

THR 817-1000
Theories of Acting and Directing
Thursdays from 3:00-5:30 PM
Murphy 341

Dr. Peter Zazzali
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Acting has long been an art in which the representation of dramatic figures is manifest through a joint expression of the human mind, body, and emotions. From the ancient Greek actor Polus' use of his deceased son's ashes to capture the grief of Electra to Early Modern England's Charles Macklin, who would violently shake a ladder in the wings in preparing to enter as an outraged Shylock, actors have historically used numerous techniques, approaches, and theories to practice their craft. In the 19th century the art of acting approached modernity in conjunction with the advent of psychology, biology, and the behavioral sciences, developments that radically shifted our understanding of the human condition. Coincidentally, the modern director emerged to alter the course of theatre history, and by extension, the work of actors. Some 75 years later an intercultural movement in western theatre started to inform both acting and directing theories. Today, stage acting and directing continue to evolve.

This seminar will examine the theories and aesthetics that have shaped acting and directing throughout theatre history. Organized chronologically, the course is constituted as five modules that range from Ancient Greece and Rome to the current moment. While it is not possible to render an exhaustive study of this topic, the subjects and examples selected for analysis have significantly influenced the prevailing ideas and approaches to acting and directing in western theatre. As such, our methodology will be to critically engage discussion questions while analyzing weekly readings. A combination of writing assignments consisting of Black Board posts, a short research paper, and a term paper will complement these discussions and provide a mechanism to support your development as scholars.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Critical Writing

Term Paper: You will write a term paper (15-20 pp.) with the goal of having it serve as either a future conference paper or the beginnings of a journal article. I strongly suggest that you meet with me to discuss formulating a topic and research methodology for this assignment. Guidelines for the paper will be provided. **DUE DATE: MAY 7**

Acting Theorist Paper: To provide an active start to our work and to give me a sense of your writing, you will complete a short (5-7 pp.) paper analyzing a particular acting/

directing theory and/or theorist. Again, guidelines for the assignment will be provided.
DUE DATE: FEBRUARY 26

Module Responses: As noted above, the course is chronologically organized into five modules. As part of a Blackboard discussion, you will write approximately a 300-word response to a question pertaining to each module at select times of the semester. The due dates for these posts are as follows: **Module 1 (February 19); Module 2 (March 12); Module 3 (April 2); Module 4 (April 23); Module 5 (April 30)**

Attendance and Participation

In-Class Presentation: You will all present and lead a discussion of a text (book) that we cover. Your 10-15 minute presentation will contextualize the reading by examining its relevance to our discipline, putting it in conversation with other texts, addressing its research methodology and argument, and determining its overall effectiveness. The due date of this assignment is dependent upon the text you choose to present.

Readings and In-Class Discussion: This is a seminar and therefore the learning outcomes are largely reliant upon you having read the assignments and being prepared to discuss them. I expect that everyone will heartily contribute to our in-class conversations. As a former teacher of mine once said, “The more you contribute to class discussions the more you reinforce what you are learning.”

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. If for some unforeseen reason you need to miss, you are responsible for the readings and must contact me about your absence in advance of that particular class. Please note that even a single absence could compromise your learning and grade.

COURSE TEXTS

Required (available in bookstore or online):

1. Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy. *Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in Their Own Words*. New York: Crown Publishing, 1970.
2. Phillip Zarilli ed. *Acting (Re)Considered: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2006.
3. Phillip Zarilli. *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavsky*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
4. Rosemary Malague. *An Actress Prepares: Women and “the Method.”* New York: Routledge, 2012.
5. Joseph R. Roach. *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1993.
6. Anne Bogart and Tina Landau: *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*. New York: TCG, 2005.
7. Tadashi Suzuki. *The Way of Acting*. New York: TCG, 1986.
8. Nancy Kindelan. *Artistic Literacy: Theatre Studies and a Contemporary Liberal*

- Education*. New York: Palgrave, 2012.
9. Rhonda Blair, *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
 10. Sharon Marie Carnicke. *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century* 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2009.
 11. Jonathon Pritches. *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting*. New York: Routledge, 2006

**All other readings will either be available via Blackboard or online. In the case of the latter, a link to the appropriate webpage will be provided.

GRADING

1. Attendance and In-class Participation: 30%
2. Blackboard Response to Module Prompts: 5%
3. Presentation of a Course Text: 5%
4. Acting/Directing Theorist Paper: 10%
5. Term Paper: 50%

ETHICAL MATTERS

Academic Honesty: As you know, scholarship is largely defined by contributing original research to a given field of study. When you borrow ideas or quote another source, you must reference them. Please cite according to either the MLA or Chicago Manual of Style.

Disability Statement: The KU office of Disability Resources coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted DR, please do so at 22 Strong Hall; their phone number is 785-864-2620.

Changes to the Syllabus: Though it is doubtful that I would do so, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus based on student needs. In the unlikely event that this happens, I will notify each of you and provide a new copy with all changes clearly marked.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Module 1: Antecedents to 20th and 21st Century Acting Theory

Class 1: January 22

Question(s): What is acting/directing theory? How can we historicize acting and its varied approaches and practices?

