

Bergen Community College
Division of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

Course Syllabus

Scene Study THR-210

Date of Most Recent Syllabus Revision: _____
Course Typically Offered: Fall___ Spring X Every Semester___ Other _____
Syllabus last reviewed by: BCC General Education Committee October 19, 2010
Curriculum Committee _____

Basic Information About Course and Instructor

Semester and Year:
Course and Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary:
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

Scene Study is a performance workshop designed to explore the various acting techniques used in the staging and development of scenes and monologues. It emphasizes a practical, step-by-step approach to acting by exploring the rehearsal process, the development of character, creation of organic blocking, script analysis, improvisational and traditional methods, and physical and vocal technique. 4 lab 3 credit

Prerequisite: THR-210 Scene Study

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements of this course, students will be able to

1. Each student will begin to develop an individual process to approaching the creation of a role, using various methods of acting and the fundamentals of directing.
2. Students will learn to analyze and break down a script beat-by-beat, creating a believable character, playing objectives truthfully, and staging their scenes with organic blocking. Improvisational exercises and written assignments will enable the students to bring the text of a scene to life. Students rehearse and perform two fully staged scenes during the semester.
3. Use of improvisation and other techniques will be used in the development of character and to extend emotional range
4. Improve vocal and physical technique
5. The challenges and styles of performing period pieces, especially works by William Shakespeare, will be explored.
6. Students learn the discipline and professional decorum required in the theatre and develop a way of working that can sustain them in future theatrical endeavors and/or careers.
7. Prepare a monologue, which may be used as an audition piece

In support of the goals mentioned above, the course will explore the many different methods of approaching a scene and audition pieces, which the student actors can utilize in their future theatrical endeavors and possible careers in the field.

Objectives will be assessed as follows:

1. Using methods, such as those taught by Constantin Stanislavsky, Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler, etc., the students will experiment with various techniques to approach their work as actors. They will stage two scenes and work on them through a rehearsal process both in and outside of class to performance. The areas of the stage, including a discussion of the types of theatrical spaces (proscenium, $\frac{3}{4}$ staging, arena/in-the-round, etc.) will be explained in terms of the demands of each in terms of blocking. The class, however, will mainly deal with the rules pertaining to proscenium staging, with an understanding of basic directing elements, such as blocking, focus, pace, “picturization”, and the overall arc of the scene.
2. The students will learn script analysis by breaking down on paper at least two pages of dialogue into beats accompanied by objectives. Beat-by-beat work will also be done

by the actors “on their feet” throughout the rehearsal process on the scenes and monologues. Students are encouraged to take notes in order to give supportive feedback to those who are performing. Through improvisation, a music project, and within rehearsal, they will understand how to “tell the story” of their scenes and monologues with organic, motivated blocking. The first scene will be performed as the midterm presentation and the second one will be performed near the end of the semester. The monologue is presented after about three in-class rehearsals also later on in the course. The instructor will fill out a scene/monologue evaluation form for all of the presentations, except for the final one, which is open to the public. The strongest work of the semester will be selected for the final presentation and is open to other students, faculty, friends, and family. All of the scenes should have suggestion of the set, props, and costumes, and be off book for their graded, final performances.

3. As noted above, improvisation will be utilized to free the students, explore their characters, create organic blocking, expand emotional range, and discover ways to make exciting choices in their work. Each student is expected to read the play from which the scene is taken, write a biography (back story) about the character in the first person, minimally two pages, and list the objectives written in active terms. The biography and objective list will only be required for one scene.

4. There will be a vocal workshop, which examines how the voice works physically, the elements of speech (projection, articulation, resonance, etc.), vocal warm-up exercises, intensive solo work on short, vocally challenging pieces, and an assignment involving a monologue with vocal variation. In terms of physical technique, there will be a discussion of the rules of stage movement for the various spaces, especially proscenium staging, and some basic directorial concepts for developing visually powerful scenes. The music project explores the power of nonverbal communication, the use of music to tell a story, and the similarities between blocking and choreography.

