

**Pomona College**  
**Department of Theatre and Dance**

**BASIC ACTING: TOOLS AND FUNDAMENTALS**

**Fall 2022**

**M/W 10-12:30**

**Allen Theater (Seaver Complex)**

**NOTE: Beginning Monday, September 19 through Wednesday, October 5 class  
will take place on the Seaver Main Stage.**

Course Number: THEA001A-01

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Office Hours: Mondays 4-6 pm and by appointment

**BASIC ACTING: TOOLS AND FUNDAMENTALS**

**A Lab for Developing Foundational Performance Techniques**

**SYLLABUS**

This outline is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and/or posted on our class Sakai site.

**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Course Description**

This course is intended for students with an interest in theatrical and live performance. It provides an opportunity for students to explore a range of physical and creative processes that serve as gateways to further training in theater-based techniques and forms. We focus on body/mind awareness and the multiple ways the body interacts with forms and practices that lead to a deeper discipline, integration, ease, joy, and sense of play. Throughout the semester, we will work to develop the practices necessary for individual presence, as well as ensemble awareness and creation. This course serves as a prerequisite to further theatre courses, but will also serve students interested in developing self-awareness, embodied creative process and research capabilities, and live performance skills.

**Course Methodology**

The lab is based in practices that view the mind/body as an interdependent whole – practices that stoke a unified whole into experiencing ignited imagery, bold precise action, and deep somatically-derived emotion. The class is both physically and mentally rigorous and requires taking on a commitment to the discipline of performance. The approach incorporates exercises attributed to Stephen Wangh's *Physical Approach to Acting* (inspired by Jerzy Grotowski.) Other diverse influences will also be in play including: Patsy Rodenburg's *Circles of Awareness*, the *Six Viewpoints* as developed by Mary Overlie and the *Viewpoints* as articulated by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau, as well as Viola Spolin's improvisational acting games. Students will experiment through individual, partnered, and group exercises and will

then have the opportunity to apply these exercises to text and scenes. Students will be asked to keep and share a process journal of their experiences, and will be assigned a variety of short readings/viewings and exercises to explore outside of class time.

### **Student Learning Goals Include the Following Habits of Heart and Mind**

Students will:

- Develop greater body/mind awareness, presence, and sense of self in relation to space and others.
- Deepen their ability to work creatively and consensually within an ensemble environment.
- Develop extraordinary group listening skills and an experiential understanding of the value of deep play.
- Become familiar with a variety of embodied practices, research, and performance skills that serve as the foundation for further training in both theatre and dance.
- Begin to develop and articulate a personal artistic aesthetic.
- Deepen their compassion for themselves and others.
- Develop the capacity to tolerate ambiguity and paradoxes, and to embrace the unknown.
- Nurture and deepen their connection to internal creative impulse.
- Develop greater habits of persistence in the face of internal resistance and external challenges.
- Begin to develop an ability to assess their personal artistic process and progress.
- Begin to appreciate and handle text and blocking as containers for personal energy and artistic impulse.
- Deepen self-confidence.

### **Content Notice**

We will work to create a brave “human-needs first” space. This means you are encouraged to take care of your human needs as you cultivate your presence and courage. We will work to develop and practice a consent-based culture where you can explore your personal boundaries, learn to communicate them regularly, and honor those of your ensemble. respect course

This course includes rigorous physical activity, which by its very nature can include an element of physical risk. Students are encouraged to remain alert, listen deeply, and be aware of potential hazards working individually or with others. If you ever feel any concern for your own or someone else’s safety and/or boundaries, you are encouraged to speak up immediately. We will be moving around quite a bit in this class; please keep your instructor and peers informed of any physical limitations and boundaries that may affect your participation. Have fun but be careful and smart about safety.

Theatre is most often about conflict and often deals with material that include controversial subjects (e.g. sexuality, racism, and violence, etc.) Some texts use imagery, explore situations, and/or employ language that you may find offensive. If you boundaries about engaging with such materials, you are welcome to speak with

me about your concerns. Your boundaries will be respected and celebrated and there won't be any punitive actions taken against you for articulating what you need.

