

THRE 353: ACTING FOR THE CAMERA

Course Syllabus—Spring 2024

Instructor: Cason Murphy, M.F.A. (he | him | his)

Course Time: Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:20-4:35pm

Classroom: Carver 308

Office: Carver 320

E-mail: cwmurphy@iastate.edu

Phone: 515-294-8936

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:00pm-1:00pm

Tuesdays from 3:30pm-5:00pm or other times by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This course aims to prepare students for the particular demands and challenges of acting on camera and will give an overview of the terms and techniques used in professional on-camera acting to assist in making the transition from the theatre to the screen.

NOTE: This class is an intermediate course designed for anyone to explore performance and build/improve their performance skill set. Experience and “talent” are important, but so are hard work, risk-taking, and enthusiastic participation. Grading policies follow this philosophy.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students should be able:	This will be measured by:
To introduce and develop skills and techniques for on-camera performance.	<i>Reading assignments, in-class discussion, viewings, exercises, self-tapes, and on-camera performances</i>
To develop a basic understanding of the on-camera production process.	<i>In-class exploration and exercises, self-tapes, and on-camera performances, and final re-creation</i>
To develop critical on-camera audition and performance evaluation skills.	<i>In-class discussions, weekly journals, reaction papers, reading assignments, and exercises</i>
To develop an understanding of the professional landscape of on-camera performance.	<i>Reading assignments, in-class exercises and performances, self-tapes, and market research project</i>
To be conversant in the differences between acting for film and acting for theatre.	<i>Reading assignments, in-class discussions, and weekly journals</i>
To recognize their “type” and create professional materials reflective of that knowledge.	<i>Typing assessment, professional material evaluation, on-camera performances, and market research project</i>

TEXT AND MATERIALS

Our required text is *Secrets of Screen Acting (4th Edition)* by Patrick Tucker.

NOTE: Students will receive access to a digital version of our text via ISU's Immediate Access program. **You must opt-out by Jan. 29 in order to not be charged via this service—see the Immediate Access tab on our Canvas shell for more.**

Outside of the required text, any additional material/articles/sides will be provided on Canvas (it is the student's responsibility to read/prepare prior to class). Otherwise, you will be responsible for access to:

- Some type of recording device—either a camera, webcam, or smartphone
 - Some elements may be available via the Design Building, Student Innovation Center, and/or Parks Library.
- Editing software—Microsoft Movie Editor (PC), iMovie (Mac), Adobe Premiere, or any other

preferred editing program (you can find a [list of free and safe programs here](#))

- Students have access to many of these via the computer lab (Carver 300).
- Ring light (while not explicitly required) is a good investment if you plan to do any on-camera work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Your final grade will be calculated on the 800-point scale:

744-800: A	584-615: C
720-743: A-	560-583: C-
696-719: B+	536-559: D+
664-695: B	504-535: D
640-663: B	480-503: D-
616-639: C+	0-479: F

Course Requirements	Points
Attendance and Participation	100
Reflections and Responses	200
Market Research Project Portfolio and Professional Materials	50
On-Camera Exercises/Auditions	300
Final Performance Re-creation	150
TOTAL	800

ITEMS TO BE GRADED

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to be at, and participate in, every class. In addition to just showing up, participation includes being fully engaged in all exercises, activities, and discussions (readings done, prepared, memorized, rehearsed, with all necessary supplies and positive mental attitude). Additionally, during viewing sessions, students will participate in feedback sessions, both as listener and critique-giver. All students are expected to contribute intelligently, articulately, and frequently.

A student can be excused for missing a class for any of the following—with proper documentation. **NOTE: Any university-approved absence must be communicated to the instructor by your supervising faculty at least one week prior to the absence.**

- Field trips or curricular-related activities
- Extra-curricular activities as a representative of the university, such as:
 - Academic or professional conferences, workshops, presentations, or programs
 - Intercollegiate athletic, academic, and judging competitions
 - Musical, theatrical, dance, or other artistic performances
- Military or National Guard service
- Court appearances
- Funerals
- Positive COVID-19 test or necessary isolation from exposure
 - The period of excusal from class will extend to the full length of the isolation period under current CDC guidance.

