arrangements for students with special needs. Don't wait until after the first presentation or assignment to talk with me! Don't try and "wing it" without telling me about your particular problem or needs. If you need special accommodations for exams, let me know **early**, not a few days before the scene or assignment due date. I am here to facilitate your learning, but I need to be informed to do so.

For information about Campus Carry, please go to

[https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/faculty-resources/common\\_language\\_for\\_course\\_syllabi\\_v2.pdf](https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/faculty-resources/common_language_for_course_syllabi_v2.pdf)

**GRADING:**Assigned Material

- Active Participation 10 points
  - includes oral scene evaluations, attitude in participating in exercises, etc.)
- Three One-page Journal Essays 30 points
  - Each essay will focus on not only the assigned reading, but also on how they are translated in the exercises. That is, you should comment in your essays about the **doing** of the exercises as outlined in the book, even if we haven't done those exercises in class (this means that part of your reading assignments will be to translate the reading into **doing**. To do the exercises in your home and then to comment on them in these essays.
  - Each journal essay will be worth 10 points.
- Performance Reports 30 points
  - You will be required to write two response papers focusing solely on the acting of each production. These reports must include reference to the various techniques Hagen defines in the *Respect for Acting* text (i.e. Destination, Three Entrances, Objective, etc.). By reference, I mean that you should include identify how these techniques are utilized (or not) by specific actors in the productions. Please see the course schedule for the performance dates and times of each production.
  - Each report is worth 15 points.
- Scene #1: Structured Improvisation presentation & Analysis 55 points
  - Character Analysis (please see pages at the end of this syllabus) 15 points
  - Beat breakdown of scene 10 points
  - Scene presentation 15 points
  - Scene presentation redo 15 points
- Interview: 20 points
  - Choose a person to study (this person may NOT be someone you know well, may NOT be your roommate, and may NOT be a theatre major). Arrange a time to interview them. Please make sure you ask permission to record the interview session (sound or video). The interview should last no less than 20 minutes and no more than 30 and should be about the person being interviewed. It's about getting the details of their life, so make sure you ask questions that provoke responses (rather than one word answers) and ask follow up questions that provoke the person to talk about her/himself. It is important that you don't prejudge or have any preconceived notions about this person. Ask the person at least three of the following questions (more if you need to get them to keep talking):
    - What is your best childhood memory?
    - If you had a chance for a "do-over" in life, what would you do differently?
    - Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do?
    - Have you ever come close to death?
    - What are you passionate about?
    - Do you remember the circumstances of your birth?
    - What do you feel most proud of?
    - If you could keep only five possessions, what would they be?
    - What do you want your tombstone to say?
    - What was one of your most defining moments in life?
    - Who do you admire most in life?
    - What are you most afraid of?
    - What was your most embarrassing moment?
    - What does a perfect day look like to you?
    - How would your friends describe you?
  - A transcript of the interview will be collected and graded. A transcript is the word-for-word document of the recorded interview. It should be typed, saved, and printed in order to hand in on the deadline as stated in the course schedule.
- Interview Monologue 55 points
  - From the interview as described above, write a monologue based on the facts of the interview, and your development of the character.
  - This character does NOT have to be just like the person you interviewed; rather, this character has to be believable and honest. This means that you can use your imagination to answer questions that still might be lingering.
    - Character Analysis (please see pages at the end of this syllabus) 15 points
    - Beat breakdown of monologue 10 points
    - Monologue Presentation 15 points
    - Monologue Presentation redo 15 points

- Final Scene: 50 points
  - You will be assigned a play and a partner. You and your partner will select a scene from the play.
  - The scene must be a minimum of two pages, and no longer than 3.
    - Character Analysis (please see pages at the end of this syllabus) 20 points
    - Beat breakdown of monologue 10 points
    - Scene Presentation 20 points

Grading Scale

224—250	A	149--173	D
199—223	B	148-Below	F
174—198	C		

WEEK 1

August TH10 Warm Up  
Introduction  
Discuss Syllabus  
Discuss class protocol and behavior  
Exercises/Improvisation  
**Signed Physical Contact Agreement due**

WEEK 2

T15 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisation Objectives & Obstacles  
**Read: Hagen: Introduction & Concept**  
Handout Structured Improv Scenes & Partners

TH17 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisation  
Goal & Obstacle  
GOTE

WEEK 3

T22 Warm Up  
**Read: Hagen: Identity & Substitution**  
Exercises/Improvisation  
Expectations in Structured Improvs