5. Students are encouraged to select a period (stylized) piece as their second scene from a play before 1920, such as plays by Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, Oscar Wilde, Moliere, William Shakespeare, and also from the Greek or Roman periods. The different genres of plays and their styles will be discussed, including the importance of the historical context of the plays, the conventions of the times, clothing, and social classes, and the use of verse and when it is used instead of prose. If students select a classical piece, they will be asked to work in a suggestion of costume, including footwear and stage “weapons”, where applicable. They may find these on their own or contact Marie Natali, the Theatre Department costume designer and coordinator, about the costumes. It will be her decision to meet with students by appointment in the BCC costume shop and lend costumes to them. The costumes must be returned in good condition and in a timely manner. Finally, there will be a Shakespeare workshop which covers a discussion of his life, times, and his plays, a warm-up using lines from his works and readings of scenes from his plays, with one of them being partly blocked.

6. Professional behavior is emphasized in this course with students learning the importance of punctuality, preparation for rehearsal, the ability to take direction,

consistency in performance, and working well with others in an ensemble. Scene work follows an abbreviated version of a standard rehearsal schedule for a one-act or a full-length play. Writing down the blocking and directorial notes is expected, as well as memorizing the lines with the blocking. There is a discussion of the various types of auditions, what to expect, pictures and resumes, agents, unions, and training programs. The overall goal is for the students to become disciplined, creative artists, who will be recognized as reliable, hardworking actors.

7. After the midterm presentation of the first scene, students begin to work on a monologue cut from a play, in addition to their second scenes. This is a monologue specifically for auditions, frequently for colleges and the professional theatre. Students will learn everything from “slating” themselves (who they are and the play from which the piece they are performing is taken) to shaping the monologue so that it plays almost like a one-act. The monologues are timed so that they stay within a workable length for different types of auditions.

Course Content

Scene Study Scene Study is a performance workshop designed to explore the various acting techniques used in the staging of scenes and monologues for performance. It emphasizes a practical, step-by-step approach to acting by exploring the rehearsal process, the development of character, the creation of organic blocking, script analysis, improvisational methods, and physical and vocal technique. Two scenes are selected by students who pair up to work on them, rehearsing in and outside of class for approximately six weeks for each and culminating in a performance of each with a suggestion of set pieces, props, and costumes. Selection and preparation of a monologue to be used for auditions is also an important component of the class. The scenes and monologues must be memorized when they are finally performed. There are three major projects: the music, vocal, and Shakespeare workshops, in addition to related class exercises, improvisations, two written assignments, and evaluation of each other’s work. The course is completed with a public performance of the strongest work from the semester presented to other students, family, friends, etc.

Technological Literacy

Technological literacy and/or information literacy is one expectation of this course. Students will be encouraged to research for their various projects online.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

Required: A collection of scenes from plays, not from films; scenes and monologues may be found online, but students are encouraged to select scenes from published plays. The monologue must be from a published play.

Recommended:

The following are suggested scene collections:

“Play The Scene: The Ultimate Collection of Contemporary and Classic Scenes and Monologues”, by Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler, St. Martin’s, Griffin, New York, N.Y. 2004

“The Actor’s Scenebook, Scenes and Monologues from Contemporary Plays”, edited by Michael Schulman and Eva Mekler, Bantam Books, 1984

“Duo! The Best Scenes For Two For The 21st Century”, edited by Joyce E. Henry, Rebecca Dunn Jaroff, and Bob Shuman, Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, An Imprint of Hal Leonard Corporation, 2009

Grading Policy

The final grade in this course will be determined by a student’s overall mastery of the subject matter as evidenced by in-class scene rehearsals and the presentation of two scenes and a monologue, participation in improvisations, warm-ups, workshops, a music project, two written assignments, the final presentation, and evaluation of each other’s work.

Class rehearsals for the scenes (10% each)	20%
A character biography and a list of objectives for the first scene	10%
Midterm presentation of the first scene	15%
A memorized monologue	10%
Second Scene Presentation	15%
Scene & Monologue Presentation (open to the public)	20%
Class participation (includes the Music Project, improvisations, script analysis work, class decorum, preparation, punctuality, and overall participation in evaluating each other’s scenes)	<u>10%</u>
	100%

Criteria for Evaluation: *Attendance and participation*

- a. Consistent attendance
- b. Rehearsal and performance of two scenes and a monologue
- c. Participation in class exercises, improvisations, and projects
- d. Two written assignments

- e. Evaluation of each other's work
- f. Participation in workshops and the music project
- g. The final public presentation
- h. Overall demonstration of comprehension of the course material

90-100 = A 86-89 = B+ 80-85 = B 76-79 = C+ 70 - 75 = C 65-69 = D
E =Unofficial Withdrawal W =Official Withdrawal INC=Incomplete 0-64 = F

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Students will be evaluated on attendance and participation in class using the following criteria: consistent attendance; evidence of studying text and assignments; completed daily assignments; quality classroom responses.