Topic:

Course introduction; Assignment of texts for weekly presentations; Begin discussing and framing antecedents to 20th and 21st century acting/directing

Assignment Due:

- *Actors on Acting* (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
 - Introduction (xiii-xvii)
 - Greece (Plato and Aristotle, 3-12)
 - Rome (Cicero and Quintilian, 21-30)
- *The Art of Poetry* (Horace)
- M.D. Grant, "Plautus and Seneca: Acting in Nero's Rome," *Greece and Rome* 46.1 (1999), 27-33

Class 2: January 29

Question: How was an actor's passion—emotional sensibility and expression—dealt with in Early Modern theatre?

Topic:

Investigate 18th century English style towards tracing the relationship between the player's mind, body, and emotional sensibility in theatre history

Assignment Due:

- *Actors on Acting* (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
 - Introduction to English acting (92-96)
 - A. Hill, Macklin, J. Hill, and Garrick (122-38)
- Edwin Duerr, *The Length and Depth of Acting*, 1963 (selected chapters)
- Dene Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 1973 (selected chapters)

Class 3: February 12

Question: What is the history of the so-called "paradox" of the actor's dual consciousness? How has it informed Western theories of acting? Can this tension be reconciled?

Topic:

Discuss Diderot's theory of the actor's dual-consciousness in the context of modern acting

Assignments Due:

- *Actors on Acting* (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
Denis Diderot and Clairon/Dumesnil (161-78)
- William Archer, *Masks or Faces*, 1888 (12-37)
- Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 1993

Module 2: Modern Acting/the Stanislavski Turn**Class 4: February 26**

Question: How did Stanislavski's system significantly change western acting? What is the socio-historical context for its emergence? What is the legacy of his system?

Activity:

Discuss the theory, practice, and legacy of Stanislavski's work as an actor, an actor trainer, and a director

Assignment Due:

- *Actors on Acting* (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
The Moscow Art Theatre and Its Tradition (475-501)
- Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Stanislavsky in Focus* 2nd ed., 2009
- Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor's Work*, ed. Jean Benedetti, 2008
"Action, If, Given Circumstances" (chap. 3)
"Imagination" (chap. 4)
"Belief and the Sense of Truth" (chap. 8)
- Laurence Senelick, *Stanislavsky—A Life in Letters*, 2014 (Introduction)

Class 5: March 5

Question: How did Stanislavski's system inform the pedagogies and practices of his Russian heirs?

Activities:

Identify the ways in which Stanislavski's work as an actor trainer and director influenced the work of his most salient disciples

Assignment Due:

- *Actors on Acting* (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
Meyerhold, M. Chekhov, Ilinsky, Vakhtangov, and Boleslavsky (501-29)
- Jonathon Pritches, *Science and the Stanislavsky Tradition of Acting*, 2006

Class 6: March 9

Question: How did Stanislavski's system become the so-called "Method" in the US? Who were the prominent players therein and how has this surrogation shaped the course of American acting and actor training?

Activity:

In identifying the legacy of his system, we will examine the specific and varied ways that American actors and acting teachers have interpreted Stanislavski's pedagogy

Assignment Due:

- Actors on Acting (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
 - Stella Adler (601-06)
 - Lee Strasberg (621029)
- Rosemary Malague, *An Actress Prepares: Women and the "Method"*, 2012
- David Krasner, "Strasberg, Adler, Meisner: Method Acting" in *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, ed. Alison Hodge, 2000 (129-50).

Module 3: The Emergence of the Director

Class 7: March 12

Questions: How did the emergence of the director influence theatre history and the work of actors? What role has Brecht had in this trajectory?

Activities:

To discuss and trace the history of the stage director; identifying the significance of Brecht's theatrical (directing) theories and how they have shaped theatre history and approaches to acting

Assignment Due:

- Actors on Acting (Cole and Krich Chinoy)
 - Germany, Lessing, Goethe (254-276)
 - Piscator, Brecht, and Weigel (301-16)
- Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. John Willet (1964)
- John Rouse, "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," in *Acting (Re) Considered 2nd ed.*, ed. Phillip Zarilli, (248-59)
- Augusto Boal, "Forum Theatre," in *Acting (Re) Considered 2nd*, ed., ed. Phillip Zarilli, (268-76)

Class 8: March 23

Question: What exactly is Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty and how has it influenced the work of 20th and 21st century directors? What implications does his theory have for actors?

Activity:

Analyzing Artaud's theatrical theory, especially the Theatre of Cruelty, and identifying its significance in 20th and 21st century performance

Assignment Due Today:

Actors on Acting (Cole and Krich Chinoy)

Julian Beck and Judith Malina (652-69)
◦ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 1958
Helga Finter and Mathew Griffin, "Antonin Artaud and the Impossible Theatre: The Legacy of the Theatre of Cruelty," *TDR* 41.4 (Winter 1997): 15-40
Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation," *Theater* 9.3 (1978), 6-19

Class 9: March 26

Questions: How can Grotowski's system for training actors and his theatrical direction be seen as part of a lineage that includes Stanislavski and Artaud? How can we identify elements of his oeuvre in current theories and practices of acting and directing?

