

Spring 2012 **The Craft of Speaking II: Spoken Expression**

Basic info

Amherst College THDA 225H
Course in the Arts of Theater and Dance
Keywords: fine arts for non-majors, artistic practice, speaking attentive, community based learning
Course meets TTHs from 10 a.m.to 11:20 a.m.
in Webster Studio 2

Assistant Professor Ron Bashford
Department of Theater & Dance, Webster Hall
E-mail: rdbashford88@amherst.edu
Office phone: (413) 542-5349
Office hours by appt.

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. In this second course in the craft of speaking, students learn to shape and speak text to powerful effect. Students build on prior work to extend vocal range and capacity while learning component principles of spoken expression. Articulation, inflection, methods of contrast and interpretation, tone, verbal imaging and aural structures of poetry and rhetoric are practiced in a studio setting. Emphasis is placed on personal engagement and presence to others while speaking. Assignments in text scoring and memorization support class work. The course culminates in a public presentation of student work.

Why THDA 225H is a “half-course”

While this course meets nearly three hours per week just like a “full course,” the amount of related outside homework is kept to a minimum for pedagogical and contextual reasons. The learning in this course is largely experiential, and takes place through physical exercises in class that must be performed regularly to make steady progress. The two progressive parts of this course (I & II) count together as a full course for the purpose of fulfilling degree requirements.

Materials you will need

Required

A No. 2 Pencil and lined writing paper, a pad or a notebook that you bring to every class

A folder to hold loose papers (I will provide)

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 further expand your breathing capacity, and the range and resonance (color) of your voice.
- To further enhance the spontaneous and expressive qualities of your speaking voice.
- To become present to others while speaking, while allowing appropriate emotional changes to occur.
- To strengthen your articulatory muscles for both added clarity and expressive possibilities.
- To learn to analyze text for its poetic and rhetorical qualities and to exploit those qualities in your speaking.

Assignments overview

- Regular work in “scoring” or marking text for speaking
- Short take-home exercises in phoneme and text analysis
- Regular practice work on speaking poetry and prose, including graded in-class speaking presentations.
- A final public performance with classmates (to be scheduled toward the end of the semester).

Optional work

Since this course meets less often than it did in the first semester, I encourage you to conduct a vocal practice sessions with peers outside of class up to once more per week. Let me know if you do.

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:

Technical progress in vocal freedom and articulation - 35%

Progress in text scoring and spoken expression (graded speaking work) - 30%

Completion of regular written exercises and scoring work - 20%

Final public performance - 15%

NOTE: Please keep all text, scores, worksheets, etc. together in a folder, including work that you have submitted and had returned to you. Toward the end of the semester, I will collect your folders for review.

Course Schedule

As was the case first semester, each class period will consist of physical exercises. To our warm-up we will add more instruction, analysis, and presentation of prepared speaking assignments. In addition to regular participation, you should expect to present longer solo speaking work to the class approximately every three weeks. Toward the end of the semester, we will begin to prepare, as a group, a public performance of speaking work. Once we agree on a performance date, please be sure to reserve it.

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.
- Analytical or other written practice work that you submit to me must be your own.