

THEA 113-002 Acting I: Fall 2011
SSP 302; TR 10:40am – 12:40pm

Instructor – Thomas L. Cunningham
Office Hours – By Appointment

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Office – TBD

Required Texts/Materials

- Acting Onstage and Off , by Robert Barton, any Edition, Available at VCU Bookstore.
- A bound journal or notebook (Moleskin is nice, Composition books are cheap).
- A pencil or black/blue pen.
- *Recommended: An Actor's Work*, by Konstantin Stanislavski
- *Recommended: An Actor's Work on a Role*, by Konstantin Stanislavski

Course Objectives

This course is designed to introduce you to the fundamentals of the acting process through a focus on personal, physical, and vocal awareness. Over the course of this semester, each of you will explore the extraordinary richness unique to you, relate that wealth of personal potential to the world of the theatre, and begin to integrate the two into a cohesive vision of yourselves as Actors. This course will likewise familiarize you with Konstantin Stanislavski's system of acting, work that will be the foundation for your future semester here at VCU. This course will include a focus on:

- Vocal and Physical Warm-Up Techniques
- Improvisation and Theatre Games
- Imagination and Risk-Taking
- The creation of personalized Text
- Introduction to Stanislavski and his System
- Exposure to live theatrical productions
- Speaking with ease, openness, and trust among Peers.

Grading

Your grade will be based on a combination of your written work, in-class participation, individual growth, and application of the work. In addition, your attendance, punctuality, and ability to focus on the work also factor into your final grade.

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

Participation	20%
Professional Growth	
Attendance/Engagement	
Written Work	30%
Journals	
Guided Response Papers	
Main-Stage Papers	
Scores	
Performances	50%
Monologue Work	
Scene Work	

Grading Scale

For **written work**, the following are examples of what merits each letter grade:

A: Enlightening; well-written, well-organized; incisive; no grammar or spelling errors; nice transitions; surpassing minimum requirements; a joy to read.

B: Fluid; well-organized; articulate; strong conclusions; surpassing all minimum requirements.

C: Clear thesis statement, but not well-supported; choppy, without flow; no strong conclusions; meets all minimum requirements.

D: Plot summary; text regurgitation; no clearly stated thesis; grammar or spelling errors; unorganized or difficult to read; no sense of argument or conclusion; no demonstration of complex thought or consideration; minimum requirements are not met.

F: Submitted in incorrect format; failure to meet multiple minimum requirements; painful or disorienting to read.

Altogether, your work will be considered on VCU's grading scale:

A	100-90%
B	89-80%
C	79-70%
D	69-60%
F	59% and Below

Submitting Work

All type-written assignments should be in a 12 – 14 point font face, double-spaced, with 1" margins, and printed in black ink. Double-sided printing is fine. Multiple pages per page is most assuredly not fine. Thomas-approved fonts include Helvetica, Courier New, Times New Roman, and Arial. Thomas-unapproved fonts include all other fonts, and should not be used. Journals may be hand-written in pencil or black/blue ink. Certain assignments, such as Scores, will have special format requirements which will be provided.

About late work: Written and performance work will not be accepted late. Printers die the death, the library becomes over-run with stern biology majors, your dog eats your hard-drive: these are the facts of the universe. Prepare accordingly. Written work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned due-date. Performances may not be deferred, delayed, or made-up when missed. They are due on the assigned date. Failure to turn in any assignment at the designated time will result in a grade of zero (0). It is **your responsibility** to be diligent in meeting all due-dates and completing all assignments to the fullest extent of your capabilities.

Elocution with Thomas

In keeping with departmental policy, you must wear solid black movement clothing during class times. Likewise you must remove **all** jewelry prior to the start of class. This includes earrings, bracelets, watches, and any piercing worn above the neck (this most certainly includes any *in* or *about* the mouth)! Dressing appropriately is a sign that you are ready to work and have come prepared to participate.

In addition to appropriate dress, an appropriate attitude and comportment are necessary in maintaining a free and open environment in which to explore our voices, bodies, and selves. You must show respect and support for the efforts of your fellow classmates. You needn't like them or even agree with them! But you must approach one another with the same grace and professionalism as you approach the *work itself*. So take turns speaking! Share the floor with others! Offer constructive feedback! Expand on one another's ideas, and always—*always*—put the work first while in the classroom.

This semester we will attempt to gain a greater understanding of the fundamental building-blocks of ourselves. The only way to begin to enter into this understanding is with a clear and direct *use of language*. Verbal garbage such as “um,” “like,” “you know,” or “kind of” only inhibits your communication. This aurally offensive particulate matter is not welcome in the classroom.

The Sacred Space

In order to promote an atmosphere of learning and openness we will be designating our classroom space as our “sacred space.” If you arrive early to the space, please use the time for silent reflection, meditation, or to warm-up physically and vocally for the day's work. You may speak, but please speak only of the work we will do here in Acting. Please stow your belongings out of the way, and have any materials you will need for the day's work on-hand. I encourage you to bring a spill-proof container of water with you into the space. All other food or drink should remain outside of our holy-of-holies. Please finishing eating or snacking prior to entering the space. All this does not mean we won't be having a riotously good time! On the contrary, it ensures we will remain focused on the work and be better able to experience the freedom and joy that it will bring!

Attendance

In keeping with the university attendance policy you are allowed a total of two (2) absences. Each additional absence will result in the loss of a **full letter grade**. Two tardies (arriving after the start of class-time) qualify as one (1) absence. If you arrive at class more than 10 minutes late you are absent. If you leave class early without being excused you are absent. As with all of your studio courses, your work in this class is tied directly to your attendance and punctuality! To put it simply: the most important part is showing up. A gentle reminder: *you* are responsible for all missed work due to absence.

Please notify me via e-mail (tlcunningham@vcu.edu) the moment you are aware of an upcoming absence. This does not excuse or exempt the absence, but it is 1) a common courtesy, 2) important so that I don't worry about you.

Disabilities

If you have any visual, auditory, ambulatory, or learning disability it is your responsibility to inform me so that I can try to accommodate your needs! See The VCU Resource Guide for details. Please let me know if you are struggling, so that I can help.

Religious Observances

In accordance with University policy, if you want to observe a religious holiday of special importance you must provide advance written notification by the end of the second week of classes so that I can accommodate your needs.

Honor Policy

Please visit the VCU website or see the VCU Handbook to review the official university honor policy. Two university rulings you need be especially aware of: **1. The University requires that cell phones, media players, and beepers must be turned off while you are in the classroom. Yes, beepers. 2. Firearms and knives are not permitted in the classroom or on campus.**

VCU Alert and Campus Security

1. Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts [<http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify>]. Keep your information up-to-date.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information [<http://www.vcu.edu/alert>].
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police: 804-828-1234. Report suspicious activities and objects.