

Syllabus for THR 410:001

SCREEN ACTING

Spring 2012, Wednesdays, 1:30-4:10pm, PAB A105 (TheaterSpace)

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Office hours, Wednesdays, 12:30-1:30; 4:30-5:00pm, or by appointment.

A copy of this syllabus can be found online: theater.gmu.edu/academics

Course Description: Designed for students with a strong interest in pursuing a professional career in acting and is focused primarily on the particular techniques for screen acting in film and television.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of THR 310 (Acting II) or the equivalent, or permission of the instructor.

Learning Outcomes: This course uses a practical, hands-on approach to acting for the film and television industries. Midway through the course, this class will partner with FAVS _____, Directing for the Screen. During the latter half of the semester, THR 410 students will act in the FAVS directing projects as cast members. It is expected that students of this class will appear in more than one film project. Some support positions (production crew) may also be involved for the sake of efficiency and teamwork. These film projects will be brief, averaging 5 minutes in length after final edit.

The course will also use filmed and reviewed in-class exercises. Because today's filmmaker often explores periods and styles through his or her modern lens, this course will examine the evolution of screen acting styles from the 1920's to present day. Ultimately, this course will provide the serious actor with professional preparation for a career as an on-screen actor.

Course Text and Materials: OPTIONAL: Acting for the Camera by Tony Barr, Revised edition (1997). Note that used copies of this book may be found at Amazon.com and other sites at very reasonable prices. Also available new at the GMU Bookstore.

Nature of Course Delivery: This course is taught through studio practice, lectures, and discussion.

Relationship of Course to Program Goals and Professional Organizations: Mason's Theater Program prepares students to enter the professional worlds of theater, film and television in the 21st Century through academic study, production work, and artistic

exploration and invention. This course is a stepping stone between what one has learned and what one can accomplish in the world outside the University setting.

The instructor for this course is associated with numerous professional organizations, and has designed the course to fulfill industry expectations. Organizations whose professional work ethic and expectations that have inspired this course of study include professional actors' unions, professional theaters and theater service organizations, casting agents and companies, television and film production companies, and many more.

Course Requirements:

- Class attendance is essential for success in this course. Students are expected to attend every class (exceptions will be made if class-related filming takes place during class time), fully participate in class exercises and related film projects, and to be fully prepared. Students will keep a journal of their experiences throughout the filming process during the latter half of the semester;
- Two unexcused absences will result in a reduction of one full letter grade. It is not possible to make up any missed classes. (see website for department guidelines)
- Latecomers must take the responsibility to receive credit for attendance. Chronic lateness will affect final grades. Being late for your call time on the set is inexcusable.
- If it is necessary to leave class early, inform the instructor ahead of time. The class will count as ½ attendance.
- Clothing - Appropriate attire is required.

Midterm Exam: There is no midterm exam for this course.

Final Exam Date and Time – May 9, 1:30 - 4:15. Written exam, submission of journal. Final grade will also involve director's assessment of cast members and instructor's review of final film projects. Details will be provided within the first few weeks of class.

Grading: The grade for this course is determined by:

Preparation of assignments	20%
Concentrated participation	20%
Attendance	20%
Technical ability	10%
Subjective analysis of growth and potential	10%
Final Exam	20%

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

As a courtesy to others in the class, and in accordance with George Mason University policy, please turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. Also, please refrain from using Instant Messenger or email during class.

Copyright Law

Each student is individually responsible for his or her own work on assignments and creative projects. A willingness to learn from and share ideas with other students is important and equally important is that students do their own work. The use of other artists' images, videos, sounds, music is allowed as long as your inclusion of these creative works falls within the realm of "fair use" as described by copyright law. Students should always cite their sources. Try to use original source material as often as possible.

Honor Code

The Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Undergraduate Catalog, applies to all students in this class. The Honor Code requires that the work you do be your own. As a university faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously.

Using someone else's words, ideas, music or art without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is crucial to understand how to avoid plagiarism when using material from other sources. No grade is important enough to justify cheating, for which there are serious consequences. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or a member of the Counseling Center staff.

Disruptive Behavior

Faculty, staff, and students have the right to be treated with respect and professionalism by students and peers in all classes and activities sponsored by the Theater department. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. If, in the opinion of the responsible faculty member, a student becomes disruptive in class or rehearsal, faculty may exercise their judgment on how best to address the situation, be it by requiring the student to leave, calling Campus Police, or taking other steps deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of the class, rehearsal or group. Such action may affect the student's final grade and standing in the University.

Missing class for productions

Under what circumstances is involvement with a Mason Players production justification for missing a class? Here are the general ground rules which we work with:

- 1) Students are never required to miss a class to participate on a Mason Players production. This includes rehearsals, load-ins, performances, etc.
- 2) Students are asked to provide their class schedule when auditioning, being selected as a designer, etc. When cast, etc, directors accept these conflicts.