## **COURSE AGREEMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **Container**

Theatre is a three-dimensional, holistic (whole body/mind/heart) experience and for this reason can be incredibly fun, uncomfortably awkward, deeply charged, emotionally messy, and transcendently joyous - in other words, all the things. This means it requires a great deal of mindfulness, care, and internal discipline. While I encourage us to enjoy the pursuit of this deep play, we will also need to build a container that can support the rigor of our work. Together we create that container by agreeing to the following intentions:

- o Best effort
- o A supportive and honest atmosphere
- o Heightened awareness
- o A rigorous dedication to being fully present in the moment
- o Full participation
- o Accountability without excuses or denial
- o Respect for self, others, and the learning environment

You will have the opportunity to add to this list of touchstones and we will come to consensual agreement about what you need to allow you to enter the space with the greatest amount of courage.

Ideally, this class will be a unique experience – one that challenges you to move beyond your current understanding, not only of Theatre but also of who you are and of what you are capable. In order to learn in this lab, you will need to agree to a willingness to be open and to expanding yourself intellectually, as well as emotionally, and physically. Growth happens outside of our comfort zone, but within our range of tolerance.

Together we will create a positive, trusting learning environment: one in which we are each emboldened to take manageable risks and to embrace uncertainty, ambiguity, paradox, and meaningful failure.

### **Attendance and Participation**

This is an experiential course. Therefore, in-studio participation is crucial to understanding. The work we will do is an interdependent endeavor and the absence and/or tardiness of one student affects us all. Furthermore, due to the ensemble nature of the course, it may not always be possible to make up missed in-class work. COMMUNICATION IS KEY. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to communicate with me to obtain missed notes or assignments as well as to make arrangements with any collaborative partners. Arrangements for make-up work must be made **prior** to your absence or the **first day** you return to school after an Excused Absence. Work cannot be made up if missed due to an Unexcused Absence.

**Department Attendance Policy** - It is expected that you will adopt a mature and responsible attitude toward attendance. You are permitted, without any penalty to your grade, to miss two class periods over the course of the semester. The next class period missed will lower your final grade for the course by one third. For instance from an A to an A- or from an A- to a B+, etc.. Every additional two absences

will lower your final grade by an additional  $\frac{1}{3}$ . Three unexcused tardies/early departures will equal one absence. Common courtesy is to inform the instructor of the reason for your absence or tardiness prior to the missed class time or immediately upon your return to class.

For the purposes of this class, an *Excused Absence* is generally an absence due to illness, injury, bereavement, or other school-approved legitimate reasons that can be documented. For this course, Excused Absences (up to six per semester) will not impact your final grade, as long as you make up the work as required, however, it will impact your Daily Practice Grade. Similarly, an Excused Absence from your Final Presentation or from your Final Dress Rehearsal will not affect your grade, as long as you make up the missed performance according to the make-up procedure listed below. If you fail to follow the make-up procedures however, your grade will be lowered for the semester in which the absence/s occur/s.

Absences associated with tech schedules and other busy times are not considered excused absences. If you know that you have an upcoming period of time that is particularly busy, please be proactive; we can sort out alternate due dates and deadlines ahead of time if you plan accordingly. Again, COMMUNICATION IS KEY.

**Make-up Procedures** - In this course, your performance in the Open Studio is used as part of your final assessment for the semester, just as a paper test would be used. It is equivalent to 10% of your grade and your Reflection Paper (an additional 10% of your final grade) must include some reference to your experience in Open Studio. It can be very difficult to make up this presentation, so please make sure you are available to be in class on December 7. If not, the make-up performance will need to be done as a solo. Other performance possibilities will be considered and you are welcome to discuss them with me. Remember that your grade will remain lowered until you have fulfilled the assessment opportunity for the semester in which the performance was missed. Your lowered grade will become permanent if the make-up procedure is not followed by the end of the semester in which your absence occurs.

**Tardiness/Early Departures** - Class begins and ends on time. Punctuality and presence in a collaborative art form are essential. Tardiness and early departures from class are distracting and alter the group dynamic. For the first three incidents of unexcused tardiness/early departure from class, one point will be deducted from your Daily Practice grade. After four instances of unexcused tardiness/early departure, your Daily Practice grade will be reduced by two points. The fifth instance of unexcused tardiness/early departure, your Daily Practice grade will be reduced by three points, and so on.

