



THR 401 Contemporary Acting II
Tu- Th 10:20-12:10 F 3:00-4:50
Room 12

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Office Hours

This course hopes to trace the roots through the pinnacle of modern psychological realism from its beginnings in late 19th century drama through its mid-twentieth century refinement. From the earliest stages of the psychological studies of Ibsen (along with Chekhov and Strindberg) the actor has been given rich characters to analyze. When the theories of Stanislavski were brought over to America (whether translated correctly or not) American dramatists like Odets melded the psychology of the character into a metaphor for the troubling social issues of the time. Finally, Tennessee Williams crafted the apex of psychologically-based characters rich for the actor to analyze and inhabit.

These dramatists will create the backdrop of our study for this course. These three playwrights represent three unique eras of psychologically-based character creation. All of your work from THR 101 and 301 has prepared you for this exploration of these complex and challenging characters.

The class is divided into three sections:

- 1) Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) Using *A Doll's House* script we will explore the discoveries of Freudian psychology to enhance the cultural relevance of this seminal script.
- 2) Odets (1906-1963) Using several scripts of the playwright we will examine how psychology and society combine to create a rich and textured backdrop for scene study.
- 3) Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) using several scripts from this playwright we will see how a playwright in complete control of the psychological make-up of a character celebrates and makes poetry from a character's flaws.

Students must have knowledge of accepted vocabulary of objectives, tactics and obstacles and understand the concept of scoring a script. They must understand the concept of premise and motivation. They must have keen script analysis skills and a clear understanding of beats and units. All of these elements will serve the student in all aspects of the course.

The assignments include:

Henrik Ibsen

- 1) Read a selection from Stella Adler on Ibsen
- 2) Read the PowerPoint on *A Doll's House*
- 3) Read the script of the play.
- 4) Quiz on the above (10 points)
- 5) Dramaturgical info on *A Doll's House* (5 points)
- 6) Scored script of your scene (5 points)
- 7) Perform a scene from *A Doll's House* (10 points)

Clifford Odets

- 1) Read a selection from “The Fervent Years”
- 2) Watch documentary on the 1930s
- 3) Watch films from the 1930s
- 4) Read the script of the play
- 5) Create a “play of social protest” (10 points)
- 6) Learn/review New York dialect
- 7) Dramaturgical work on Odets or the 1930s (5 points)
- 8) Scored script of your scene (5 points)
- 9) Perform a scene from an Odets play (10 points)

Tennessee Williams

- 1) Read a selection from Uta Hagen and others
- 2) Watch the PowerPoint on Williams
- 3) Read the script of the play
- 4) Quiz on the above (10 points)
- 5) Learn/review Southern dialect
- 6) Dramaturgical work on Williams (5 points)
- 7) Scored script of the scene and diagnosis of character (5 points)
- 8) Perform a scene from a Williams play (10 points)

Assignments for Class:

- Most of the assignments will be posted on angel. All grades are posted on angel.
- Quizzes will cover all readings, PowerPoints, class information and plays.
- Dramaturgical reports will be approved by the instructor and will cover a worthy research component for the playwright, play, time period or ancillary subject. The information may be in research paper form (2-3 pages) or PowerPoint (10-15 slides with images and information). They will be graded on clarity and relevance.
- Scored scripts will include premise, superobjective scene objective. The scene will be broken into units with objectives. Beats with tactics. They will include obstacles and other psychological clues and motivational triggers.
- Performances of the scenes will be graded on synthesis of all information and research, clarity of objectives, growth as actor, truthful playing of high stakes, creating a believable character, mastery of dialect (when applicable) and above all creating a clear and logical motivation of character related to their psychology.
- Critiques of all Main Stage (*Six Character, DanceFest, Babes in Arms*) and Second Stage (*Blue Room*) shows plus one Open Stage. Each is worth two points (total 10 points.) These critiques will be 2-3 pages and will concentrate ONLY on the truthful playing of a character’s psychology. Were the characters believable? Did their actions seem motivated? All critiques must be placed in the appropriate drop box by the start of class on the date due.

The total points for the course are 100 points.

Grading scale:	93-100 = 4.0	73-77 = 2.0
	88-92 = 3.5	68-72 = 1.5
	83-87 = 3.0	60-67 = 1.0
	78-82 = 2.5	59 and below =

Attendance Policies:

You will be allowed 2 absences without being penalized. Beyond these two absences, only a University sanctioned absence or medical absence will be excused (an official University or Department excuse form will be necessary to excuse you or a note from your doctor). No absences of any kind will excuse you from class responsibilities.

