

Fall 2010 The Craft of Speaking I: Vocal Freedom

Basic info

Amherst College THDA 32H
Course in the Arts of Theater and Dance
Keywords: artistic practice, writing attentive, speaking attentive
Course web page: <http://alturl.com/92vkj>
Course meets MWFs from 11 to 11:50 a.m. in Webster Studio 2

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Course description

The Craft of Speaking I, and its continuation, The Craft of Speaking II, provide progressive instruction in the physical technique and aural principles used in expressive speaking. The Craft of Speaking I: Vocal Freedom is a beginning studio course in the development of voice for speaking. Students develop range and tone through regular physical exercises in relaxation, breathing technique, placement, and presence. Individual attention focuses on helping each student develop the the physical, mental, and emotional self-awareness needed for expressive vocal production.

Why THDA 32H is a “half-course”

While this course meets three hours per week just like a “full course,” the amount of related homework is kept to a minimum for pedagogical reasons. The learning in this course is largely experiential, and takes place through physical exercises that must be performed regularly to make progress with the voice.

Books and other materials you will need

Required

The Right to Speak by Patsy Rodenburg
available locally at Amherst Books

Recommended

The Second Circle by Patsy Rodenburg
Optional headrest
A personal yoga mat (for home use)

A note on clothing: you should wear clothing that is loose fitting (especially around the waist), and that allows for a wide range of leg movements. Make any clothing changes before class so we can start work on time.

Goals

- To become familiar with the process of breathing, your own body, and your vocal habits and possibilities.
- To expand your breathing capacity, and the range and color of your voice.
- To enhance the spontaneous and expressive qualities of your speaking voice.
- To learn how to become present to others while speaking and to encourage presence in others.
- To learn to strengthen your articulatory muscles.
- To learn beginning techniques to enhance clarity, effectiveness and self-expression in your speaking.

Assignments overview

- Reading (see course schedule below)
- Three short essays, **due on Sep. 24, Oct. 22 and Dec. 13**, respectively
- Several short homework exercises in text analysis near the end of the semester

Final speaking presentation

I will ask you to choose and to prepare a selection of text to speak in class during last two weeks of the semester, according to guidelines I will provide. Your performance will be graded.

Optional work

I encourage you to conduct vocal practice sessions with peers outside of class. I will provide guidelines.

Many students find it helpful to keep a journal, or write short reflections on their experience while working with the voice. I am happy to read and comment on any reflective writing you would like to share with me.

Grading and attendance policy

Excellent attendance is mandatory and necessary to make progress with your voice. Your grade will be based not on attendance *per se*, but on your progress made during class time. Your course grade breaks down like this:

Three short essays - 30%

Final speaking presentation - 30%

In-class progress in vocal freedom - 40%

Course schedule

We will work together as a group in a process-oriented fashion. Below is an approximate course schedule and a reading schedule designed roughly to coincide with class work.

Week 1: Beginning: Orientation & Relaxation

September 8 & 10

Read: *The Right To Speak*: Foreword & Introduction (pp. vi-xiv) & Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 1-18)

Weeks 2 & 3: Stretching & breathing

September 13, 15, 17, 20, 22 & 24 (**first short essay due**)

Read: *The Right To Speak*: part of Ch. 7 (pp. 110-142) & part of Ch. 8 (pp. 172-194)

Week 4 & 5: Making sound

September 27, 29, October 1, 4, 6 & 8

Read *The Right To Speak*: Chapters 3, 4, 5 & 6 (pp. 19-109)

MID-SEMESTER BREAK

Week 6: Placement & Presence

October 13 & 15

Read: *The Right To Speak*: continuation of Ch. 7 (pp. 142-159)

Read: *The Second Circle*: Introduction (pp. xi-xvii) & Chapters 1-5 (pp. 3-44)

Week 7: Warming, Freeing & Placing

October 18, 20 & 22 (**second short essay due**)

Read: *The Right To Speak*: remainder of Ch. 7 (pp. 159-171) & part of Ch. 8 (pp. 194-206)

Week 8: Depth, Range & Resonance

October 25, 27 & 29

Read: *The Right To Speak*: remainder of Ch. 8 (pp. 206-228)

Week 9: Introduction to Prosody in Speaking

November 1, 3 & 5

Read: *The Right To Speak*: Ch. 9 (pp. 229-250)

Week 10: Speaking as Breathing

November 8, 10 & 12

Review: *The Right To Speak*: Chapter 7

Week 11: Warming & Speaking Work

November 15, 17 & 19

Review: *The Right To Speak*: Chapter 8

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 12: Warming & Speaking Work

November 29, December 1 & 3

Read: *The Right To Speak*: part of Ch. 10 (pp. 251-282)

Weeks 13 & 14: Warming & Speaking Work

December 6, 8, 10, 13 & 15 (**third short essay due; final presentations**)

Read: *The Right To Speak*: remainder of Ch. 10 (pp. 283-299)

There is no examination during the Examination Period.

The absolute deadline for any outstanding writing is 5 p.m. on December 20.

Statement of Intellectual Responsibility

Every person's education is the product of his or her own intellectual effort and participation in a process of critical exchange. Amherst cannot educate those who are unwilling to submit their own work and ideas to critical assessment. Nor can it tolerate those who interfere with the participation of others in the critical process. Therefore, the College considers it a violation of the requirements of intellectual responsibility to submit work that is not one's own or otherwise to subvert the conditions under which academic work is performed by oneself or by others.

Some implications of the Statement of Intellectual Responsibility for THDA 32H are listed here.

- Your willing and concentrated participation in class activities is your intellectual responsibility in this course.
- Experiential learning works best in an atmosphere of openness and trust. It is your intellectual responsibility to contribute to optimal conditions by attending all class meetings and scheduled practice sessions on time, by communicating conflicts or problems openly and promptly, and by listening to peers with empathy.
- Writing that you submit to me must be your own.