Activity: To study Grotowski's training system in relationship to his theatrical direction

Assignment Due:

- Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 2002 (selected chapters)
- Zbigniew Cynkutis, *Acting with Grotowski*, 2015 (selected chapters)
- Lisa Wolford, "Grotowski's Vision of the Actor, in *20th Century Actor Training*, ed. Alison Hodge, 2000 (191-208)
- Paul Allain, "The Gardzienice Theatre Association of Poland," in *Acting (Re) Considered 2nd*, ed., ed. Phillip Zarilli (200-18)

Module 4: The Postmodern Actor/Director—An Intercultural Approach

Class 10: April 2

Question(s): How have eastern performance traditions influenced actor training in the west? In what ways has this "postmodern" move shaped western theatre? How can this trajectory be traced to Artaud and Grotowski?

Activity:

Discuss the significance of eastern performance traditions on western acting over the past 50 years?

Assignment Due:

- Phillip Zarilli, "General Introduction: Between Theory and Practice," in *Acting (Re) Considered 2nd* ed., ed. Phillip Zarilli (7-22)
- Phillip Zarilli, *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavsky*, 2009 (Parts 1 and 2; and "The Beckett Project," 115-143)
- Eugenio Barba, "An Amulet Made of Memory: The Significance of Exercises in the Actor's Dramaturgy," in *Acting (Re) Considered 2nd* ed., ed. Phillip Zarilli (99-105)
- Ian Watson, "Training with Eugenio Barba: Acting Principles, the Pre-expressive and 'Personal Temperature'" in *20th Century Actor Training*, ed. Alison Hodge, 2000 (209-23)

Class 11: April 9

Question: How does Suzuki's system for developing actors inform his work as a director? How has the system impacted US actor training over the past 30 years?

Activity:

Understanding Suzuki's actor training system and its foundational role in his directorial aesthetic

Assignment Due:

- Tadashi Suzuki, *The Way of Acting*, (1986)
- Tadashi Suzuki, "Culture is the Body" in *Acting (Re) Considered 2nd ed.*, ed. Phillip Zarilli (163-67)
- James R. Brandon, "Zeami on Acting: Values for the Western Actor" in *Zeami and the Nô Theatre in the World*, eds. Benito Ortolani and Samuel L. Leiter, 1998 (101-8)

Class 12: April 16

Questions: What has been Anne Bogart's contribution to American theatre and actor training? How can her work be analyzed in relation to other specialists in physical theatre (e.g., Suzuki, Meyerhold, Grotowski, etc.)?

Activity:

To gain an understanding of "the Viewpoints" and how it has shaped Bogart's directing and teaching

Assignment Due:

- Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, *The Viewpoints Book*, (2005)
- David Diamond, Anne Bogart, and Kristen Linklater, "Balancing Acts: Anne Bogart and Kristin Linklater Debate the Current Trends in American Actor Training" in *American Theatre* 18.1 (January 2001): 30-34, 104-06
- Porter Anderson, "The Search for a SITI State: When Anne Bogart Secures the Right Base for Her Company's Work, on Whose Hill Will This SITI Be Shining" in *American Theatre* 25.3 (March 2008): 81-83

Module 5: Current Approaches to US Actor Training

Class 13: April 23

Question: How have the cognitive and neurological sciences altered how we understand an actor's consciousness relative to his mental, physical, and emotional expressivity?

Activity:

To investigate the actor's work through the lens of cognitive theory and neuroscience

Assignment Due:

- Rhonda Blair, *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience*, (2008)

° John Lutterbie, “The Language of Acting” in *Toward a General Theory of Acting: Cognitive Science and Performance*, 2011, (21-75)

Class 14: April 30

Question: What is the current state of US actor training and theatre departments/programs? How do the various incarnations of theatre in higher education (e.g., BFA, MFA, PhD, BA) function? How might we consider changing it for the better?

Activity:

To examine US actor training today by identifying its successes and drawbacks; to identify and discuss the current moment in US acting, actor training, and educational theatre

Assignment Due:

° Nancy Kindelan, *Artistic Literacy: Theatre Studies and a Contemporary Liberal Education*, 2012

° Leigh Woods, “Degrees of Choice” in *The Politics of American Actor Training*, eds. Ellen Margolis and Lissa Tyler Renaud, 2010 (62-75)

° David Eulis Wiles, “Beyond Race and Gender: Reframing Diversity in Actor-Training Programs, in *The Politics of American Actor Training*, eds. Ellen Margolis and Lissa Tyler Renaud, 2010 (123-36)

Jennifer Dunning, “The New American Actor,” *New York Times* (2 October, 1983)

Class 15: May 7

WRAP UP AND SHARING OF FINAL PROJECTS