



Michigan Technological University

**Course Syllabus**  
**FA 2600 – Acting I**  
**College of Science and Arts**  
**Spring 2011**

***Instructor Information***

---

**Instructor: Patricia Helsel, Assistant Professor**

**Office:** Walker 209A

**Phone:** 487-3283

**Email:** [helsel@mtu.edu](mailto:helsel@mtu.edu)

**Office Hours:** MWF 11:00 – 12:00, 1:00 – 2:00

Course Identification

Course Number: FA 2600

Course Name: Acting I

Course Location: Walker 207 (McArdle Theatre)

Class Times: TR 11:05-12:20 am

Prerequisites: None

***Course Description/Overview***

---

The course is an in-depth investigation of the actor's instrument and the tools available to the actor. Students learn and implement acting theory and methodology. Emphasizes historical and modern acting techniques using research, scene work, improvisation, script and character analysis, and movement and vocal exercises.

***Course Learning Objectives***

---

The purpose of this course is to provide a working foundation for the beginning actor. Students will learn necessary skills and methods intended to promote growth in the craft of acting. Each student is expected to improve throughout the course in the following areas:

- \*Physical and vocal strength and flexibility
- \*Concentration skills
- \*Awareness of personal habits that inhibit or limit acting ability
- \*Self-confidence and emotional access
- \*Research and analysis of dramatic literature

## ***Teaching Methods***

Each student will keep an acting journal. The journal is intended as a communication tool for both the student and the instructor. Self-reflection, observation, and notation of personal revelations or reactions to classroom exercises can be an extremely beneficial learning tool. Class will consist of exercises, performance, and discussion. Students will have assigned readings from articles and books pertaining to acting methods, and will be required to read plays. Students will perform improvisations and scenes from plays. A valuable part of the class will be peer review, in the form of discussion, following rehearsals and performances.

## ***Requirements/Assignments***

---

### **Class Journal:**

Students will keep a journal, submitted weekly, electronically. The journal is not a “diary” but will reflect the student’s personal observations and ideas relative to class. The journal may include discussion/lecture notes, notes for classmates, character analyses, and anything the student considers useful for future personal reference. The journal is intended to be confidential, to be reviewed only by the instructor. In addition to observations of the student’s own work in class, it is expected that everyone will also record ideas as they pertain to the work of fellow classmates. Students will usually be assigned journal topics relative to coursework. Journal grades are based on several factors including content, insight, and thoroughness. Once scene work begins (Performance Projects) the “Rehearsal Log” will replace the Journal.

### **Participation:**

Acting is a participatory art form. Cohesiveness with classmates is strongly encouraged. Every effort is made by the instructor to establish an open environment in which students feel more comfortable in participating in exercises and performance. Many exercises (and both performance projects) require a partnership with a classmate. It is extremely important for students to establish and maintain the trust of their peers by attending class and committing fully to all exercises, discussions, and performances. The grade is determined by:

- \*Commitment to exercises, performances, or discussion/critiques
- \*Preparedness for class, including appropriate attire and necessary implements for note taking
- \*Memorization of short exercise material (as required)
- \*Courtesy to classmates

Any more than one unexcused absence will result in a lower participation grade for the semester and may, ultimately, cause the student to fail the class. (See “Attendance” Policy)

### **Play Attendance:**

Students are required to attend 2 MTU productions. Students must submit a two-page review (Guidelines will be provided) of the acting.

Almost, Maine	February 16-18	7:30 p.m.	McArdle Theater
	February 23-25	7:30 p.m.	McArdle Theater
Twelfth Night	March 22-24	7:30 p.m.	McArdle Theater
	March 25	2:00 p.m.	McArdle Theater
	March 29-31	7:30 p.m.	McArdle Theater
	April 1	2:00 p.m.	McArdle Theater

### **Performance Projects:**

Two projects are assigned in which students will perform a scene from a play in pairs or trio. For each project, students will be required to read a play and develop a character analysis for the role in which they are cast. Scenes vary in length from @ 5 – 10 minutes and are intended as an opportunity to demonstrate skills learned throughout the semester. Students will be assigned scenes and partners by the instructor for the first project but will choose their own partners for the second project. Students will memorize lines, stage the scene, and rehearse both inside and outside of class. Time is allotted in class for coaching by the instructor and for rehearsing. Students are expected to make use of class time either by rehearsing in an alternate space, or watching/observing other students' scenes, as directed by the instructor. Students are evaluated on the strength of the final performance of each project, as well as on improvement as demonstrated through adherence to a disciplined approach to the project. Students will memorize lines in a timely fashion, have scenes ready to perform as scheduled, and make changes toward improvement of the performance, as suggested by the instructor and classmates. Radio Drama: Each student auditions for the Introduction to Practicum Sound Design class. Students will be cast by student directors. (Class time will be reciprocated for an evening audition.) The Rehearsal Log is a **major** part of the grade for the Project and should demonstrate the creative process, through personal assessment and planning. Failure to attend class on the day scheduled for a performance may result in the failure of the project by that student. (See "Attendance" Policy)

### **Radio Drama:**

Students will audition for and be cast in a short radio drama produced by the Creative Lab sound design class. The project consists of approximately 2 hours of rehearsal and recording of a sound story in which the student engages in character voices and/or narration.

