

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY
THEA 3304 / 5303 ADVANCED ACTING - IMPROVISATION**

FALL 2014
Tuesday/Thursday
9:30am – 10:45am
FAB 105

Bret Scott, Asst. Professor
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Regular Office Hours:
9-10AM MWF, on walk-in basis
All others by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

All acting is reacting. In order to react, you must listen.

But for a scene to take place, something has to happen, right? Otherwise you've just got a bunch of actors on the stage all...listening...to each other. In most cases, the playwright takes care of this by writing objectives and dialogue for the actors to follow – the action of the scene is known before you ever enter the scene, and you (ideally) have rehearsed your dialogue, blocking, and action.

But in improvisation, there is no script. No one knows what's going to happen next.

So you walk out onto a black stage knowing nothing. If you don't listen, you can't know how to react. But if you don't do something, your partner has nothing to react *to*. This conundrum is the central conflict in improvisation – what I like to call the beautiful art of making stuff up.

The goal of this class is to place you, the actor, so squarely “in the moment” that you'll always know exactly how to react to your scene partner, whether you are working with a script, or as we say in improvisation, “without a net.”

You'll be spending most of your time on stage in ensembles of seven or eight, and together we'll explore this thing called “improv.”

REQUIRED TEXT

Improvise. Scene from the inside out Mick Napier, 2004. Pub: Heinemann Drama.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- 1) Your positive attitude is the difference between success and failure in art, life, and this class.
- 2) You will be on time. Which means, at minimum, five minutes before start of class.

- 3) Dress to move in clothes you're willing to sacrifice – you'll be on the floor, in the air, carrying each other, etc. What this means, practically:
 - a. Men: No shorts. Take a shower.
 - b. Women: if you wear a skirt or dress, wear bike shorts underneath.
 - c. BOTH: No flipflops, open toes, high heels. No loose jewelry. Tie your hair back and get it out of your face.
- 4) Come to class ready to play. If that means getting up an hour before and guzzling coffee, do that.
- 5) Refer to Mick Napier's "Advice and Guidelines for improvisers" *Improvise*, Napier, pp 88-97.

PREREQUISITES

Whatever theater classes are required to qualify for Advanced Acting status – see catalog or Prof. Dona Roman if necessary.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this class, students will:

- Demonstrate a working vocabulary of terminology of improvisation
- Demonstrate beginning mastery of long-form improvisation
- Articulate the skills needed for a successful improvisational scene.
- Evaluate and critique improvisational work from the standpoints of both art and craft.
- Synthesize the elements of improvisational work as they apply to scripted acting.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1) Terminology / Definitions Quiz
- 2) Mid-Term Paper
- 3) Full participation in class discussion / critique
- 4) Final Performance

Materials Required:

None

CLASS DATES: Assignments and Deadlines

Note that these dates and the details of each class are subject to change at the instructor's discretion, as class progress warrants.

DATE	TOPICS/ACTIVITY	READING
8/26	Syllabus. Expectations. What is improvisation? Group mind exercise	Napier PP 1-13
8/28	Trust Us, This Is All Made Up	
9/2	Scenes	
9/4	Scenes	Napier 14-36
9/9	Montage	
9/11	Montage	
9/16	Intro Harold	Napier 37-47
9/18	Openings	
9/23	Openings	
9/25	Group scenes	
9/30	Group scenes	
10/2	Harold	
10/7	Harold	
10/9	Harold	Napier 47-57
10/14	Scenes	
10/16	Group Scenes	Napier 58-71
10/21	Harold	
10/23	Harold	
10/28	Harold	
10/30	Harold	
11/4	Short Form	Napier 72-87
11/6	Short Form	
11/11	Scenes - Taking care of yourself	
11/13	Scenes - Taking care of yourself	
11/18	Harold	
11/20	Harold	
11/25	TBD	
11/27	NO CLASS - HAPPY FOOD COMA DAY	
12/2	Harold	
12/4	Dead Day	
12/9	8AM - FINAL EXAM	

GRADING

Assignments are valued as follows:

- 1) Quiz 5%

2) Midterm Paper	25%
3) Participation and attendance	25%
4) Final Performance	45%

Grading Criteria:

A = Exceptional. Demonstrates mastery of material beyond expectation. Professional quality of work. Highest level of scholarship.

B = Above average. Demonstrates mastery of material. Work is of better-than-expected quality, but not quite professional. High level of scholarship.

C = Average. Demonstrates proficiency with material. Work is of amateur quality. Ordinary level of scholarship.

D = Below Average. Less than proficient with material. Work shows errors, careless mistakes, or is just plain wrong. Poor scholarship.

F – Failure. Material incomplete. Work grossly negligent or incomplete. No evidence of scholarship present.

LATE PAPERS

Deadlines are an inescapable part of responsible, professional, adult life. Late papers will lose a letter grade for each day that the paper is late.

If you discover, *a week or more in advance*, that you have multiple deadlines converging on the same day, you may request a change in deadline> Such a change may be granted at the instructor’s discretion. Once the deadline has passed, it’s too late to ask for exceptions. Manage your time and deadlines wisely.

TARDINESS / ABSENCE POLICY

Attendance is 25% of your grade. That’s the difference between an “A” and a “C”...or a really easy way to earn an “F.”

TARDINESS

Class **BEGINS EXACTLY AT THE APPOINTED TIME**. It is your responsibility to be prepared to begin **BEFORE** the class starts.

Three instances of tardiness is equivalent to one absence. See below for the class absence policy.

THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO DENY ENTRY TO STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT PRESENT AT THE START OF CLASS* – ON THE HOUR. PLAN ACCORDINGLY. ON-TIME is EARLY!

*Exceptions will be made only for those with classes located in RAS whose end time makes on-time arrival impossible.

Punctuality is essential in this business. Tardiness will not be tolerated.

Absence Policy, from the Sul Ross State University 2012-2014 Course Catalogue:

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Regular class attendance is important to the attainment of the educational objectives of the University. Each instructor will keep class attendance records, and the instructor's policy on class attendance will be explained at the beginning of the semester or term.

The instructors will drop a student from a course when the student has a total of nine absences. A student will be dropped for excessive absences in remedial courses after nine absences.

An absence is defined as non-attendance in fifty minutes of class; for example, non-attendance in a one and one-half hour class will constitute one and one-half absences and non-attendance in a three hour class will constitute three absences. An absence because of participation in an official University activity is considered to be an authorized absence.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact Grace Petty in Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-171, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Telephone: 432-837-8203.