TH24 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisation  
Responding to scene presentations

WEEK 4

T29 Warm Up  
**Read: Hagen: Emotional Memory & Sense Memory**  
Tactics in Structured Improvs

TH31 Warm Up  
Rehearse Scene 1 Structured Improvisations (peer review)  
Review GOTE

WEEK 5

September T5 Warm Up  
**Due: Scene #1: Structured Improvisations Presentations**  
Presentation responses

TH7 Warm Up  
TBA Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Hagen: The Five Senses, Thinking, Walking and Talking, Improvisation, and Reality**

WEEK 6

T12 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Due: One-page Journal Essay Part 1**

TH14 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Due: Scene #1: Structured Improvisations Redo Presentations**  
Preparing a Role

WEEK 7

T19 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
Staging a Scene  
**Due: Interview Transcript**

TH21 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
Staging the Scene

WEEK 8: *Godspell* runs Wednesday—Saturday, September 27—30 at 7:30pm and Sunday, October 1 at 2:30pm in the Townsend Center Mainstage

T26 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations

TH28 TBA

**(September 29 is the last day to withdraw with a grade 'W')**

WEEK 9

October

T3 Warm up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Hagen: Part II: Introduction, The Basic Object Exercise Three Entrances**  
**Due: *Godspell* Performance Response**

TH5 Fall break, no class

WEEK 10

T10 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Due: Written Interview Monologue** (peer review and to turn in)  
Choices

TH12 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Hagen: Part II: Immediacy, The Fourth Wall, Endowment, Talking to Yourself**

**F13 Playwright Tony Kushner Keynote Address for Georgia Theatre Conference at 1:00pm in the Coliseum**

WEEK 11

T17 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
Work Interview Monologues

TH19 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Hagen: Finish Part II: Outdoors, Conditioning Forces, History, Character Action**  
**Due: Interview Monologue Presentations**  
Presentation response

WEEK 12

T24 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisation  
**Due: One Page Journal Essay Part 2**  
Final Scene Play/Partners figured out

TH26 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Hagen: Part III Introduction, The First Contact with the Play The Character, Circumstances**

WEEK 13

T31 Warm Up  
Through line  
**Due: Interview Monologue Presentations redo**

November TH2 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Hagen: Part III: Relationships, The Objective, The Obstacle**

**WEEK 14 : *The Scarlet Letter* performs November 8-11 and 14-17 at 7:30pm and November 12 at 2:30pm in the Townsend Center Dangle Theatre**

T7 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations

TH9 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: The Action The Rehearsal**

WEEK 15

T14 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations  
**Read: Practical Problems Communication, Style, Epilogue**  
**Due: *The Scarlet Letter* Performance Response**

TH16 No Class  
**Due through email: One Page Journal Essay Part 3**

WEEK 16

T21 Happy Thanksgiving! No Class

TH23 Happy Thanksgiving! No Class

WEEK 17

T28 Warm Up  
Exercises/Improvisations

TH30 **Last Day of Classes**  
**Due: Final Scene Presentations**

WEEK 18

December T7 **8--10 a.m. TBA**

**Physical Contact**  
**A statement of understanding**

Physical contact between teacher and student, student and student, and student and self is a traditional and effective pedagogical tool used to train actors in acting, voice, stage movement classes, rehearsals and coaching sessions. The teacher may employ gentle touch in order to educate and facilitate:

1. The execution of safe and effective motion
2. Improved alignment
3. Help with breathing and sound production
4. The identification of habitual holding patterns and areas of tension
5. An increase in flexibility and mobility
6. An increase in release and relaxation
7. The deepening of an emotional or behavioral response

Physical contact will always take place during class time and rehearsals with other students. The physical contact is never intended to be sexual in nature nor demean the student in any way and will never be used on the breast or genital area. If you have an injury, chronic condition, or area of sensitivity or pain, please notify the instructor immediately.

If the student is uncomfortable at any time with the physical contact, he or she should immediately inform the instructor, or wait until after class, whichever the student prefers. In the case where a student feels uncomfortable with physical contact, the instructor will immediately cease this practice with that particular student and discuss the practice at a later time. The student may also at any time say "STOP" or move away from the contact in order to end it. **A REQUEST BY THE STUDENT TO CEASE ANY PHYSICAL CONTACT WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE STUDENT'S GRADE.**

The instructor will give a sample demonstration of "hands on work" at the first class to familiarize students with this process if requested by any student in the class.

Thank you,  
Shelly Elman

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_