



Fiona Shaw (*Medea*)

THR 212: Beginning Voice and Speech for Actors

Tuesday/Thursday: 1:00-2:50 PM

Murphy Hall 209

Dr. Peter Zazzali

Office Hours: Tues. from 11:00-12:30 or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The celebrated stage actress Fiona Shaw eloquently summarizes the significance of speaking:

Each time we speak, we reveal our nationality, disposition, attitudes, background, idiosyncrasies, familial traits and mannerisms. We carry our lives and childhoods in our voice and this is an important part of the armoury of any artist or person who wishes to be heard.¹

As Shaw asserts, voice (and speech) is an expression of the self, a conceit that is particularly crucial for actors. Having a free, open, articulate, versatile, and expressive vocal instrument allows a performer to fill the shoes of her character and serve the demands of a given text. As such, it is an acquired skill that is foundational to the art of acting.

It takes years of development and discovery to master becoming a powerful and expressive speaker onstage. Conservatory programs usually spend 3-4 years training an actor's voice and speech, a regimen that is in itself much too short for

¹ Quoted from David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey, *Vocal Arts Workbook: A Practical Course for Vocal Clarity and Expression* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), iv.

achieving mastery; indeed, it is only a good first step in the very best of training contexts. This course is designed to introduce beginning actors to some basic principles and practices of effective and communicative speaking. Using a range of pedagogies (e.g., Linklater, Skinner, Rodenburg, etc.), our work will consist of a balance of physical, vocal, and articulation exercises and techniques to increase an actor's awareness of how his mind, body, and emotional expressivity all interrelate. Our goal will be to locate and free your "own" voice in conjunction with expressing ideas, thoughts, and intentions through clear, resonant, and distinguished use of your speaking apparatus.

While much of our work will be practical and require hands-on training, there is an academic component to this course that is intended to supplement our praxis. You will therefore be required to complete numerous low and high stakes writing assignments throughout the term; there will also be regular reading assignments. I invite you to engage in these activities as support for our core work, which will, again, be practical. Becoming a powerful speaker will serve you as actors and enrich your daily lives. As Shaw points out, it is a necessity to "being heard."

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- To connect to breath towards releasing a relaxed, free, and resonant tone that is diaphragmatically supported
- To develop a legato/smooth flow to speaking; to avoid the "glottal attacking" of sound in the throat
- To increase breath capacity and control in conjunction with having greater articulatory dexterity and agility
- To increase your pitch range by balancing your resonators in producing sound
- To develop and craft a physical and vocal warm-up that is individualized to accommodate your needs as a performer
- To express ideas and emotions through clear and articulate use of the speaking apparatus
- To apply the skillset of becoming a powerful speaker to your work as actors

COURSE TEXTS

At the Bookstore: Edith Skinner, *Speak With Distinction* (New York: Applause, 1990). Other readings and assignments will be available on Blackboard (BB).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation: Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. You must be on time and prepared for all classes. If you fail to show up on a day you are scheduled to present work without having contacted me beforehand with a justified reason for missing, you forfeit the opportunity to present, and so lose credit for the assignment. Furthermore, any absence in excess of two will result in a reduction of your final grade.

You are required to come to class in comfortable, form-fitting attire to facilitate the physical nature of our work. If you do not come appropriately dressed, your participation will be reduced to an observer for that class and your grade accordingly affected. Finally, this is an ensemble-oriented course that requires everyone's mutual support. You are therefore expected to be prepared and active in your participation each and every class.

Professional Decorum: Our work requires us to demonstrate mutual respect and support towards one another. Please be sure to turn off cellphones before entering class. Also, there is no eating or drinking during class (water is allowed), and "side-bar" discussions are frowned upon. When classmates are presenting their work they deserve our full support, encouragement, and attention. Adherence to these criteria will count towards your participation grade.

Speaking Presentations: You will complete four performance projects designed to develop and test the speaking skills that you are learning. These projects will be administered throughout the semester in the following order: 1) Emotional speech; 2) Rhetorical speech; 3) Political speech; 4) Heightened language speech. Specific guidelines for the performance projects will be furnished in class and available on Blackboard.

Readings and Low Stakes Writing: As you can see by the class schedule, there are numerous reading assignments for the course. You are expected to be prepared to actively discuss these texts in class on their respective due dates. Throughout the term you will also be responsible for participating in discussions on Blackboard to support our coverage of the course readings. This process will be facilitated by prompts that I will post no later than Friday (12:00 PM) of any given week, thereby providing you ample time to formulate a thoughtful and relevant response by the due date: 12:00 PM the following Monday. You are likewise responsible for reading the responses of your peers, an activity that will, again, support our in-class discussions.

Reporting on the Speaking in UT Productions: You are required to attend all the performances offered through the University Theatre this semester. In addition, you will draft a 5-page paper that compares the voice and speech work of each production and compile it as a report to be turned in at the end of the semester. Specific guidelines for this assignment will be available on Blackboard and discussed in class as needed. **DUE DATE:** on or before **DECEMBER 3**

Voice and Speech Journal: To offer me insight into your perspectives on our work and to give you a chance to review and document the discoveries you make throughout the term, you will keep a voice/speech journal. Organized by weekly entries accounting for our work, these journals should be seen as an opportunity to actively reflect on your development. They will be collected at both the midterm and end of the semester, thereby allowing me to share in your observations. Unlike more formal writing assignments, you will not be evaluated on the form and content of your work, but on your willingness to fully engage in this important exercise of self-discovery and reinforcement of the learning process.

