**THEA 113-004: Introduction to Acting I**

Instructor: Tara Weintraub Email: helrichtb@vcu.edu

Fall 2014, M, W 9:30- 10:50 Office Hours: By Appointment

Performing Arts Building, Room 57 Mailbox: Performing Arts Center, 2nd Floor

**Course Description**

An introduction to and exploration of performance skills through theatre games, role-playing, improvisation and work on basic script units.

**Course Objectives**

* This course will introduce students to the acting process through in-class exercises, outside assignments and partner work.
* Students will compare and contrast the designer’s and actor’s approach to a script.
* Students will develop critical and analytical skills through observing and writing about actors in on-campus productions.
* Students will demonstrate the skills they've acquired by analyzing, rehearsing and performing both a monologue and two-person scenes.

**Required Text, Materials, and Expenses:**

* *Doubt* by John Patrick Shanley
* Students will be responsible for obtaining a copy of the full script that their chosen monologue and scene is from. Please make use of the library!
* Students must have a paper copy of your scene with you every day while working on scenes and monologues.

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on a combination of written work, class participation and presentations. In addition to these major areas, your attendance, punctuality and ability to focus on the work will also be considered. Your final grade will be based on a 1000 point total (details under “Assignments”).

VCU Grading Scale

A 100-90% (895-1000 points)

B 89-80% (795-894 points)

C 79-70% (695-794 points)

D 69-60% (595-694 points)

F 59% and Below (0-594 points)

**Written Work**

All written assignments will be typed in a **12 point font, double spaced and printed in black ink**. Punctuation, grammar and spelling will be evaluated. While two-sided printing is encouraged, printing multiple pages per side is not acceptable. Please format all papers with proper indentation and numbering. Students must submit **paper copies** of all written assignments.

**Performance Work**

Each time you perform is an opportunity. It is a chance to learn something new about your fears, your thought processes, and your strengths. Over the course of the semester students are expected to take advantage of each of these opportunities to increase confidence and improve. Students will always be graded based on their individual improvement and growth. Everyone comes into this class with different levels of experience and is expected to demonstrate a deliberate effort toward cultivating their strengths and improving upon their existing talent.

**Professionalism**

We will spend a lot of time discussing one another's work. As you give feedback on your classmates' work please remember to be courteous and respectful. While constructive criticism is encouraged, you are expected to remain mindful of each other's feelings and respectful of each other's work. It is important that the classroom be a safe environment where everyone can explore and play. During the semester, students may participate in scenes with adult themes and language. Please be respectful of people's boundaries and feelings. If, for any reason, you feel uncomfortable with the work inside or outside the classroom, please do not hesitate to approach me or email me.

**Attendance**

Students are allowed **TWO** unexcused absences.  For each additional unexcused absence, you will lose a full letter grade for the class.  Excused absences must be cleared by the instructor in advance. Arriving late for class disrupts the learning process for fellow students, so every two late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence for grading purposes.  Students arriving more than 20 minutes late to class will be considered absent.  Because each class builds upon previous information, it is not possible to “make-up” class sessions.  It is expected that late and absent students will call/meet other class members to find out what occurred in class and to get handouts and assignments before the next class meets.  Missing all or part of a class is not an excuse for being unprepared.

**Attire**

Students are expected to dress in attire appropriate for an acting class at all times. Clothing that allows for freedom of movement is required. Skirts, dresses, baggy pants and other restrictive clothing are not appropriate. Students coming from work or other classes should bring a change of clothes.

**Assignments**

**Monologue (200 points)**

Students will, with the assistance of the instructor, choose, memorize and rehearse a

**1 to 2-minute monologue** to be performed in front of the class. Students will be graded on overall effort and improvement.

**Monologue Scoring (50 points)**

Students will learn how to analyze and score their monologue and will turn it in for a grade when they do their final performance.

**Scene (200 points)**

Students will be assigned scene partners and will, with the assistance of the instructor, choose, memorize and rehearse a **4 to 6-minute scene** to be performed in front of the class. Students will be graded on overall effort and improvement.

**Scene Scoring (50 points)**

Students will learn how to analyze and score their scene form their character's point of view and will turn it in for a grade when they do their final performance.

