

Intermediate Acting/Gateway: The Actor's Toolkit—Lecture/Lab

Prerequisites: DRA 021A; or Consent of Instructor\*

*\* It is rare that students will be accepted into this course without taking prerequisite courses.*

Lecturer: Danika Sudik

Days: Monday & Wednesday. CRN: 28008

Time: 9:00 AM - 11:50 AM

Location: Wright Hall 120/Arena Theatre & Outdoors TBD

Email: [dburmester@ucdavis.edu](mailto:dburmester@ucdavis.edu)

Virtual Office Hours: By appointment; Thursdays 2:00–4:00 PM.

<https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/93313271716?pwd=bW9qY2xRUmRkZjJ4cXEyNDJnL3BkZz09>

Meeting ID: 933 1327 1716

Passcode: 550923

*\*\*This is the virtual classroom we will use if I am ill but able to conduct class from home.*

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

In the lived experience of one individual, Acting weaves together psychological, physical, and social dynamics and structures. This alchemy is uniquely expressed through the interpretative skill of the actor. Springing forth from Stanislavski's early methods, we will explore voice work, bodywork, and emotional and psychological landscapes through the practice of psychophysical acting skills. These practices will give you a framework to serve the story, the character, your community, and yourself.

We will take full advantage of the studio time to fully engage in individual and collective practices drawn from the work of Michael Chekhov, Fay Simpson, and other leaders in the field. In this experiential journey, we will deepen and expand your actors' toolkit and build community through consent-based practice to develop creative longevity and sustainability. Through the process of co-creation, you will strengthen and build upon the skills you have already acquired and be introduced to new concepts and tools. To this end, we will use improvisations, open scenes, and analysis of fixed texts culminating in performances of your "Dream Role."

You are the co-creators of this experience. The course syllabus will be adjusted as needed to best support your learning. Course adjustments will always favor the student experience.

### **PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES**

**We will:**

1. Practice acting techniques from a psychophysical perspective.
2. Increase bodymind awareness and emotional literacy to give broader and deeper access to the entirety of your communicative range.
3. Communicate a flexible, personalized vision of responsibility (response-ability) as an actor, either in creating your own work or interpreting someone else's.

**Required Reading (available in the UC Davis Bookstore):**

On the Technique of Acting by Michael Chekhov

The Lucid Body by Fay Simpson

**Supply List:**

- Dedicated journal (blank pages recommended; any size that will promote daily usage)
- Pencils with erasers.
- Colored pencils and/or fine-tip colored pens.
- Yellow highlighter
- Refillable water bottle.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

TBD	<b>Acting with the Playwright in the Room: Q&amp;A</b>
Oct 24 & 26	<b>Final Performance Pitch: Presenting Your Dream Role</b>
Nov 18 & 19 at 7:00 PM Nov 20 at 2:00 PM	<b><u>Live Performance: The Fall Show: A Devised Work</u></b> in the Main Theater
Nov 28 & 30	<b>Dream Role Performances</b>
December 9 at 10:00 AM	<b>No class meeting.</b> All work must be turned in before this deadline.

**HEALTH & SAFETY**

Please do not attend class if you or someone in your home is ill. Before coming to class, fill out the **Required Daily Symptom Survey**: <https://campusready.ucdavis.edu/symptom-survey>. Keep up to date on Campus protocols by visiting the Campus Ready website.

**Safety & University Resources:** The craft of Acting requires individuals to explore multitudes of relational, situational, and emotional landscapes. While we will work towards caring for our class and campus community, each actor must take responsibility to keep themselves emotionally and physically safe while working.

Together we will create a culture of consent and discuss this process repeatedly and in-depth throughout the course. However, you are empowered to protect yourself physically, psychologically, and emotionally from day one. **STOP** if you find yourself entering into territory that makes you feel unsafe. Then, communicate your experience so we can find a safe way to proceed. **Valuing, caring for, and protecting your instrument is your responsibility.**

Aggie Mental Health is a new campus wide campaign to support student mental health and well being and **Student Health and Counseling Services** are an extraordinary resource. You do not need to be "in crisis" to find value there. Please take time to explore the resources available on campus: <https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/counseling-services>.

**The Arena Theatre** is used as a classroom, rehearsal room, and performance space—sometimes all in the same day or week. Do not assume the theatre set-up will be the same from day to day. Perform your own safety check every time you enter the space checking for moved furniture, location of step units, cords, equipment, etc.

**SELF & COMMUNITY**

**Communication:** This is the essential ingredient for successful Acting. Honest expression and active listening are required in your performance work and, most importantly, in your creative relationships. To be successful in this class, you will need to develop the skill of addressing issues head-on with integrity, kindness, and humility. Ten weeks go by fast; we cannot afford to lose time pretending things are working if they are not. Please discuss with me any physical or other considerations that may limit the extent of your full participation.

**Email/Canvas Policy:** Please check your UC Davis email daily while enrolled in this course and, if applicable, respond to messages within 24 hours. Any last-minute updates will be posted to Canvas announcements; please adjust your settings to receive them immediately. I suggest checking your email/announcements then completing your Daily Symptom Survey each morning *before* traveling to campus. In the event Canvas is unavailable, check [www.danikasudik.com/120](http://www.danikasudik.com/120) for class updates.