**Participation** - You are expected to commit fully within the studio. This includes participation in exercises and discussions, as well as incorporating critique and feedback from me, yourself, (and sometimes your peers) into your work. It also includes being ready to work at all times. Observation is a key means of working and learning in the Performing Arts. If you are not speaking or performing, you are still working. Your attention supports the ensemble of performers. You are expected to be actively supportive and always ready. Everything that you do is part of the Work. This perhaps, above all else, requires the most inner and outer discipline. Be ever mindful and alert.

## **Additional Requirements**

**Process Journal** – Students are required to keep a hard copy journal. Reflection and writing prompts will be given on a regular basis, but when they are not, the student is still encouraged to make entries tracking their own individual artistic process and experience within and outside of the studio. Entries are due on Wednesday unless otherwise notified.

**Dress** - Students are expected to dress appropriately for the studio – clothing that allows for fluid movement and that can be worn to work on the floor is required. The clothing needs to fit you in such a way that it does not require continual fixing during exercises. “Soft pants”, such as sweat pants, pajama pants, shorts, or yoga pants/leggings are your best options. “Hard pants” such as jeans, chinos, and dress pants are discouraged, as they will inhibit your ability to participate fully. You will be asked to work barefoot or in jazz shoes. (If this is a problem, please make certain to speak with me outside of the studio immediately.) Because of the explorative nature (both personal and physical) of the lab, as well as for safety reasons, students are discouraged from wearing jewelry and other personal adornments.

**Hair** - Hair must be secured in such a way that it allows for full view of the face and does not require fixing during exercises.

**Silence/No Chatter** – The studio is a space for training and creation. There is to be no casual socializing within the studio. Please limit talking to what is necessary for and relative to the work. Warming up vocally and physically is highly encouraged.

**Cleanliness of Space and Props Room** – The studio must be kept clean at all times. If you enter the studio and there are items cluttering the space, it is **your** responsibility to clear them. Please do not enter the studio with anything other than water, your journal (if needed), a writing implement (if needed), and any assignments due that day. Small bags, books, shoes, and additional clothing should be neatly stored outside of the studio or outside of view. Props should be neatly stowed away at the end of class.

**General Decorum** - Students are to refrain from the use of cell phones and laptops, unless specific permission is granted, as well as the consumption of food, gum, and any beverages other than water during studio time. It is expected that interruptions and coming and going will not occur, especially due to the nature of the lab. If you have a specific need, please talk to me in advance.

## **Office Hours and E-mail Policy**

Please feel free to email me with questions and/or concerns throughout the semester. You are also encouraged to come to Office Hours on Monday from 4-6 pm or to make personal appointments with me at any point in time to discuss studio work, receive personalized attention or support, and/or discuss whatever is on your mind. The most effective way to contact me is via email at [Gleason.Bauer@pomona.edu](mailto:Gleason.Bauer@pomona.edu). If seeking an appointment outside of Office Hours, please suggest a few options of possible meeting times. In general, you can expect that I will respond to you within 24 hours or by the end of the next business day. Please note that if you email me over the weekend, I may not respond to you until the following Monday, unless it is an emergency.

## EVALUATION AND GRADING

I will evaluate student learning with the following graded activities:

| <u>Activity</u>                           | <u>Percentage of Grade</u> |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Daily Practice</b> (See Rubric below.) | <b>45%</b>                 |
| <b>Process Journal</b>                    | <b>20%</b>                 |
| <b>Performance Responses</b>              | <b>15%</b>                 |
| <b>Reflection Paper</b>                   | <b>10%</b>                 |
| <b>Open Studio</b>                        | <b>10%</b>                 |
|   | <b>100%</b>                |

**Rubric for Daily Practice** – Daily each student will receive ten points based on the following guidelines:

- Appropriate dress – 1
- Appropriate hair – 1
- Maintaining silence in the space before class and during any breaks - 1
- Maintaining the tidiness of the space – 1 (This is a point earned collaboratively.)
- Punctuality - 1
- Participation and Aware Engagement – 5 (These points are earned through participation in exercises and discussions, aware and engaged effort, accountability, honest communication, and respect.)