***Missed performance assignments MAY NOT be made up.***

**Performance Critiques (x2, totaling 100 points)**

Students will attend a performance of *Macbeth* and *Man of La Mancha*. They will write a 3-page critique of one performer from each production. The critique should reflect the concepts we've talked about in class as well as your understanding of the acting process. Students will attend performances at their own expense. Performances do sell out, so please be sure to buy a ticket in advance. Please visit the box office located on the lower level of the performing arts building to purchase your ticket. The ticket must be stapled to the top-left corner of the paper. *Italicize* or underline the title of the play. Write about the performance in past tense. If you are unable to attend a school performance, you may attend a professional production in Richmond with approval of instructor.

**Final Reflection Essay (100 points)**

Students will write a 3-page essay, summing up your experience in this course. Things to touch on can include your personal journey toward improvements in this course, any “Ah-ha” moments you had this semester, recommendations you have for improving the class, challenges you had from the beginning that you feel you've overcome (or have made steps toward overcoming), challenges you had from the beginning that you feel you have not overcome, etc.

**Class Participation (200 points)**

This is a ***crucial*** part of your grade. Participation in class activities, assignments and discussions is a required part of this class. You will also be expected to give feedback to your fellow classmates. If you are absent without an excuse on a day where feedback, for example, is being elicited, you will lose points off your participation grade.

**Online Journal Vlogs (x4, totaling 100 points)**

Students will be required to post four Vlogs (Video Blog) throughout the semester. As your character, you will create a “Dear Diary” entry about something that the character is dealing with in their life (and during your monologue or scene). It should be between three to five minutes in length. The instructor will explain how the Vlogs will be submitted via Blackboard. If you do not own a device to record on, you may borrow a laptop from the campus library to create your Vlog.

**Course Calendar**

(Subject to change)

Mon 8/25 Introductory Class and Ensemble

Wed 8/27 Ensemble Building

Mon 9/1 No Class. Labor Day

Wed 9/3 Body and Movement Exploration

Mon 9/8 Vocal Exploration

Wed 9/10 Listening and Responding Exercises

Mon 9/15 Improvisation Exercises and Scene Partners assigned

Wed 9/17 Open Scenes

Mon 9/22 Scoring a Scene- Score a scene from *Doubt* in class

**Due: *Doubt* read by today**

Wed 9/24 Train exercise

**Due: Scene chosen and approved by instructor**

Mon 9/29 Discussion of scenes

**Due: Play read; Initial play analysis for scenes**

Wed 10/1 Group A Scene Work

Mon 10/6 Group B Scene Work

Wed 10/8 Group C Scene Work

**Due: Vlog 1 posted by end of day**

Mon 10/13 Group A Scene Work

**Due: Group A off-book**

Wed 10/15 Group B Scene Work

**Due: Group B off-book; *MACBETH* RESPONSE PAPER**

Mon 10/20 Group C Scene Work

**Due: Group C off-book; Monologues chosen and approved by instructor.**

Wed 10/22 TBA

**Due: Vlog 2 posted by end of day**

Mon 10/27 FINAL Scene Presentation For All Groups

**Due: Final play analysis for scenes**

Wed 10/29 Monologues vs. Scenes/ Discussion of plays

**Due: Play read; Initial play analysis for Monologue**

Mon 11/3 Group A Monologue Work

Wed 11/5 Group B Monologue Work

Mon 11/10 Group C Monologue Work

**Due: Vlog 1 posted by end of day**

Wed 11/12 Group A Monologue Work

**Due: Group A off-book**

Mon 11/17 Group B Monologue work

**Due: Group B off-book**

Wed 11/19 Group C Monologue work

**Due: Group C off-book; Due: Vlog 2 posted by end of day**

Mon 11/24 TBA

**Due: *MAN OF LA MANCHA* RESPONSE PAPER**

Wed 11/26 No Class. Happy Thanksgiving!!