**Personal Accountability:** You can count on obstacles arising to thwart your success in this class. This is your education and your life; get positive and creative to find the win-win to every situation.

**Responsibility to Classmates:** Assignments will be performed individually and in groups. Completion of all assignments will be necessary to support your classmates in successfully completing their work. If you don't "show up" for class, it hurts your classmates' experience as much as it is detrimental to your own.

**Care for the space:** You commit to leaving all rehearsal and performance spaces better than you found them. At a bare minimum, you 'leave no trace.'

**Privacy & Trust:** While trust is built as a group, we will set being trustworthy as an expectation from Day One. Acting requires personal risk-taking. Our first impulse during class exercises might look foolish or be otherwise embarrassing. We can't fully participate if we are afraid of being cruelly judged or exposed. Personal recordings/photography are prohibited unless you receive written permission from the instructor. Violating this policy will result in an automatic and non-negotiable drop from the class and failing grade.

**Original work, Academic Integrity, & Honesty:** Plagiarism of any kind can result in course failure and expulsion from the University. Promote a good learning environment. Students are expected to know and follow the [Code of Academic Conduct](#).

**GRADING OVERVIEW**

<b>Participation</b>	40%	<b>Mini-Assignments/Performances</b>	30%
<b>Dream Role Performance</b>	15%	<b>Final Reflection</b>	15%

**WORKLOAD**

Per University policy, students should spend 3 hours weekly per unit of course work, including class time. Much of the work will involve collaborating with partners, and you will be required

to conduct rehearsals outside of class which will necessitate coordinating your schedule with classmates. A certain amount of analysis and embodiment/memorization of text will be required.

You should anticipate at least 2-3 hours of rehearsal per week ahead of your mid-term and final performances. Please note that rehearsal hours are in addition to your individual class preparation time. Please do not take this class if you cannot make this weekly time commitment.

In the context of this class, grades are a tool to help you assess if you are "showing up" for your own learning experience and supporting the learning of your fellow actors. If circumstances are not allowing for the personal discipline required for the class, I will suggest that you drop the course to preserve your GPA.

There will be small assignments, projects, and performances that will crop up during the quarter. It is your responsibility to complete them on time and to the best of your ability. **Many ancillary projects will *only* be described and assigned orally in class.** Your success will depend on your active listening, attention, and communication with classmates.

### **PARTICIPATION (40%)**

Acting requires being actively present. Participation includes **preparation** (following University protocol regarding masks, appropriate dress, journal, independent rehearsal of scenes, memorizing text, having read or viewed assigned materials, scripts, water bottle, pencil, props, etc.); **commitment** (to warm-ups, improvisations, in-class rehearsal of scenes, contribution to discussions, and adjustments to feedback, and **timekeeping** (arriving on time and staying until the end of class)).

#### **Preparation**

**Masks:** Following university policy and guidance regarding masking and other Covid related safety measures, including testing. This means being ready to pivot to wearing high-quality, well-fitting masks if required.

**Dress Code:** Physical, vocal, and imaginative warm-ups form a regular part of the curriculum; therefore, please wear loose-fitting clothing that allows you to run, jump, lie down, move and breathe without restriction or inhibition. Shorts/skirts, buckles, buttons, and zippers are not advised. Long hair must be pulled back with a soft tie (no claw clips). Hats are not allowed during class as they obstruct your face from your classmates/audience. Please plan to work in socks or bare feet in the classroom.

**Materials:** Yoga mat (For indoor and outdoor use), pencils, pen, dedicated journal, refillable water bottle, soft hair ties (for long hair), extra socks or flip-flops (to prevent soggy feet during/ after working outdoors).

#### **Commitment**

**Daily Classwork & Assignments:** In general, if you bring your full creativity and effort to each task, you should expect an "A" grade. If you fulfill the minimum requirements of the assignment, you can expect a "C" grade.

**Phone/Gadget Etiquette:** Silence your notifications during class time and use our meetings as an opportunity to be fully present. During physical warm-ups and class activities, expensive gadgets will not be safe in your pockets.

**Journal:** Actors observe the world and combine what they see with their personal experiences and imagination to create the characters and environments they inhabit. The more you observe yourself and your surroundings, the better your Acting will be. A dedicated acting journal will be part of your journey this quarter to support honing your observational skills. Choose a journal you love and bring it with you to each session (along with writing utensils and a highlighter). **You will use this journal every class.**

**Label each entry with the class date and session #.** Your journal will also be where you record copywork and responses to freewrites. I also recommend you use it to record your observations and reflections outside of class.

### **Required Readings/Viewings**

You can expect assigned reading and/or viewing each week. These will be posted weekly by 6:00 PM on Thursday and will be discussed the following Monday. I suggest calendaring a recurring time block so you always have dedicated time set aside for these assignments.