*Please note that each semester you have up to three instances in which only a minimum of points will be deducted for neglecting to practice the above studio guidelines. So for instance, each time (up to three times) that you come to the studio without being dressed in the appropriate clothing, you will have a single point deducted from your Daily Practice Rubric. However, the fourth time you come to class without being dressed out, your daily grade will be reduced by two points. In the fifth instance, your daily grade will be reduced by three points and so on. If you have questions about this policy, please do not hesitate to ask. Please remember that this Daily Practice constitutes a full 40% of your grade.*

**Process Journal** - All students will need to purchase and keep a small hard-copy journal. Consider a notebook that is unlined so that you can relate to it in a non-academic manner.

**Written Assignments/Papers** – There will be three written Performance Responses required in this class as well as one Reflection Paper. All students must attend the plays/musicals in the fall semester of the Pomona season (*If Nobody Does Remarkable Things* - October 6 - 9th and *Head over Heels* - November 17 - 20th) as well as one play/musical/live performance outside of Pomona. One to two page critiques of these performances will need to be submitted the Wednesday after the performance.

- **Final Reflection Paper** - This 3-5 page paper acts as half of your final grade and is to be submitted on Sakai no later than **11:59 pm on MONDAY, DECEMBER 12.**

- **Performance Critique One** - *If Nobody Does Remarkable Things* to be submitted on Sakai no later than **11:59 pm on WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12.**
- **Performance Critique Two** - *Head over Heels* to be submitted on Sakai no later than **11:59 pm on WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 23.**
- **Performance Critique Three** - On an outside production of your choice, it can be submitted at any time in the semester, but no later than **11:59 pm on WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30.**

Please go through your planner now and mark the Pomona performance dates on your calendar. Start making your plans to see the outside performance now. We can also discuss seeing a performance together as a class.

**Open Studio** – This presentation acts as the other half of your final assessment. It **WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7,** and is open to the larger Pomona community. There will be a **required** DRESS REHEARSAL on MONDAY, DECEMBER 5. OPEN STUDIO is the final project; therefore you **MUST** make arrangements to be available for the performance and the dress rehearsal. You will be graded based on your individual work, as well as on your cooperation with, and support of your collaborators.

**Late Assignments:** All assignments submitted past due will be marked down by one-third of a grade for every day they are late.

**Required Readings/Viewings:** Students may be given handouts and/or links to required reading and/or video clips throughout the semester as applicable.

## **CURRICULAR OUTLINE**

Please note that the learning units are not of equal length, often overlap, and will be facilitated in direct response to the students' progress as an ensemble.

### **UNIT ONE: Building the Container**

- Introductions/Exploring the Why
- Community Agreements
- Studio Etiquette
- Exploring Assumptions
- Exploring Inspirations and the How

### **UNIT TWO: Self-Awareness and the Practice of Mindfulness**

- Mindfulness Practices and Noticing
- Boundary and Consent Work
- Finding Your Readiness
- Simple Imagery
- Ensemble Games and Noticing
- Exploring Habits/Increasing Choice
- Circles of Awareness

### **UNIT THREE: Group Awareness and Physical Practices**

- The *Kata*
- Self Perception
- Peripheral Vision
- Partnered Work



- Sensory Perception
- Collaboration and Ensemble
- Safety and Risk
- Group Play
- Spatial-Temporal Awareness and Physical Improvisation

#### **UNIT FOUR: Text and Cultivating Creative Impulse**

- Personal Practice
- Psycho-physical feedback loop
- Imagery
- The Role of Emotion
- *Corporels*

#### **UNIT FIVE: Text and Character Work**

- Sourcing Analytically
- Sourcing Physically
- Sourcing Vocally
- Character Day - putting it all together

#### **UNIT SIX: Scene Work**

#### **IMPORTANT DUE DATES:**

- ~ JOURNALS - Every Wednesday
- ~ CHOOSE TEXT (1-2 minutes) - September 26
- ~ TEXT MEMORIZED - Monday, October 3
- ~ PERFORMANCE CRITIQUE ONE - Wednesdays, October 12
- ~ CHOOSE SCENE/SCENES ASSIGNED - October 19
- ~ SCENES MEMORIZED - November 2
- ~ PERFORMANCE CRITIQUE TWO - November 23
- ~ PERFORMANCE CRITIQUE THREE - no later than December 7
- ~ DRESS REHEARSAL Monday, December 5
- ~ OPEN STUDIO – Wednesday, December 7
- ~ SELF REFLECTION PAPER – Friday, December 13