Any student who has an excused absence must provide the proper documentation to me prior to the date of the absence to excuse your absence. You must also make arrangements with me to make up any missed assignments within a reasonable amount of time. Students experiencing family crisis or prolonged medical absences may be offered an additional assignment to help make up a deficit of participation points on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the professor.

RESPONSES AND REFLECTIONS: Throughout the semester, we will read the textbook, speak with guests, view performances, or read relevant articles for student response in relation to class concepts/exercises/feedback/discussions. You may be asked to reflect on those, and as well as track your progress throughout the semester in written form (guidelines for each response/reflection will be provided on Canvas).

ON-CAMERA EXERCISES/AUDITIONS: Students will have multiple exercises and four performance opportunities on-camera—a commercial audition, a sitcom audition, a horror film “callback” scene, and the exquisite corpse collaborative film—each emphasizing and evaluating different skills. Auditions will be scheduled during class times throughout the course of the semester—missing a scheduled audition day will result in a zero for the assignment and cannot be made up.

Each time you shoot an exercise, monologue, or scene in class, you need to come with the material *fully off-book*. Thorough memorization and preparation of this material is imperative. All of your memorization, character choices, and business choices must be done before class.

SELF-TAPES: Once during the semester, students will be assigned material to rehearse, perform, and submit as a self-tape. Students will be responsible for following instructions in order make sure the requested material is filmed, edited, and returned before the deadline.

MARKET RESEARCH PROJECT PORTFOLIO: Students will research a city/market for their potential post-graduation career. For the portfolio, students will compile their professional materials (current headshot(s), résumé, and website) as well as a useful document that reflects the information they’ve found about their chosen market.

FINAL PERFORMANCE RE-CREATION: For our final project, students will rehearse, film, edit, and submit a performance re-creation from a film of their choice (more on this in class).

EXTRA CREDIT: Students may earn 15 extra credit points for finding and submitting an audition for on-camera work (outside of this class). **Limit of 2 for extra credit**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic of Class Meeting	What’s Due For Next Time?
Week 1		
Jan. 17	NO CLASS – KCACTF	READ: Chapters 1-2 UPLOAD: Recorded Slate and Basic Object Exercise

Week 2		
Jan. 22	<i>Discussion: Why Do We Watch? / Stage vs. Film</i>	READ: Chapter 3, 4 & 7
Jan. 24	PLAYBACK: Slates and BOEs <i>Discussion: Who are You? / Typing</i>	SUBMIT: Self-Reflection #1
Week 3		
Jan. 29	<i>Discussion: The Basics of Film</i>	PREP: Peer Story
Jan. 31	<i>On-Camera Exercise: Listening and Reacting</i>	READ: Glossary (and complete Quiz) <i>Begin Exquisite Corpse Collaboration</i>
Week 4		
Feb. 5	<i>Discussion: Moving into and Around the Frame</i> Commercial How-To's	
Feb. 7	<i>Experiential Exercise: "SET VISIT"</i>	READ: Chapter 8, 9 & 13
Week 5		
Feb. 12	AUDITION: COMMERCIAL Group A	
Feb. 14	AUDITION: COMMERCIAL Group B	
Week 6		
Feb. 19	PLAYBACK: Commercial Auditions	READ: Chapters 5 & 6
Feb. 21	How to Read / Decode a Film Script Exercise: Beating a Text	SUBMIT: Self-Reflection #2
Week 7		
Feb. 26	<i>Discussion: Style in Film / Sitcom How-To's</i>	
Feb. 28	AUDITION: SITCOM Group A	
Week 8		
Mar. 4	AUDITION: SITCOM Group B	
Mar. 6	NO CLASS – Cason at MATC	WATCH: Sitcom Playbacks SUBMIT: Self-Tape Exercise
Spring Break (Mar. 13-Mar. 17)		
Week 9		
Mar. 18	<i>Discussion: Continuity and Blocking</i> The Master, Two Shot, and Close-up	
Mar. 20	Workshop: Blocking a Scene	SUBMIT: Self-Reflection #3
Week 10		
Mar. 25	AUDITION: HORROR Scene "Callback" A	
Mar. 27	AUDITION: HORROR Scene "Callback" A	
Week 11		
Apr. 1	PLAYBACK: HORROR Callbacks	
Apr. 3	GUEST SPEAKER TBD <i>Discussion: Final Re-creations Assignment</i>	READ: Chapter 10, 11 & 14 SUBMIT: Self-Reflection #4