### **Quizzes:**

While no formal tests or exams are offered in this class, there will be an occasional "pop quiz" covering material introduced in assigned readings or from plays attended. Quizzes may not be made up under any circumstances.

### **Leader of Warm-ups:**

Each student will lead the class in a warm-up in preparation for one day's class activities.

## Course Resources

---

### Course Website(s)

- Blackboard <http://www.courses.mtu.edu>

### Textbook:

Cohen, Robert, Acting One, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2008

## Grading Policy

---

Grades will be based on the following:

Radio Drama	50 points
Class Journals	200 points
Warm Up Leader	50 points
Performance Project #1	200 points
Final Showcase of Scenes Performance	400 points
Class Participation	100 points
Play Attendance	200 points
Quizzes	50 points
TOTAL	1250 points

### Late Assignments

The instructor does not accept late assignments. Work may only be made up in the event of an excused absence. Arrangements for making up work must occur by the time the student returns to class. It is the responsibility of the student to make these arrangements.

## Grading Scheme

---

### Grading System

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Grade points/credit</i>	<i>Rating</i>
<b>A</b>	94% & above	4.00	Excellent
<b>AB</b>	88% – 93%	3.50	Very good
<b>B</b>	83% – 87%	3.00	Good
<b>BC</b>	78% – 82%	2.50	Above average
<b>C</b>	73% – 77%	2.00	Average
<b>CD</b>	68% – 72%	1.50	Below average
<b>D</b>	60% - 67%	1.00	Inferior
<b>F</b>	59% and below	0.00	Failure
<b>I</b>	Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student's control. A grade of incomplete may be given only when approved in writing by the department chair or school dean.		
<b>X</b>	Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up within the next semester in residence or the grade becomes a failure (F). A (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as a (F) grade.		

## ***Course Policies***

---

**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is recorded daily by signing a roll sheet. If the student is late, or fails to sign the sheet, an absence will be recorded for that day. Students will be excused for absences according to University policy. It is the student's responsibility to provide the proper documentation for an excused absence. Documentation is to be provided upon the return to class. **More than one unexcused absence will result in the loss of 50 points per absence from the Participation grade.** More than 5 absences, whether excused or not, may result in failure of the course. Students are expected to communicate with partners when rehearsing for a scene and should notify the classmate should they foresee missing class or out-of-class rehearsal.

**TARDINESS:** Never interrupt a performance or exercise! Wait outside the door until your classmate(s) finish. If the class is engaged in an exercise, enter QUIETLY and join in unobtrusively. If you have a valid excuse for being late for class, see the instructor immediately following class to have your absence removed from the record.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** Late assignments or projects will be accepted in the event of an excused absence. Arrangements to make up work must be made on the day the student returns to class. Quizzes may not be made up under any circumstances.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Please arrange with the instructor any special accommodations necessary.

### **COURTESY:**

Students are expected to be mutually courteous to each other. Cell phones should be turned OFF before class and phone conversations should be terminated before entering the classroom. While students are expected to be critical of each other, every attempt should be made to offer criticism professionally, if not kindly.

## ***Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules***

---

### **COLLABORATION:**

Some projects will require collaboration. Your performance will be graded both individually, and as a group. Turn in your own unique written work unless otherwise instructed.

### **PLAGIRISM/CHEATING:**

Copying text directly from a book, magazine article, web site, etc. without crediting the author is plagiarism. Similarly, paraphrasing the same text is a form of plagiarism. Honesty is expected. In addition, cheating on tests or submitting a false excuse are not tolerated and are both grounds for disciplinary action.

## ***University Policies***

---

Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance the University's policies.

