Michigan State University Dept. of Theatre

Theatre 204 Topics in Acting/ Directing I: Acting for the Camera

Spring 2016

M W 12:40 – 2:30 Aud. 244 Studio

Instructor: Mark Colson

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00 -4:00

Wednesday 11:00 - 12:00

Text: Collegeville Coursepack

Acting in Film, by Michael Caine

Acting for the Camera by Tony Barr

Scripts to be assigned.

**Course Description and Objectives**

Intensive practicum focusing on the craft of On-Camera Acting. Becoming comfortable in front of a camera. The fundamentals of auditioning and On-Camera acting - Including TV and Commercials. Beginning TV and Film scene work. Understanding the equipment and terms used in an audition and on-set. Understanding the mechanics of On-Camera acting, approached from a relaxed and confident state.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To expand awareness of on-camera acting as a craft, with practical and useful tools and goals.
2. To make students critically aware of what makes a good commercial actor and to be comfortable when the camera is rolling.
3. To develop an understanding of on-camera acting skills and on-set terminology.
4. To gain and maintain confidence while performing in front of a camera.
5. To perform from a place of relaxation and calm.
6. To gain a basic appreciation for the jobs needed in TV and film.
7. To examine one’s own work critically and make the desired adjustments.
8. To make solid choices as an actor.

**Procedures for accomplishing objective:**

1. Enthusiastic, prepared and creative participation in class.
2. Applied understanding of the terms and theory covered in readings and discussed in class.
3. Successful presentation of Camera work, monologues and scenes (including commitment to rehearsal outside of class time) as well as participation in class exercises.
4. A focused commitment to bettering work as an actor.
5. Memorization of scenes to be filmed in class.
6. Understanding terms used on-set, along with jobs needed.
7. Auditions. Commercials and TV.
8. On-camera scene work.
9. Written critiques of three films.

**Written Work:**

1) **Test of Terms** used in production and jobs associated with the TV and film industry. Understanding of key-points of the assigned readings.

**2) Two written Critiques:** 2 pages. Film or TV. (All to be watched in class, worth 5 points each)

You will focus on the actor’s performances (were they believable, did they perform from a place of relaxation and confidence, what made one actor’s performance more memorable/ exciting than another’s? Shots used –(master, medium, close-up). Did they help in telling the story? How did the lighting and soundtrack add or take away from the film?

**CRITIQUES WILL BE EMAILED TO:** [**mcolson@msu.edu**](mailto:mcolson@msu.edu) **DO NOT TRY TO PUT ON D2L**.

**Presentations**:

**In class ORAL CRITIQUE**. Students will have 3 minutes to critique a film. Critique should be clear and concise. See guidelines above for written critiques. **All topics** listed above in written critique section will be discussed. Students will need to be economical in their use of time; clarity of thought, editing and preparation will be instrumental in the successful completion of assignment. Racing through the report will possibly qualify as unclear or unintelligible. Oral Critiques will be filmed for benefit of student and grading purposes. Critiques will be timed and cut off if exceeding 2.5 minutes.

**Performance Work:**

**Continuity/ Repetition Exercise:**

You will select a monologue from a play or film and memorize -No more than 90 seconds. You will choose five distinct physical actions to accompany the monologue AND five will be assigned to you. (Ten total)

Assigned actions:

Take off or put on one article of clothing.

Take three steps and turn to the left or right.

Sit down on floor or chair.

Stand up from a sitting position.

Adjust your hair.

You will repeat these physical actions at precisely the same time during the course of the monologue. Turn in hardcopy of script with physical actions marked/ written in. The monologue will be filmed three times consecutively. You will strive to perform the monologue exactly the same way in regards to established physical actions.

**Silent Activity**

Perform silent activity, minimal props and/or mime actions. Exercise should last from 2 minutes. Camera will be stationary, so keep your activity small and precise. Make what you are doing real for yourself; be very detailed in your actions. If *you* believe it fully, *we* will believe it fully. Have some sort of emotional connection to the task and environment.

**Commercial Audition Solo and Commercial Audition w/ Partner:**

You will perform commercial auditions, handed out **10-15 minutes** before taping. Instructor will let you know appropriate attire before audition. You will embrace the dialogue and circumstances and you will make choices in a brief period of time. For partner audition, you will establish a relationship and connection with your partner in a brief period of time.

**TV Audition**:

Scene will be handed out a few days prior to the taping. You will prepare scene, and tape audition, making choices appropriate to the givens of the scene.

**One Line Audition:**

Prepare a scene (to be handed out same day as taping), where you are only able to speak one line. Make choices appropriate to the scene, character and circumstance.

**Final Scene and Soap Opera Scene:**

Prepare a scene with a partner for taping. Rehearse scene, break scene in to beats, make choices appropriate to your character and circumstance.

**Requirements of Students:**

1. Attendance (see attendance policy) and active participation in each class.
2. Committed and connected work in monologues and scenes as well as rehearsals.
3. No make-up performances will be permitted.
4. Successful passing of test on film terminology and readings.
5. Rehearsals outside of class will be required. No missed rehearsals are allowed: participation grades will be affected by missed outside rehearsals.

6) Successful performances for assigned scene work.