GRADING BREAKDOWN*

Participation/Attendance:	100 points
Report on UT Productions:	100 points
Low Stakes Writing (10):	100 points (10 points each)
Voice and Speech Journal:	100 points
Speaking Presentations (4):	600 points (150 each)
	<u>1000 points</u>

Grading Ranges: A=900-1000/ B=800-899/ C=700-799/ D=600-699. Please note that your final score will be adjusted for excessive absence, tardiness, and other matters relative to your work in the course.

INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

- I encourage you to visit during my office hours (T 11:00-12:30) or by requesting an appointment.
- I am always available by email and promise to respond to your messages within 48 hours.
- Acceptance of late assignments is at my discretion, and if accepted, your grade will be penalized.
- KU Accessibility Resources (<http://www.disability.ku.edu>) coordinates accommodations and services for our students. If you have a disability for which you may request an accommodation, please contact AR as soon as possible.
- Any written work you submit must be your own. Plagiarism is in serious breach of academic honesty and will be treated according to KU policy, see http://www.writing.ku.edu/~writing/instructors/guides/plagiarism_guidelines.sh; also <http://www.studenthandbook.ku.edu/>

CLASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, August 26 (1)

Class Topic

Course introduction and review of syllabus

Assignment Due Today

Rodenburg, "Declaring Your Vocal Rights," (BB)

Thursday, August 28 (2)

Class Topic

Introduction to a physical/vocal warm-up; Connecting to breath

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 1-5, “An Introduction to the Approach,” (BB)

Tuesday, September 2 (3)

Class Topic

Relaxation, release of tension, and connecting the breath to expressing emotion

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 6-16, “How the Voice Works”; “How the Voice Does Not Work,” (BB)

Thursday, September 4 (4)

Class Topic

Understanding the important role of the spine in centering the breath and releasing unnecessary tension; Psychophysical alignment; Assign “emotional” speech

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 19-34, “The Spine: the Support of Breath”; “Breathing the Source of Sound,” (BB)

Tuesday, September 9 (5)

Class Topic

Connecting breath to producing a supported, open and released sound; Work “emotional” speeches

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 35-51, “The Touch of Sound”; “Vibrations that Amplify the Initial Sound,” (BB); Work “emotional” speeches

Thursday, September 11 (6)

Class Topic

Continue to develop the relationship between breath and sound; Identifying habits that block our expressivity; Work “emotional” speeches

Assignment Due Today

Rodenburg, “The Roots of Habits,” (BB)

Tuesday, September 16 (7)

Class Topic

Work “emotional” speeches

Assignment Due Today

“Emotional” speeches

Thursday, September 18 (8)

Class Topic

“Emotional” speeches

Assignment Due Today

***Present “emotional” speeches**

Tuesday, September 23 (9)

Class Topic

Articulation; Stop-plosive consonants; Assign drilling partners

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 144-46, “Articulation”; Rodenburg, “Speech and Phonetics”; David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey, “Articulation and Muscularity,” (BB): Bring Skinner text and mirrors to class

Thursday, September 25 (10)

Class Topic

Continue to review stop-plosive consonants; Rhetorical devices; Assign “rhetorical” speech

Assignment Due Today

Read rhetorical devices packet (BB)

Tuesday, September 30 (11)

Class Topic

Affricate and nasal consonants; Work rhetorical speech

Assignment Due Today

Rhetorical speech with copies for class

Thursday, October 2 (12)

Class Topic

Lateral and fricative consonants; Work rhetorical speech

Assignment Due Today

Rhetorical speech

Tuesday, October 7 (13)

Class Topic

Continue fricative consonants; Work rhetorical speech

Assignment Due Today

Rhetorical speech

Thursday, October 9 (14)

Class Topic

Rhetorical speech; Assign political speech

Assignment Due Today

***Present rhetorical speech; Journals collected**

Thursday, October 16 (15)

Class Topic

Vocal resonance and range; Balancing the resonating chambers

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 57-90, “The Channel for Sound”; “The Channel Resonators”

Tuesday, October 21 (16)

Class Topic

Continue with vocal resonance and range; Work political speech

Assignment Due Today

David Carey and Rebecca Clark Carey, “Resonance and Range,” (BB)

Thursday, October 23 (17)

Class Topic

Glide consonants; Work political speech

Assignment Due Today

Work political speech

Tuesday, October 28 (18)

Class Topic

Work political speech; Review consonants

Assignment Due Today

Political speech

Thursday, October 30 (19)

Class Topic

Present political speech

Assignment Due Today

*Present political speech

Tuesday, November 4 (20)

Class Topic

The societal influences on voice and speech; Assign heightened language speech

Assignment Due Today

Rodenburg, “Settling Into Habits”; “Deep Habits and Release” (BB)

Thursday, November 6 (21)

Class Topic

Review breath support towards producing tonal resonance; Review consonants

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 121-43, “Breathing Power”; “The Center” (BB)

Tuesday, November 11 (22)

Class Topic

Applying our voice and speech techniques to the actor’s work; Work heightened language speech

Assignment Due Today

Linklater, 171-210, “Words”; Texts”; “Observations and Opinions on Voice and Acting” (BB); Heightened language speech

Thursday, November 13—December 9 (23-29)

Class Topic

Review and deepen all aspects of our voice and speech work; Work heightened language speech

Assignment Due

Heightened language speech

Thursday, December 11 (30)

Class Topic

Present heightened language speech; Wrap up

Assignment Due Today

***Present heightened language speech; Journals collected**