Week 12		
Apr. 8	<i>Discussion: Storyboarding / Piecing Together a Performance / Editing</i>	
Apr. 10	<i>Exercise: Editing Tutorial</i>	
Week 13		
Apr. 15	Final Re-creation Work Days	
Apr. 17		
Week 14		
Apr. 22	Final Re-creation Work Days	
Apr. 24		SUBMIT: Final Re-creation Paperwork
Week 15		
Apr. 29	Final Re-creation Work Days	
May 1		UPLOAD: Final Re-creations
Week 16 (Finals Week)		
May 6 (2:15-4:15pm)	FINAL MEETING: Exquisite Corpse / Recreation Playbacks and Wrapping Up	SUBMIT: Self-Reflection #5 and Market Research Project

CLASSROOM POLICIES

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY: This class honors ISU’s Principles of Community and expects the classroom discourse and attitude to reflect them: respect, purpose, cooperation, richness of diversity, freedom from discrimination, and the honest and respectful expression of ideas:

<http://www.diversity.iastate.edu/principles-of-community>

TECHNOLOGY: Although this is an in-person class, there may be times we will utilize the Zoom platform for some on-camera instruction, please make sure to visit <https://zoom.us> and download the free platform for use in our class.

Note: Should you require assistance with technology at any time, students should contact ISU IT Solution Center first to resolve technical issues: email at solution@iastate.edu or call (515) 294-4000 or visit 192 Parks Library.

REGARDING NAME, GENDER IDENTITY AND/OR GENDER EXPRESSION: Class rosters and any other university-controlled apparatuses (email, Canvas, etc.) are created, and provided to me, using the student’s legal name. Students will never be compelled to disclose their pronouns; however, I will gladly honor any request to address you by an alternate name or pronouns. Please advise me of your preferences so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

ATTIRE: Anticipate you will be on camera during many class meetings. For regular instruction days, please make sure you are dressed appropriately. For audition days, be “camera ready” and dress according to any provided call information.

PHYSICAL CONTACT: The nature of acting and any acting course or performance requires physical contact from time to time with others. A good rule of thumb is to always check in with anyone before

engaging in physical contact in order to make sure you are BOTH clear on boundaries/previous injuries/concerns before you begin working.

FEEDBACK: Each student will be expected to not only receive but also give positive criticism. Emotionally and socially prepare yourself to enter into a room in which all *constructive* feedback has a place and is encouraged.

COLLABORATION: Even though acting is by and large a solitary endeavor, this class will be set up as an artistic community, dependent on the participation and enthusiasm of each member for the success of the whole. You should be present for all audition days (even if not performing, you *may* be assigned production roles in the room). This class will be largely hands-on and interactive. The more each of you put into this class, the more we will all get out of it.