7) Respect, support, and encouragement of classmates. Most importantly, respect for

assigned scene partners

1. Critique of Episodic TV program and Films.

**NO CELLPHONES, iPods or other electronic devises permitted in class.**

**NO USE ON INTERNET during class time.**

**Noncompliance with Cellphone and Internet ban will result in points deducted from the Participation portion of your grade at the discretion of the instructor.**

**NO GUM, FOOD OR DRINK permitted in class. (Except for one bottle of water per student)**

**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.

***New Department-Wide Attendance Policy***:  Class/Rehearsal/Performance Policy. Our primary focus is your education. Classes should take precedence over production. To ensure that this focus remain balanced we have instituted a “no class attendance means no rehearsal policy” for all BFA and MFA actors and Stage Managers.

Every course has different attendance guidelines. This policy is related to the number of allowed absences in any THR or DAN class. If you exceed the number of allowed absences for any individual class, the Director of the production that you are involved with will be notified regarding the break of policy and you will not be permitted to participate in that evening’s rehearsal or performance. Please check the attendance policy carefully on all THR and DAN syllabi.

As an example, most acting classes allow two unexcused absences.  You may use these at any time and it will not affect your attendance at rehearsal or performance. If you miss class again and have exceeded your limit of allowed absences, you will not be allowed to attend that evening's rehearsal or performance. This is related to all THR and DAN classes.

**Grading policies:**

This is a studio class with daily active participation. Your attendance, support and enthusiasm along with a concentrated daily effort significantly affect your final grade.

Commercial audition 9 points

Commercial audition w/ partner 9 points

TV audition 9 points

One Line audition 9 points

Silent Activity 5 points

Continuity Exercise 7 points

Soap Opera scene w/ partner 7 points

Final Scene 10 points

Test of terms and jobs 10 points

Critiques of TV and Film 15 points (5 points each)

Participation in class 10 points

BE AWARE: MEMORIZATION OF SOME SCENES AND MONOLUGUES IS EXPECTED AND WILL RELECT IN YOUR FINAL GRADE.

BEAWARE: ON AUDITION DUE DATES YOU WILL COME PREPARED WITH PICTURE, RESUME AND APPROPRIATE ATTIRE.

Your performances will be assessed according to your own ability to comprehend and execute the work. You will be evaluated with consideration of your individual progression and not in comparison to your classmate’s level of previous knowledge, experience or progression.

**Participation:** Will account for 10% of your final grade. Participation refers to your willingness to volunteer with a positive attitude for class work and exercises; to speak up in discussions with pertinent comments or questions; being supportive and respectful to your classmates at all times. Responsibilities also include participation in exercises that require physical and emotional involvement.

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Grading scale: 93-100 = 4.0

88-92 = 3.5

83-87 = 3.0

78-82 = 2.5

73-77 = 2.0

68-72 = 1.5

60-67 = 1.0

59 and below = 0.0

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 304. 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. See MSU Registrar Website for specific dates related to drop, adds and refunds. 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 faulty member of the course of 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 journals 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, “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.

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| Date | Class | Assignment for next class |
| 1/11 | Introduction to Class  Business of Acting  Exercises Improvisation | Read Caine Introduction and Chapters 1, 2  Perform Silent Activity |
| 1/13 | Discuss Introduction and Chapters 1, 2 and 3  **Perform Silent Activity** |  |
| 1/18 | **NO CLASS MLK DAY** | Read Caine 3, 4 |
| 1/20 | Discuss Caine 3,4  Silent Activity Playback  Discuss/ Work Continuity Exercise |  |
| 1/25 | Watch Film | Read Caine 5, 6  Perform Continuity Exercise |
| 1/27 | **Perform Continuity Exercise**  Discuss Caine 5,6 | Read Caine 7, 8  Critique #1 Due |
| 2/1 | Discuss Caine 7, 8  **Critique #1 Due** |  |
| 2/3 | Work Commercial Auditions | Read Barr Chapters 1 -14 |
| 2/8 | Work Commercial Auditions  Discuss Reading Barr 1-14 |  |
| 2/10 | Work Commercial Auditions | Read Barr Chapters 15 - 30 |
| 2/15 | Discuss Reading Barr 15 – 30  Work Commercial Auditions | Perform Comm. Audition |
| 2/17 | **Perform Commercial Auditions**  **Solo and Partner** |  |
| 2/22 | Playback Commercial Auditions |  |
| 2/24 | Watch Film #2 | Critique #2 Due |
| 2/29 | **Film Critique #2 Due**  Work One Line Auditions | Perform One Line Auditions |
| 3/2 | **Perform One Line Auditions** |  |
| 3/7 | SPRING BREAK |  |
| 3/9 | SPRING BREAK |  |
| 3/14 | Work TV Audition |  |
| 3/16 | Work TV Audition | Perform TV Auditions |
| 3/21 | **Perform TV Audition** |  |
| 3/23 | Playback TV Audition  Hand Out Soap Opera Scenes |  |
| 3/28 | Work Soap Opera Scenes | Perform Soap Opera Scenes |
| 3/30 | **Perform Soap Opera Scenes** |  |
| 4/4 | Playback Soap Opera Scenes |  |
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| 4/6 | Work Final Scenes |  |
| 4/11 | Watch Film #3 | Test of Terms |
| 4/13 | Work Final Scenes  **TEST OF TERMS** | Critique #3 Due (Oral Report) |
| 4/18 | **Critique #3 Due (Oral Report)**  Work Final Scenes |  |
| 4/20 | Work Final Scenes | Perform Final Scene |
| 4/25 | Work Final Scenes |  |
| 4/27 | **Perform Final Scene** |  |
| 5/2 – 5/6 | **Final Exam 1:00pm May 5th Thursday Playback Final Scenes** |  |
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