Syllabus

School for New Learning

BAIFA

LL 302 Externship: From Page to Stage, Bringing Characters to Life

Winter 2017

Instructor:  Fred A. Wellisch  
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Location:  Loop

Time:  Mondays, January 2nd – March 13th, 5:45 – 9:00 p.m.

Course Description

LL 302 Externship (pre-requisites: LL 250 Foundations, L-4 and L-5)

The Externship is designed to give you an opportunity to focus on the particular dynamic of learning from direct experience in new situations. You can choose from two formats for completing the Externship: 1) an individualized project assessed by your academic committee or, 2) an SNL travel, community-based learning course, or other faculty designed Externship course. For all of these formats, you will be expected to:

- Identify and explain a personal learning goal
- Identify and select learning opportunities to support the goal
- Select and employ methods to achieve the desired learning goal
- Explain the interrelationship between one’s own profile as a learner and new learning opportunities
- Explain the nature and outcomes of this particular learning experience

These specific criteria make clear that the emphasis in Externship is on thoughtful reflection about how your learning occurs. The learning environment you choose for the basis of your Externship will depend upon your own needs and preferences.
The central issues of the Externship are as follows: to push yourself to define and to expand your learning style, to learn about something with which you don’t have much experience, and to familiarize yourself with your ability to successfully adapt to new learning.

**Learning Outcomes, Competencies, and/or Objectives**

L-10 – Can reflect on the learning process and methods used in an experiential project.

L-11 – Can articulate one’s approach to bringing a character to life and apply it to the performance of monologues and scenes

**Learning Resources**

* A Practical Handbook for the Actor by Bruder, Cohn et al. (Vintage Books);
* Various handouts and scenes to be distributed in class;
* Readings posted at e-reserves on the DePaul library webpage – (the password is ll302);
* The D2L course website
  - [https://www.goldstar.com/chicago](https://www.goldstar.com/chicago)
  - [http://www.hottix.org/](http://www.hottix.org/)

**Learning Deliverables**

The purpose of this class is for you to experience how to bring a character to life and to reflect on ways you – and others – might go about achieving that. We will read various dramatic scenes and short plays together and I will assign some of these for in-class rehearsal and performance. I will give you oral and written exercises to help you stretch your imagination and to help you turn your parts into full-blooded living characters. And I will give you class time to work on your scenes and plays so that you can perform them – by memory - for and with your fellow students. You will also keep a journal that describes your thoughts and feelings about the acting process and your own individualized approach to “bringing your character to life.” Additionally, I will assign various readings in which actors and other theater professionals describe their methods and thoughts, readings you can use as writing prompts for your journal. We may watch some videotapes and have actors as guest speakers. I will ask you to attend a couple of theatrical productions during the quarter so that you can see professional actors “in action.” I hope we can go as a class – it’s always fun to share the experience - but if not I will ask you to attend on your own. **I will try to find us cheap tickets but it doesn’t always work out so please set aside $30 to $50 for tickets as an additional cost for this course.** All of this, I hope, will help stimulate your thinking about your own approach to acting and help make your scenes come alive in a safe, supportive environment.

**Assessment of Student Learning**

This is a pass/fail class. If you wish to receive a letter grade you must let me know in writing by the end of the second week of class.

You will be evaluated on the commitment and growth you bring to your scenes each week. You will also be evaluated on your completion of several written and oral exercises and your willingness to incorporate those exercises into your dramatic work on your scenes. Additionally, you will be evaluated on the depth of reflection you bring to your journal and the extent to which you incorporate the weekly readings and acting exercises into those reflections. The
Journal should be at least 12 pages in length and will be turned in approximately every other week.

Finally, you will be evaluated on your attendance at and participation in the one or two field trips we will be taking to Chicago-area theaters.

Here is the breakdown:

- Six Journal Entries: 25%
- Written Exercises: 25%
- Class Participation: 25%
- Scene Performance: 25%

As your instructor, I will uphold DePaul University’s guidelines on academic integrity. As a member of the School for New Learning, I offer clarity, empathy, integrity and flexibility in the design, implementation and assessment of your learning experience.

**Grading Criteria & Scale**

See additional information pertaining to the grade designations for undergraduate grades

See relevant Pass/Fail Grading Options

**Course Schedule**

“I think ultimately we choose our identity; our character develops through the choices we make... who you are is created out of what you discover you like. And you can only discover what you like through trying out new roles and taking on various “disguises” as you grow up. Acting is natural to human beings. It isn’t an isolated activity; we’re acting all the time.” Gary Griffin about his 2011 production of “As You Like It” at Chicago Shakespeare.

January 2nd: Jump Right In, Sit Right Down, Roll Up Your Sleeves and Start Acting.


**Homework:**

1. Journal prompts: What are your fears, dreams, expectations regarding this class or acting in general? What do you think it takes to become an actor? Is it a craft you cultivate, a natural born talent, or some of both? How much of your own experience and emotion should you put into a role? What do you think will help you be successful in this class?
3. Pick an actor whose work you admire. Find something he or she wrote or said about the art of acting and share it with the class. If you also want to find a YouTube clip that demonstrates how this actor works and what you like about his or her performance, so much the better. Be ready to share your discovery with the class.