CONTENT: Film can contain strong language and mature content: profanity, depictions of violence, graphic or sexual terms, religious references, and other mature themes/elements may be presented in this class. This is an art form that provides us an opportunity to explore the human condition, and the human condition is not always pretty. Expect to examine material that challenges you as both an actor and as an audience member. **NOTE: It is a violation of copyright law to alter/change/omit dialogue from a script.**

FLEXIBILITY: All good theatre artists must constantly exercise their ability to be flexible, both physically and in life. In that vein, all dates and assignments are open to being changed at the instructor's discretion, particularly as we continue to navigate the pandemic.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: As a land-grant institution, we are committed to the caretaking of this land and would like to begin this event by acknowledging those who have previously taken care of the land on which we gather. Before this site became Iowa State University, it was the ancestral lands and territory of the Baxoje or Ioway Nation. The United States obtained the land from the Meskwaki and Sauk nations in the Treaty of 1842. We wish to recognize our obligations to this land and to the people who took care of it, as well as to the 17,000 Native people who live in Iowa today.

ACCESSIBILITY: Iowa State University is committed to assuring that all educational activities are free from discrimination and harassment based on disability status. Anyone requesting accommodations for a documented disability are required to meet with staff in Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to establish eligibility and learn about related processes, and if approved, will be provided with a Notification Letter for each course and reasonable accommodations will be arranged after timely delivery of the Notification Letter to the instructor. Please deliver Notification Letters as early in the semester as possible. SAS, a unit in the Dean of Students Office, is located in room 1076, Student Services Building or online at www.sas.dso.iastate.edu. Contact SAS by email at accessibility@iastate.edu or by phone at 515-294-7220 for additional information.

PUBLIC HEALTH: If you are not feeling well, you should stay home and focus on your health. Should you miss class due to illness, it is your responsibility to work to arrange for accommodations and to make up coursework, as consistent with the attendance policy.

Iowa State University is committed to proactively facilitating all students' well-being. Please know that the following on-campus services are available for assistance regarding your physical, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, environmental, financial, social, and/or emotional needs:

- Student Wellness call (515) 294-1099 or via website (<http://studentwellness.iastate.edu>)
- Thielen Student Health Center call (515) 294-5801 (24/7 Medical Advice) or via website (<http://www.cyclonehealth.org>)
- Student Counseling Services call (515) 294-5056 or via website (<https://counseling.iastate.edu>)
- Recreation Services call (515) 294-4980 or via website (<http://recservices.iastate.edu>).
- Students dealing with heightened feelings of sadness or hopelessness, thoughts of harm or suicide, or increased anxiety may dial 988, use the ISU Crisis Text Line (Text ISU to 741-741) or contact the ISU Police Department (515) 294-4428.

Public health information for the campus community continues to be available on Iowa State's public health website. All public health questions should be directed to publichealthteam@iastate.edu.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: The class will follow Iowa State University's policy on academic misconduct ([5.1 in the Student Code of Conduct](#)). Students are responsible for adhering to university policy and the expectations in the course syllabus and on coursework and exams, and for following directions given by faculty, instructors, and Testing Center regulations related to coursework, assessments, and exams. Anyone suspected of academic misconduct will be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct in the Dean of Students Office](#). Information about academic integrity and the value of completing academic work honestly can be found in the [Iowa State University Academic Integrity Tutorial](#).

WRITING AND MEDIA CENTER ASSISTANCE: The Writing and Media Center (WMC) helps students become effective, confident communicators by supporting students during all stages of the writing process, from brainstorming to revising, as well as with oral, visual, and electronic communication. The WMC offers one-on-one and group consultations online—to register and schedule an appointment, see <https://iastate.mywconline.com/>. For more information, visit our website at <https://www.wmc.dso.iastate.edu> or emailwritectr@iastate.edu.

FREE EXPRESSION: Iowa State University supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION: Iowa State University welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students may request the reasonable accommodation for religious practices. In all cases, you must put your request in writing. The instructor will review the situation in an effort to provide a reasonable accommodation when possible to do so without fundamentally altering a course. For students, you should first discuss the conflict and your requested accommodation with your professor at the earliest possible time. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the [Dean of Students Office](#) at 515-294-1020 or the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) at 515-294-7612.

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION: Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to Office of Equal Opportunity and eooffice@iastate.edu

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you are experiencing, or have experienced, a problem with any of the above issues, email academicissues@iastate.edu