

SYLLABUS

THP 194: Special Topic: Understanding Acting (iCourse) Fall 2018, Session B

School of Film, Dance and Theatre

Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, Arizona State University

Course Site: <https://understandingacting.hol.asu.edu/>

Herberger Online Support: <https://courses.hol.asu.edu/help/>

Instructor: Joya Scott, MFA

Office: West Hall 246

Office Hours: Drop-in time on Tuesdays 3-5pm or by appointment via [Skype](#)

Email: UnderstandingActing@asu.edu ← PLEASE NOTE SPECIAL EMAIL ADDRESS FOR THIS CLASS.

IMPORTANT:

Please read this entire syllabus carefully. If you continue with this course, you are responsible for the information contained in this document.

Before contacting the instructor with questions during our course, please first check this syllabus and the course site. The instructor is not able to re-answer via email questions whose answers are already provided in the syllabus or on the course site.

Course Description

In this online course, students will analyze great performances of stage and screen, learn how the best actors train and practice their craft, and improve their skill in working with actors by learning how actors work.

Enrollment Requirements

None.

Course Objectives

- To aid students in developing an understanding of acting history, styles, and techniques
- To give students the tools to cultivate a critical eye and a vocabulary for evaluating acting choices in the work they see
- To help students of all disciplines understand the actor's craft and creativity and work more effectively with actors

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to the Western acting tradition as popularized in mainstream American and British film and theatre from the past century. Students will learn about the differences between acting for camera and acting for the stage. They will examine different styles of performance, learn techniques many actors use to prepare for roles, and “reverse-engineer” excellent performances captured on film. While not a substitute for an in-person acting class, Understanding Acting provides a window into the actor's process and is designed to increase students' appreciation for and understanding of this craft.

This course requires significant writing and critical thinking, as well as proficiency with digital/web-based platforms. Per ABOR guidelines for workload per credit hour, it is designed to take the average student approximately 135 hours (i.e., 45 hours/credit) to complete this course successfully.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to...

- Identify key moments in the evolution of major Western acting techniques.
- Compare and contrast styles of acting.
- Analyze an actor's performance in the context of a larger work of theatre or film.
- Compare and contrast the methods and goals of various types of actor training.
- Apply several script analysis and research tools actors use when approaching a role.
- Identify a character's dramatic function in a script.
- Understand how actors use objectives, tactics, and other tools of the Stanislavskian tradition to create a performance.

Required Texts and Video Materials

- Required Textbook/Video Purchases:
 - Primary text: *FLIXACTING, Volumes 1 and 2* by Joe Olivieri and Catherine Telford. This is a multimedia ebook that uses Adobe Digital Editions. (You must buy both volumes at flixacting.com and also download/install the free ebook reader software from Adobe. **Please download and test this app and ebook during the first few days of class to ensure it works on your computer.** See below for tech support contact info if you encounter any problems.)
 - [Digital course pack](#) published by Xanedu
 - *Malcolm X* (1992 film directed by Spike Lee)—available for rent for \$2.99 from various [streaming services](#)
- All other videos, films, book excerpts, and articles will be provided by the instructor or available for free via the ASU library e-reserves or on the internet.

Course Expectations and Student Responsibilities

Online Course Responsibilities, Technical Requirements, and Technical Support:

- **IMPORTANT:** This is an online course delivered entirely via the internet. **You should proceed with this course *only* if you have previous computer and internet experience and you're willing and able to assume the added personal responsibility of completing an online course.** (If you're not comfortable learning new applications and problem-solving on your computer when necessary, and then please choose an in-person course instead.)
- It is your responsibility to ensure you have **adequate computer resources** and **fast enough internet service** to view course materials, use the required multimedia textbook and digital course pack, and complete all online activities, screenings, assignments, etc. You will need a **standard laptop or desktop computer**. A mobile device, tablet, or netbook will not provide the access and functionality necessary for ASU's online courses.
- You should have at least two browsers on your computer. Any browser will work, though preferred browsers are [Chrome](#) and [Firefox](#), which can be downloaded for free online.
- If your computer or internet service malfunctions at any time during the semester, it is your responsibility to locate adequate resources elsewhere or withdraw from the course.
- I strongly recommend you do not wait until the last minute to submit your assignments, just in case of internet service disruptions at your location or other technical problems. Requests for extensions due to computer or internet malfunctions may not be granted.
- **If you have technical questions or difficulties, please do not contact the instructor.** Herberger Online handles all technical questions and issues that may arise in this course. Please **contact the Herberger Online support team** immediately if you encounter technical issues while completing an assignment and you are unable to resolve the problem and reset your work. When contacting Herberger Online, include the full name of this course (THP 194: Understanding Acting), the title and lesson number of the assignment you're having trouble with, a brief description of your problem, and detailed, step-by-step instructions to reproduce the problem. The Herberger Online support team is available to assist you **24 hours a day, 365 days a year**. You may reach them at:

- holsupport@asu.edu
- 888-298-4117
- 480-965-3057 (international)
- If you have any issues purchasing, downloading, or accessing the *FLIXACTING* ebooks or using the Adobe Digital Editions software, please contact the [publisher](#) and/or [Adobe](#) for technical support. Herberger Online does not administer these resources directly, and the instructor cannot provide detailed technical support for this application or ebook.
- If you have any issues purchasing, downloading, or accessing the course pack, please contact XanEdu at 800-218-5971.
- In all discussion board posts and other communication, you are expected to treat your instructor and your fellow classmates with respect. Debating ideas is fine, but ridiculing, insulting, or belittling others will not be accepted. Keep in mind that electronic communications do not have the advantage of nonverbal cues that are so much a part of interpersonal communication. Humor or satire can sometimes be misinterpreted in electronic communication forums. See [this page](#) for best practices in “netiquette” for online courses.

Instructor Information and Email Policy:

- **If you need to reach me about this course, please email UnderstandingActing@asu.edu**, the email address reserved for this course. If you contact me by other means, I can't guarantee a timely response.
- If you have questions about the course content or need extra help, please don't hesitate to reach out. Feel free to contact me via email or set up a Skype meeting.
- Communicating with students is one of my highest priorities, and I will reply to emails as soon as possible. That said, please allow at least 48 hours for a response during the busiest times of the semester. If you don't receive a reply within that timeframe, please feel free to send a polite follow-up message.

Course Content and Assessment:

- This course assumes you are prepared to read and write, as well as watch and analyze films, in English at the college level.
- Please review the Rubric for Written Work and ASU School of Film, Dance and Theatre Writing Standards (available on the course site) for a detailed description of the writing expectations for this course. In your written work, you will be graded on the ideas you present, the degree to which you draw upon course materials, and the clarity of your written expression. Please make sure to organize your thoughts in advance and proofread carefully.
- Our course materials include many examples from the canon of great performances of stage and screen from the last century. You will also read and analyze at least one play by a respected contemporary playwright. Some of the above contain vulgar language or adult content. If watching or reading such material is a concern for you, please contact the instructor immediately.

Workload, Course Schedule, and Late Work Policy:

- Online classes provide the flexibility of “attending” class at the time that is most convenient for you, but you should still plan a schedule to complete the work for each class. Online courses are just as rigorous as in-person courses, so expect your coursework to be challenging but rewarding.
- Remember, this is an **accelerated course that covers three credits worth of material in just five weeks**. Please plan accordingly.
- **Course structure:** This course is made up of **three units plus a final exam**. Units will unlock one at a time as the session progresses. Each unit consists of a series of lessons, and each lesson includes videos, readings from the textbook and/or other sources, and at least one graded assessment. You should **complete all the assigned reading and viewing assignments in a lesson before you attempt the graded assessment** for that lesson because you will be asked to employ the specific knowledge you've learned.