#### **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS -**

- ❖ What is Art? What is not Art? How do you know the difference?
- ❖ What is Theatre? What is not Theatre? How do you know the difference?
- ❖ What does what we are doing in class have to do with theatre and/or performance? How might I apply it?
- ❖ What are the elements of theatrical performance?
- ❖ What is the value of artistic discipline?
- ❖ What tools does a performer have?
- ❖ What is the work of a performer? And where else does it manifest?
- ❖ What does it mean to be a leader in the Arts?
- ❖ What am I noticing?
- ❖ Who am I and how am I changing?
- ❖ How can I apply what I am learning here to my life outside of the studio?
- ❖ What do I want to get out of this lab? And how is this changing as my learning deepens?



## **COVID SAFETY AWARENESS**

The faculty at Pomona College knows that person-to-person interaction provides the best liberal arts education. The best learning occurs in small communities. This year we are gathering in person to do what we do best: create, generate, and share knowledge. As you know during the past several years, we have had to try to build community remotely. This year we may use some of the pedagogical work-arounds that we acquired in the past years. For example, we might meet on Zoom from time to time, hold class outside, or hold discussions online on Sakai Discussions Board. Our health, both mental and physical, is paramount. We must consider the health of others inside and outside the classroom. All Claremont Colleges students have signed agreements regulating on-campus behavior during the pandemic; in the classroom, we will uphold these agreements. We need to take care of each other for this course to be successful. I ask you therefore to adhere to the following principles:

- We will continue to wear masks in class for the first several weeks, revisiting this policy on Monday, September 12th and each week thereafter. Unless otherwise instructed, you must wear a mask for the entire class; eating and drinking are not permitted. (We will take outside breaks, so feel free to bring a water bottle if needed.) Your mask must cover your mouth and nose.
- If you come to class unmasked you will need to borrow a mask from a peer. Otherwise you will be asked to leave class for the day.
- Class attendance is required, but if you need to miss class for health reasons, concerning symptoms, suspected COVID exposure, unexpected dependent care, or other emergency reasons I will work with you. Let me underscore this: please make your decisions always based on health, safety, and wellness—yours and others—and I will work with you at the other end. Take any potential symptoms seriously; we're counting on each other.
  - When not in class, avoid closed public spaces, and if you can't avoid them: wear your mask properly, wash your hands, and maintain social distance.
  - If you, or a family member, are experiencing hardship because of the pandemic, talk to me or to someone in the Dean of Students office. You are not alone during this time.
  - We may adjust these principles as the semester evolves. I am always happy to receive your feedback to make this course work.

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

[\*\*The Center for Speaking, Writing, and the Image\*\*](#) (formerly The Writing Center) is open this semester! They open at full capacity after the second week of the semester, but will be holding limited appointments and drop-in hours as soon as classes begin. Writing and Speaking Partners meet one-on-one with students to talk about their work and provide feedback at any stage of their preparation process. Trained to think deeply about written, oral, and visual rhetoric and communication, these student peers facilitate conversations about everything from ID1 papers to senior theses, lab reports to creative writing, giving presentations to developing strategies for reading and engaging more deeply and confidently in class discussion.

Jenny Thomas, Asst. Director of College Writing and Language Diversity, offers specialized writing and speaking support for multilingual students navigating English as an additional language.

To make an appointment with a Writing or Speaking Partner, please log onto the Portal and go to Academics > Writing Center or contact the center at [writing.center@pomona.edu](mailto:writing.center@pomona.edu). They offer both in-person and virtual appointments, and have regular drop-in hours in SCC 148.

**[Accessibility Resources and Services](#)** - Pomona College is committed to nurturing an engaged, thriving, safe and healthy community that is responsive to student needs. The Dean of Students Office is committed to providing equal access and reasonable accommodations, where appropriate, for qualified disabled students. The College will continue to develop and coordinate policies and procedures, provide services, and insure access to academic programs, activities and facilities.

If you are not a Pomona College student, please be aware that you can inquire about academic accommodations through your home college's disability office.

Faculty members are not able to grant accommodations outside of the official channels.