**Readings:** Required texts are On the Technique of Acting by Michael Chekhov and The Lucid Body by Fay Simpson. You will be required to read two-full length plays this quarter and attend one live performance. We will discuss readings/performances/viewings frequently and in detail; please come prepared with your thoughts and questions.

**Viewing:** Films and programs viewed for our class will have various 'ratings' from no rating to G to R. If you are under 18 years old, please notify me immediately. Please use caution when watching these films in a public or family setting, as some material might not be appropriate for all viewers.

### **Timekeeping**

**Punctuality:** Classes begin promptly at 9:00 AM. Punctuality is vital as the ensemble warms up and members engage with each other immediately. If you are late (and within the first 15 minutes of class), you will be marked down two letter grades for the day. For example: If your participation earns an "A" for the day, you will receive a "C" for lateness.

**NOTE: IF YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE PERSISTENTLY LATE FOR A PRACTICAL, HANDS-ON CLASS BEGINNING AT 9:00 AM, PLEASE SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS AN APPROPRIATE COURSE FOR YOU.**

**Missed Classes:** Because this class is experiential, it is impossible to "make up" missed classwork. Any unexcused absences result in a zero for that day's participation grade.

**What to Do If You Miss Class:** *Exchange your contact information with 2-3 of your classmates during the first week of class.* Please get in touch with these classmates before emailing me any clarifying questions regarding what you have missed. Ask for copywork, writing prompts, in

class exercises, and homework assigned during the missed class. If you are absent, you are still expected to journal on the readings, and complete homework, rehearsals, or other class processes.

**Excused absences:** You are allowed two excused absences with a medical note. This allowance should cover absences necessary due to quarantine. Do not schedule elective appointments/ procedures or travel during class time. You are responsible for homework assigned or due on the day you are absent (including journaling); no assignments will be accepted after the beginning of the next class period.

**PLEASE NOTE: If you are absent four times, you will be required to drop the class.**

\*\*If you are a **university athlete** whose sport is in season, please talk to me during the first week of class: you should consider a different course if your season schedule has conflicts.

### **Daily Participation Self-Check**

**Objective (30%)**

- Present and ready to work at 9:00 AM
- Dressed for class and/or costumed for performance
- Mask covering nose and mouth at all times (or adhering to current Campus guidance)
- Dedicated journal
- Writing utensils
- Mat
- Refillable water bottle
- Visibly following directions
- Giving quiet attention to instructor or classmates
- Assignments turned in by due date/time
- All directions followed on assignments
- \* Contributing to class discussions
- \* Volunteering for exercises

**Subjective (10%)**

- Giving full effort in class
- Challenging yourself
- \* Volunteering for exercises
- \* Contributing to class discussions

**Journal Self-Check**

- Date
- Session #
- Copywork
- Freewrite response
- Name and description of warm up activities
- Names and description of class activities
- Observations/reflections on your daily work
- Observations of your classmates work
- Outside of class/life observations as applicable

### MINI-ASSIGNMENTS (30%)

In creative work, you can have a lousy final product but still have an interesting and valuable 'failure.' **This is a process-oriented class—take care in your process, and the product will take care of itself.**

Each assignment will have a rubric. All submitted work on Canvas should be double spaced, in 12-point font, and paginated, with name, date, and a title. In the event Canvas is unavailable, email a PDF to [dburmester@ucdavis.edu](mailto:dburmester@ucdavis.edu) by the date due.

### DREAM ROLE PERFORMANCE (15%)

Your final will be a performance of your Dream Role AND supporting the dream of someone else by acting as their scene partner. This will be an opportunity to utilize all the strategies and tools practiced in class as interpreted through two distinct characters.

### FINAL REFLECTION (15%)

**Due during the scheduled final exam period.** \*Please note: We do not meet during the scheduled exam time in finals week. 500 words minimum-1000 words max.

(An in-depth prompt will be posted on Canvas near the end of the quarter). Your goal for the Reflective Paper is to communicate the inner work you've done in class, telling a clear story about what you have learned. This essay is your opportunity to express your ability to self-reflect, analyze, and practice your writing skills.

Although this is not primarily a writing class, you are expected to write at university-level standards. I strongly suggest you read your essay aloud before turning it in to catch grammatical mistakes and ensure your writing reflects your thinking.

Utilize the Academic Assistance and Tutoring Center for assistance with grammar, punctuation, essay organization, and writing processes. <https://tutoring.ucdavis.edu/writing>

### EXTRA CREDIT POLICY

There are rare occasions when extra credit may be granted. Please do not assume that extra credit assignments can be sought to elevate low grades. In this class, extra credit is generally given to students who are earning a strong 'B' and wish to be earning an 'A' grade. **Your grade is your responsibility.**

### Recommended Texts for Further Study:

*Check your local library before purchasing to see if you resonate with philosophy and style.*

Cameron, J. (2020). *The artist's way: A spiritual path to higher creativity*. Souvenir Press.

Hagen, U. (1991). *A challenge for the actor*. Scribner.

Tharp, T., & Reiter, M. (2006). *The creative habit: Learn it and use it for life: A practical guide*. Simon & Schuster.

Wangh, S. S. (2000). *An acrobat of the heart*. Vintage Books.