- Graded assessments in this course include quizzes, worksheets, discussion board posts, short essays, a final exam with essay questions, and a self-evaluation. Please **download the document entitled “Assessment Due Dates & Point Breakdowns”** from the course home page to view this session’s full list of graded assessments, point distributions, and due dates.
- Most weeks, **graded assessments will be due on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays**. You won’t receive reminders for every assignment; rather, it’s **your responsibility to keep track of due dates** and plan the time to complete each lesson. Before proceeding with the course, please consider your schedule for this semester carefully and ensure you have enough time to participate fully.
- **All assessments in this course are “open-book”/“open-notes,”** which means you are welcome to refer to the course materials while you answer the questions. (If you have any issues viewing the course materials while completing an assessment, please contact the HOL support team via the contact info above.)
- **Extensions** *before* an assignment’s due date: If you need an extension for an assignment and have a legitimate explanation for requiring extra time, please email me at least 24 hours before it’s due. Such extensions are not guaranteed and are at the instructor’s discretion.
- **Make-ups** *after* an assignment’s due date: In general, late work will not be accepted except in the case of a serious medical issue or personal/family emergency. If such an event has occurred, please email me as soon as possible. Include proof in the form of a doctor’s note or other documentation if available, and I will give you a make-up for any assignments you missed due to the illness/emergency.
- Please **read all assessment instructions on the course site carefully**. You will not be granted a make-up if you neglected to read the instructions and therefore did a poor job on an assignment.
- **Course drop or withdrawal:** If you are unable to complete the course, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. You will not be automatically withdrawn if you stop participating partway through the session. Unless you officially withdraw from the course, you will receive a final grade based upon the total points you have earned for the semester. Students are required to pay all tuition and fees for any registered course unless enrollment is officially cancelled during the 100% refund period. Please visit the Academic Calendar to review the withdrawal deadlines for this semester. Click [here](#) or more information on drop/add and withdrawal. (Since this is an accelerated course, note that ASU’s drop/add deadline may be only a few days after the start of the class.)

Academic Integrity:

- **You are encouraged to do outside research for written work in this course, but you must cite all your sources.** Please use **MLA format**, including both parenthetical in-text citations and a Works Cited list. (Information on MLA format is available [here](#).) Please note that Wikipedia is *not* an accepted source for assignments in this class.
- **Plagiarism is not acceptable.** Plagiarism is defined as presenting the work of another as one’s own. **Do not copy or even paraphrase from anyone else’s work, including articles found online, without properly citing in MLA format.**
- Plagiarism is not the only possible violation of academic integrity. Please review [ASU’s academic integrity policies](#) for an explanation of each type of violation.
- Students who violate academic integrity may receive a failing grade for the assignment in question or, in the case of a severe violation, a failing grade for the course.

Accommodations:

- To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the [ASU Disability Resource Center](#). This is a very important step as accommodations may be difficult to make retroactively. If you have a letter from the DRC indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, please email this documentation to me no later than the end of the first week of the session so that your needs can be addressed effectively.

Course Outline

See course site for point breakdowns, detailed guidelines, and the schedule of due dates.

Unit 1: Acting History and Acting Styles

- Lesson 1: The Actor's Job
- Lesson 2: The History of Acting
- Lesson 3: Styles of Acting/Great Performances #1
- Lesson 4: An Actor Prepares

Unit 2: Character Research and Script Analysis

- Lesson 1: The Actor's Homework
- Lesson 2: Given Circumstances
- Lesson 3: Understanding A Character's Traits and Needs
- Lesson 4: Objectives
- Lesson 5: Great Performances #2

Unit 3: The Actor at Work

- Lesson 1: The Actor's Process: Advanced Tools
- Lesson 2: The Actor's Process: Advanced Tools, Continued
- Lesson 3: The Actor in Rehearsal and Performance
- Lesson 4: Acting on Stage/Great Performances #3

Final Exam: Great Performances #4

Self-Evaluation

Grading Scale for Final Course Grades

Your work in this course is worth a total of 1000 points. (There are also 40 additional extra credit points available to you at the end of Unit 1. The extra credit is optional.)

A+ = 980 points and above

A = 940-979 points

A- = 900-939 points

B+ = 860-899 points

B = 830-859 points

B- = 790-829 points

C+ = 750-789 points

C = 700-749 points

D = 600-699 points

E (failing) = under 600 points