Bergen Community College Academic Policies:

Bergen Community College is committed to academic integrity – the honest, fair and continuing pursuit of knowledge, free from fraud or deception. Please review the college catalogue or student handbook for further information on this topic.

Bergen Community College has adopted an internal grievance procedure to provide for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by federal regulation implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. (ADA). Please review the college catalogue for further information on this topic.

Bergen Community College is committed to providing its students and employees with an academic and work environment free from sexual harassment or discrimination. Please review the policy prohibiting sexual harassment in the college catalog.

Please review the statement on acceptable use of BCC technology in the college catalog.

Faculty hold 3 office hours per week, and as requested by students, by appointment. Students are encouraged to seek out their faculty member for academic needs.

Student and Faculty Support Services

All students are encouraged to visit and use the BCC Library. There are particularly excellent electronic references in the area of theatre available to our students.

Students are encouraged to use the student support services of the college. These services include: the Writing Center, the music-computer Lab, the Tutorial Center, and the Office of Specialized Services.

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/owl
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Course Outline:

Note to Students: This Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class

Week	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1	Course Introduction: Explanation of the syllabus; warm-up; explore various methods of approaching a scene; choose scene partners. Script analysis work and basic directing concepts are discussed; improvisation to create organic blocking through conflict, the set pieces, and props, and block open-ended scenes	1,2	Bring in scene collections or samples of possible scenes

2	Select the scenes; begin first read-throughs of them and work on floor plans and prop lists. Improvisational techniques are utilized to free the scene. Explain the different types of acting spaces, physical technique, and blocking, especially for the proscenium stage. Begin blocking.	1,2,4,6	Bring in scenes for rehearsal with hand props
3	Complete blocking of each scene; floor plans and prop lists are handed in; script analysis workshop	1,2,4,6	Character biography and list of objectives due
4	Character biography and list of objectives for first scene due; vocal workshop; continue rehearsing, writing down the blocking in pencil	1,2,3,4,6	Learn the lines and blocking for the scene; vocal assignment due
5	Vocal assignment presented; scenes off-book are worked in a beat by beat rehearsal	1,2,4,6	Bring in costumes for the dress rehearsal; rehearse outside of class
6	Dress rehearsal for the mid-term presentation	1,2,6	Bring in materials for the next class
7	Midterm presentation of first scenes with costumes and props; discuss monologues and how to identify good ones	1,2,6	Bring in one or more monologues to be read in class; also, select one or more pieces of instrumental music for the Music Project and bring recorded versions of these to class; bring scene collections again
8	Music Project; read and time monologues; select the second scene, possibly a classical one, with a new partner	2,4,5,7	Bring new scenes with hand props, and bring monologues
9	Shakespeare Workshop, discussing "style" in terms of period pieces; monologue improvisation; work on monologues for auditions; start blocking second scenes	2,5,6,7	Monologues off book; bring scenes again
10	Work on monologues off book; continue working beat by beat on scenes	2,5*,6,7 * signifies if a classical piece is being worked on	Prepare monologues for presentation; scenes off book; bring random props and costume pieces for improvisation; rehearse outside of class on scenes

11	Advanced improvisational exercises using props and costumes and to explore substitution; present monologues off book; continue working on scenes	1,2,3,5*,6,7	Prepare for the dress rehearsal next week, bringing all costumes and rehearsing outside of class
12	“Dress rehearsal” of second scene with costumes and props	1,2,5*,6	Prepare for the presentation of the second scene, bring all props and costumes, and rehearse outside of class
13	Presentation of the second scene	1,2,5*,6	Select scenes and monologues for the final, public presentation and bring props and costumes
14	Select format for the final presentation; dress rehearsal	1,2,5*,6,7	Review and rehearse outside of class what will be performed in the final presentation
15	Final scene performance, which is open to the public	1,2,5*,6,7	