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

*Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310*

### **Academic Integrity:**

[http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic\\_integrity.html](http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html)

### **Affirmative Action:**

<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao/>

### **Disability Services:**

[http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student\\_services.html#disability](http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability)

**Equal Opportunity Statement:** <http://www.admin.mtu.edu/admin/boc/policy/ch3/ch3p7.htm>

## Course Calendar (Subject to Change)

---

### Week 1

- Jan 10 Tue Introduction/Syllabus
- 12 Thu Preparing to Act
- Read pp. 3-20
  - Be familiar with Relaxation exercise (pp. 4-5)
  - *Journal Topic: Discipline and Criticism*
    - *What challenges do you foresee for yourself regarding discipline (as discussed on p. 11)? Compare your current methods of preparing or studying for other classes. How will this class be different?*
    - *What challenges will you face in offering or receiving criticism? How do you respond to criticism? Explain how you approach giving criticism.*

**Journal #1 Due: Midnight Sunday, January 15 (50 points)**

### Week 2

- 17 Tue The Actor's Approach
- Read pp. 21-28
  - Familiarize yourself with all the exercises – TRY them
  - Offer 2 goals for classmates to achieve.
  - *Journal Topic: Discuss what "Doing vs. Being" means to you. Explain the difference in how it felt to "do" vs. "be" in the exercise during class.*
- 19 Thu Acting with the "Other"
- Read pp. 29-38
  - Familiarize yourself with and practice exercises.
  - Practice saying "beetaratagang" and "cleridipity"
  - *Journal Topic: Describe moments when you felt you were fully contacting your partner. How did it feel? Describe moments where you felt you and your partner didn't fully connect. How might you improve connectedness with your partner?*

**Journal #2 Due: Midnight, Sunday, January 22 (50 points)**

### Week 3

- 24 Tue Beginning to Act
- Read pp. 39-44
  - Memorize Contentless Scene 1 (What did you do last night?) p. 40
  - Memorize Contentless Scene 2 (I'm going away) p. 44
  - *Journal Topic: Explain the difference each time you played the scenes. How did "intensifying" improve the scene?*

**AUDITIONS FOR RADIO DRAMAS: Tuesday, January 24. 7:00 pm,  
Walker 210**

### Week 3 Continued

- 26 Thu Tactics
- Read pp. 45-52
  - Be familiar with exercises
  - *Journal Topic: What challenges did you face in using alternating tactics with your partner? What worked best? Least?*

**Journal #3 Due: Midnight, Sunday, January 29 (50 points)**

### Week 4

- 31 Tue Expectations
- Read pp. 53-60
  - *Journal Topic: Describe expectations you created for yourself in the class exercises. What did you expect to achieve? Explain how expecting to succeed improved your scene.*
- Feb 02 Thu Preparation for Project #1 – Plan for Success
- Read pp. 79 – 91
  - Receive Project #1 scenes/partner assignment
- (READ YOUR SCRIPT FOR NEXT CLASS SESSION!)**

**Journal #4 Due: Midnight, Sunday, February 5 (50 points)**

### Week 5

- 07 Tue Performing/Criticism
- Read pp. 101-110
  - Read Project #1 scenes with Partner
- 09 Thu WINTER CARNIVAL – NO CLASS

### Week 6

- 14 Tue Rehearse/Coach Project
- 16 Thu Rehearse/Coach Project

### Week 7

- 21 Tue Choices
- Read pp. 92 – 100
- 23 Thu **PERFORM SCENE #1**

### Week 8

- 28 Tue Taking Risks
- Mar 01 Thu Taking Risks
- March 6/8 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**



### Week 9

- |    |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | Tue | The Actor's Voice/Stage Speech <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read pp. 111 – 120</li><li>• Familiarize yourself with exercises</li><li>• <b>DEADLINE FOR PARTNER/SCENE CHOICES – PROJECT #2</b></li></ul> |
| 15 | Thu | The Actor's Voice/Stage Speech <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read pp. 121 – 128</li><li>• Familiarize yourself with exercises</li></ul>                                                                  |

### Week 10

- |    |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 20 | Tue | Using the Voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read pp. 129 – 135</li><li>• Familiarize yourself with exercises</li></ul>                                                                                           |
| 22 | Thu | The Actor's Body/Voice and Body Integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read pp. 136 – 157</li><li>• Be familiar with exercises</li><li>• <b>PROJECT #2 ASSIGNMENTS (READ ENTIRE PLAY FOR TUESDAY)</b></li></ul> |

### Week 11

- |    |     |                                                                                                                                                              |
|----|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 27 | Tue | Read Project #2 Scenes                                                                                                                                       |
| 29 | Thu | Preparing for New Challenges: Project #2 Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Imagination and Discipline</li><li>• Read pp. 158-163</li></ul> |

### Week 12

- |        |     |                        |
|--------|-----|------------------------|
| Apr 03 | Tue | Rehearse/Coach Project |
| 05     | Thu | Rehearse/Coach Project |

### Week 13

- |    |     |                        |
|----|-----|------------------------|
| 10 | Tue | Rehearse/Coach Project |
| 12 | Thu | Rehearse/Coach Project |

### Week 14

- |    |     |                                              |
|----|-----|----------------------------------------------|
| 17 | Tue | Rehearse for Evening of Scenes/Coach Project |
| 19 | Thu | Rehearse for Evening of Scenes/Coach Project |

**EVENING OF SCENES: Tuesday, April 24 7:00 p.m., Rozsa**