3) Subject to the attendance policies of a given class, students may request of their instructor to miss a class or portion to participate in critical activities. Such a request should be rarely be made and is subject to approval of the instructor. The syllabus policy on absence would apply. Student academic success is the priority.

4) In the case of our Mainstage including weekday matinees on Friday, because of the unique nature of the situation, the director of the production will provide an email confirming a student's participation in the performance (on stage, back stage, etc), but it is still at the discretion of the instructor to excuse the absence. As this conflict, if it exists, is known at least 6 weeks in advance, it is the student's responsibility to confirm that they will be able to participate in the performance so alternative arrangements can be made if necessary.

Given the dual nature of our learning experience - in the classroom and in production - it is not surprising that schedules sometimes conflict. In the end, we are an academic institution, and that is where the priority lies.

GRADING:

Letter grades will be assigned based on the George Mason University undergraduate grading system in which a letter grade of "A" is equal to 4.00 grade points, "A-" equals 3.67 grade points, etc. See the Academic Policies section of the *University Catalog* (available online at www.gmu.edu) for more information.

Grading Standards: What makes a project or other assignment an "A"? (B, C, D, F)

- A grade of "A" is given for superlative work that demonstrates a profound commitment to the course material, and further, employs this material as a springboard for independent thought and work.
- A grade of "B" is given for very good work that completely fulfills all the requirements of the course in a conscientious and dedicated manner, and that demonstrates mastery of the course content.
- A grade of "C" is given for work that fulfills all the requirements of the course in a satisfactory manner, but that falls short of demonstrating rigor and mastery.
- A grade of "D" is given for work that is unsatisfactory in content, but meets the standards of submission.
- A grade of "F" is given for work that fails to fulfill the requirements of the course.

All communications regarding this course must occur via Mason email accounts.

GMU Add/Drop Policy: The last day to drop this class with no tuition liability is **1/31/2012**. The last day to drop this class without Dean's permission is **2/24/2012, by 5pm**. The selective withdrawal period is 2/27/2012 – 3/30/2012. It is the student's responsibility to check to verify that they are properly enrolled as no credit will be awarded.

Honor Code, Copyright, & Computing Policies: *To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code:* Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

You are expected to adhere to all University policies and guidelines during your participation in this course. All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others is a George Mason University Honor Code violation. Please review the University's website for information on the following: Honor Code and Judicial Procedures; Copyright/Fair Use; and Responsible Use of Computing.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Students must inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester, and the specific accommodation will be arranged through the Disability Resource Center.

GMU Email Accounts

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. The GMU email accounts are the official accounts for this class.

Writing Center: Students in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). These services are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

Other Mason resources: <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/freshman/resources.html>

University Policies: University Catalog can be accessed catalog.gmu.edu

University Libraries "Ask a Librarian" <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) caps.gmu.edu or (703) 993-2380

University Policies

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

You are encouraged to sign up for the Mason Alert System by visiting the website <https://alert.gmu.edu>. Emergency information is posted in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises. Further information about emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert>.

NOTE: Cell phones, pagers and alarms must be turned off in class. Exceptions will only be made in advance or in case of emergency.

THR 410 SYLLABUS

- 1/25 Introduction to course and instructor, review of the basics, industry expectations and discipline, memorization, terminology, screen vs stage acting, listening exercises. Distribution of script materials to be memorized for class exercises.
- 2/1 Shooting the master shot.
- 2/8 **Meet your directors for casting purposes of final presentations.** Shooting cutaways and reversals.
- 2/15 Shooting the ECU
- 2/22 **NOTE: Class meets in JC G34.** Screen acting styles (1990-2012).
- 2/29 Exploration of scene study, in-class exercises.
- 3/7 Preparing for your first day on the set.
- 3/14 **SPRING BREAK.**
- 3/21 **Class merges with FAVS Directing class.** Casting assignments, distribution of scripts for final projects.
- 3/28 Shooting begins *. Screen acting styles (1970-1989). Scene study exercises.
- 4/4 Screen acting styles (1950's – '60's). Scene Study exercises. Review dailies.
- 4/11 Screen acting styles (1940's). Scene Study exercises. Review dailies.
- 4/18 Screen acting styles (1930's). Scene Study exercises. Review dailies.
- 4/25 Screen acting styles (1920's). Scene Study exercises. Review dailies.
- 5/2 The professional film audition. Final review
- 5/9 FINAL EXAM (1:30-4:15pm)

*NOTE: Shooting of final projects with FAVS Directors will take place as mutually scheduled by director and cast. Some shoots may be scheduled during class time, but it is expected that most filming will take place outside of class time. This is the nature of filmmaking. All students are expected to make themselves available toward the efficient completion of these short films. Students may be assigned to appear in multiple projects.