Homework:
1. Prepare a character profile for the character(s) you are playing. (form to be posted on D2L) and submit it to the D2L drop box.
2. Journal prompts: What is your reaction to the character and scene you have been assigned? How are you finding your way into the characters? What is your personal approach to this work?
3. Write your own two-character contentless scene. These will be performed next week.

January 16th: No class. But try to get together with your partner(s) some time before the next class so that you can go over your scenes. And maybe we can have our first theatrical outing sometime during this two-week period, perhaps the weekend before our next class.


Homework:
1. Read the Shurtleff selection (on e-reserves) and Chapter Two, “Analyzing a Scene,” from A Practical Handbook for the Actor.
2. Write a scene breakdown for the scene you are performing. (form to be posted on D2L) and post it to the D2L dropbox.
3. Journal prompts: How did you feel about your scene today? What would you like to do differently next time? How will you accomplish it? What would you keep the same? How will you accomplish that?

January 30th: Journal #3 and Scene Breakdowns due. Share scene breakdowns with class. Rehearsal, performance and feedback on scenes.

Homework:
1. Read the selection by Anna Deveare Smith.(on e-reserves)
2. As your character, write a letter to anyone you like expressing your hopes, fears, state of mind, dreams or anything else you wish to communicate. Try to capture the words of your character as he or she might speak them, given what you know about the character. Perhaps the Anna Deveare Smith selection can help you with this.
3. Read “The Obstacle” by Uta Hagen. (on e-reserves)
4. Start memorizing your scene if you have not done so already.

Homework:
1. Write either the “scene before” or the “scene after” the one(s) you are actually performing. This can be a monologue or a scene with another character, even one who does not appear in your scene or play.
2. Journal: Look back at what you wrote a couple of weeks ago and see if you have accomplished what you wanted in your scenes. How have you grown? What techniques and exercises have helped you? What do you have left to accomplish? How will you accomplish it?  
3. Continue memorizing your scene.

February 13: Journal #4 due. “Before” and “after” scenes due. Share “before” and “after” scenes. Rehearsal, performance and feedback on your scenes.

Homework:
1. Bring a box of “objects” that represent your character(s). These might be things he or she owns, wears, desires, fears, etc. They might also serve as ideas for props/costumes for your final performance.
2. Finish memorizing your scene. You should be off book by next week.

February 20th: Character box due. Share character boxes. Rehearsal, performance and feedback on your scenes. You should be off book. Incorporate some of the objects you have brought into your scenes.

Homework:
1. Journal: How have the letters, “before” and “after” scenes” and the box of objects helped you with your scenes? What have you found most useful and why? How have you incorporated them into your scenes?

February 27th: Journal #5 due. Theater games and exercises TBA. Rehearsal, performance and feedback on your scenes.

Homework:
1. Add to the character boxes you began last week. Start thinking about props, costumes, music, etc. for your scenes.
2. Gather everything you need for the dress rehearsal of your scenes. This includes props, costumes, music, make-up and anything else you think would bring your scenes to life. Bring them to class.


Homework: 1. Gather everything you need for the final performance of your scenes. This includes props, costumes, music, make-up and anything else you think would bring your scenes to life. Bring them to class.
2. Journal: How have you grown in this class? If you had fears about performing, have you gotten over them? Have any readings stimulated your thinking about acting? Have any exercises in particular helped you with your scenes? Where do you go from here? Can you apply what you have learned in this class to other parts of your life, either personal or professional? Are you more confident than when you started? Is it easier for you to get up in front of people now?

March 13th: Final Journal (#6) due. Final performance of your scenes. Feel free to bring guests. Show them how far you’ve come. Cast party at The Exchequer afterwards.

Course Policies
Incomplete:
I do not give incompletes automatically. If you wish to take an Incomplete you must request a "Contract for the Issuance of an Incomplete Grade" no later than March 6th. Incompletes will be given only if you are current on your class assignments and you have medical, family or work emergencies.

This course includes and adheres to the college and university policies described in the links below:

- Academic Integrity Policy
- Incomplete Policy
- Course Withdrawal Timelines and Grade/Fee Consequences
- Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability
- Protection of Human Research Participants

Course Resources
- University Center for Writing-based Learning
- SNL Writing Guide
- Dean of Students Office

Instructor Brief Bio
Fred A. Wellisch was appointed to the Resident Faculty of SNL in September of 2000. He teaches Foundations, The Bill of Rights in Contemporary Life, Religion and Democracy, and Race and Identity in American Theatre. He was a criminal defense lawyer for eighteen years, first with the Office of the Cook County Public Defender and then in private practice. Prior to that, he was a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools and at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. He received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1969 and 1973 respectively and his J.D. from the John Marshall Law School in 1984. He is also a professional actor, having appeared
at Steppenwolf, Timeline, Eclipse, Red Orchid, Strawdog, and Profiles Theatres as well as Lyric Opera of Chicago.