You, the student, will be held accountable for keeping up with class assignments and projects. Although the instructor reserves the right to calculate the participation grade (see Participation) by subjective evaluation of the “quality” of each student’s participation, the primary factor in your attendance will be evaluated as follows:

- 2 absences = no grade reduction
- 3 absences = a 0.5 reduction of your final grade
- 4 absences = a 1.0 reduction in final grade
- 5 absences = Automatic failure of class

Tardiness: Tardiness is disruptive to a class of this nature and will not be tolerated. Any tardiness will be recorded along with attendance. Attendance will be taken promptly at the start of class. If you enter the room after the role-call has been completed, you will be considered tardy. 3 tardies = 1 absence.

If you enter the room anytime after 20 minutes of the official start of class you will be marked absent for that class day. If you depart from class (for any reason) before the official end of class, you will be marked absent for that day.

1. Academic Honesty: Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades and professional standards.” In addition the Department of Theatre adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grade; the all-University Point on Integrity of Scholarship and Grade, and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu.) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from a source. You are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in THR 401. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment in the course.
2. Accommodations for disabilities: Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 TTY).
3. Drop and Adds: The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is 2/1/08 Last day to drop the course with no refund and no grade reported is 2/27/08. You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.
4. Observing Major Religious Holidays: You may make up course work missed to observe a major religious holiday only if you make arrangements in advance with the instructor.
5. Participation in Required Activity: To make up course work missed to participate in a required activity or a university-sanctioned event, you must provide the instructor with adequate advanced notice and a written authorization from the faculty member of the course or from a university administrator.
6. Attendance: Students whose names do not appear on the official class list for this course may not attend this class.
7. Internet: Some professional Responses will not consider a submission for publication if the article has appeared on the Internet. Please notify you’re your instructor in writing if you do not want your course papers posted to the course Web site.
8. Disruptive Behavior: Article 2.3.5 of the Academic Freedom Report (AFR) for students at Michigan State University states that “The student’s behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned.” Article 2.3.10 of the AFR states that “The student has a right to a scholarly relationships with faculty based on mutual trust and civility.” General Student Regulation 5.02 states that “no student shall...interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to classes...) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action through the Student Judiciary process.

1/8 Overview of class Discuss Psychology Improv/Discuss scoring/Assign dramaturgy
1/10 No Class ACTF (Read Doll’s House and other info!)
1/11 No Class ACTF
1/15 Discuss Doll’s House/ Dramaturgical assignments assigned
1/17 Psychology/ Discuss readings/ Present monologue in “style”
1/18 Sam O’Neill 1st hour/Dramaturgical reports

1/22 Quiz/scenes assigned/scene partner coaches assigned
1/24 Creation of groundplan/ step by step first rehearsal
1/25 first unit
1/29 Free rehearsal
1/31 mid point
2/1 mid point/ scored script
2/5 selected rehearsal/ <i>Six Characters</i> response due in dropbox
2/7 selected rehearsal
2/8 selected rehearsal/ Scored script due
2/12 Full scene workshop (1/2 called)
2/14 Full scene workshop (1/2 called)
2/15 Present scene for a grade
2/19 Discuss 1930s watch dvd and 1930 movies/ Assign dramaturgy
2/21 Discuss reading/Learn dialect/Assign scenes/Dramaturgical information due/ scene assigned/Plays of social protest assigned
2/22 Quiz/Plays of social protest rehearsal
2/26 Present plays of social protest/Discuss Odets plays/Discuss <i>DanceFest</i> critique due
2/28 First unit ENVIRONMENT
2/29 First unit
SPRING BREAK
3/11 Midpoint CONDITIONING FORCES
3/13 Midpoint
3/14 Improvs and exercises/Scored script due
3/18 Full scenes workshop (1/3 called)/ <i>Blue Room</i> critique due
3/20 Full scene workshop (1/3 called)
3/21 Full scene workshop (1/3 called)
3/25 Present scene for a grade
3/27 Discuss Williams/ Dramaturgical info assigned
3/28 Discuss reading/Learn dialect/Assign scenes/Dramaturgical information due/ scene assigned
4/1 Quiz/ Review dialect/Analyze plays
4/3 All <i>Summer and Smoke</i> and <i>Sweet Bird of Youth</i> scenes called for first unit FAMILY
4/4 All <i>Streetcar</i> scenes called for first unit
4/8 All <i>Summer and Smoke/ Sweet Bird of Youth</i> scene called for midpoint. DIAGNOSIS
4/10 All <i>Streetcar</i> scenes called for midpoint.
4/11 Rehearsal with professor as needed (Scored scripts due INCLUDING diagnosis)

4/15 Full <i>Summer/Sweet Bird</i> Scenes called
4/17 Full <i>Streetcar</i> scenes called
4/18 Rehearsal with professor as needed.
4/22 Refine scenes with psychology and motivation/ Discuss <i>Babes in Arms</i> critique due
4/24 Refine scenes
4/25 Perform scenes for final grade