Mon 12/1 Audition Technique Monologue Run Through Group A and ½ B

Wed 12/3 Auditioning Technique and Monologue Run through Group ½ B and C

Mon 12/8 FINAL Monologues and wrap-up discussion

**DUE: Final Monologue Analysis and REFLECTION PAPER**

**CONTEMPORARY PLAY SUGGESTIONS:**

*True West* by Sam Shepard

*The Book of Liz* by Amy and David Sedaris

*Crimes of the Heart* by Beth Henley

*Proof* by David Auburn

*Rabbit Hole* by David Lindsay-Abaire

*The Odd Couple* by Neil Simon

*Rumors* by Neil Simon

*Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling

*A Piece of my Heart* by Shirley Lauro

*The Shape of Things* by Neil Labute

*The Normal Heart* by Larry Kramer

*Independence* by Lee Blessing

*Dinner with Friends*by Donald Margulies

*Gruesome Playground Injuries* by Rajiv Joseph

**These are just a small sample of plays past classes have enjoyed working on! You are more than welcome to choose a scene or monologue from a contemporary play not listed above, perhaps a play you have read in Intro to Drama, but it must be approved by the instructor by the required date.**

**\*Note to student:** By choosing to remain in this class, you agree to abide by the standards set forth in this syllabus. Additionally, your signature on your VCU application signifies that you agree to abide by all rules and policies, including the Honor System, of Virginia Commonwealth University. For more information, refer to the Student Resource Guide, at <http://www.students.vcu.edu/policies.html> and the Student Bulletin, at [http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/](http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/)

<http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/>

**Religious observances**

In accordance with university policy, if you wish to observe a religious holiday you must provide advance written notification by Fri. 9/5, so that I may accommodate your needs.

**VCU Email Policy**

Email is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost-effective, and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU email on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking email daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student email account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html.

**VCU Honor System: Upholding Academic Integrity**

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

* Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
* Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
* Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
* Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases;
* Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases."

More information can be found at in the VCU policy library at http://www.assurance.vcu.edu/Policy%20Library/Honor%20System.pdf.

**Student Conduct in the Classroom**

According to the Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings (http://www.assurance.vcu.edu/Policy%20Library/Faculty%20Guide%20to%20Student%20Conduct%20in%20Instructional%20Settings.pdf), “The university is a community of learners. Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. The Student Code of Conduct also prohibits the possession of or carrying of any weapon. For more information see http://register.dls.virginia.gov/details.aspx?id=3436.

**Students with Disabilities**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, require that VCU provide "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). Please also visit the Disability Support Services website at www.students.vcu.edu/dss and/or the Division for Academic Success website at healthsciences.vcu.edu/DAS/ for additional information.

Any student who has a disability that requires an accommodation should schedule a meeting with the instructor at the student's earliest convenience. Additionally, if coursework requires the student to work in a lab environment, the student should advise the instructor or a department chairperson of any concerns that the student may have regarding safety issues related to a disability. Students should follow this procedure for all courses in the academic semester.

**Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment**

If military students receive orders for short-term training or for deployment/mobilization, they should inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the corresponding policies.

**Excused Absences for Students Representing the University**

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedules to their instructors at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

**Campus Emergency Information**

What to Know and Do to Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU:

* Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts. Keep your information up-to-date. Within the classroom, the professor will keep his or her phone on to receive any emergency transmissions.
* Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
* Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities. Within the classroom, follow your professor's instructions.
* Know where to go for additional emergency information.
* Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234).
* Report suspicious activities and objects.
* Keep your permanent address and emergency contact information current in eServices.

**Important Dates**

You can view important dates for the Fall 2014 semester in the university calendar (http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/ac\_fullViewAll.asp?term=Fall+2014).

**VCU Mobile**

The VCU Mobile application is a valuable tool to get the latest VCU information on the go. The application contains helpful information including the VCU directory, events, course schedules, campus maps, athletics and general VCU news, emergency information, library resources, Blackboard and more. To download the application on your smart phone or for more information, please visit http://m.vcu.edu.

**Class Registration Required for Attendance**

Students may attend only those classes for which they have registered. Faculty may not add students to class rosters or Blackboard. Therefore, if students are attending a class for which they have not registered, they must stop attending.

**Withdrawal from Classes**

Before withdrawing from classes, students should consult their instructor as well as other appropriate university offices. Withdrawing from classes may negatively impact a student’s financial aid award and his or her semester charges. To discuss financial aid and the student bill, visit the Student Services Center at 1015 Floyd Avenue (Harris Hall) and/or contact your financial aid counselor regarding the impact on your financial aid. Contact information for the University Financial Aid Office is available at http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/finaid/contact-us/.

**Student Financial Responsibility**

Students assume the responsibility of full payment of tuition and fees generated from their registration and all charges for housing and dining services, and other applicable miscellaneous charges. Students are ultimately responsible for any unpaid balance on their account as a result of the University Financial Aid Office or their third party sponsor canceling or reducing their award(s).