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# Communicate: Basic Acting Techniques for Confidence-Building & Better Presentations

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COURSE DESIGNATOR: LNDN 3247

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

NUMBER OF CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

**Communicate** introduces the student to the basic skills of acting and shows how acting techniques can be used to improve self-confidence, presence, and vocal presentation in a range of different work and life scenarios. Over the semester, students will learn to improvise, undertake creative challenges, and begin to master a range of techniques. Students will keep a developmental journey during the semester and also perform a dramatic monologue. For the final assessment, students will write a 5- to 10-minute speech about something they feel passionate about, then deliver it at Hyde Park's famous Speaker's Corner to fellow students and an audience of Londoners.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Via a series of games, workshops, exercises, challenges and group problem-solving exercises, students will encounter a range of practical techniques derived largely from the writings of Stanislavski, but also including other practitioners. Students will learn techniques for relaxation, mindfulness, creative thinking and motivation. By the end of the course, students will have met a range of developmental challenges, and completed a final task to demonstrate their new-found practical performance abilities.

## METHODOLOGY

The class will comprise of a series of skills-based workshops, collaborative creative tasks, lectures, and problem-solving exercises, culminating in a live public presentation at Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park. Students will each keep a developmental journal recording their process.

## REQUIRED READINGS/ MATERIALS

Aristotle (trans M. Heath). *Poetics* (Penguin)

Boal, A. (trans A. Jackson) *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Routledge)

Chekhov, M. *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting* (Harper and Row)

Johnstone, K. *Impro* (Methuen)

Stanislavski, K. (trans. E R Hapgood) *An Actor Prepares* (Bloomsbury)

*Creating a Role* (Bloomsbury)

## GRADING

Grading Rubric		
A	93-100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90-92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87-89	
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77-79	
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D+	67-69	
D	60-66	
F	0-59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

## SUMMARY OF HOW GRADES ARE WEIGHTED

Class participation	10%
Mid-term class presentations	20%
Developmental journal and final reflection	40%
Final presentation at Speaker's Corner and text	30%
<b>Overall grade</b>	<b>100%</b>

## COURSE CONTENT

UNIT 1
<p><b>YOU AS A CHARACTER</b></p> <p>In this class, we'll get to know each other, create biographies for ourselves, and establish our targets for the course. We'll play some games to get us bonded into a team, then work on some improvisation exercises to get us thinking and acting creatively. We'll then prepare for our observation exercise, which will involve looking at status in a social group.</p>

Task: Observation Exercise, First Journal Entry (at least 500 words per entry)

## UNIT 2

### MIND & BODY

We'll share what we've learned in the Observation Exercise before moving on to explore the connection between our mind and our body. One of the keys to confidence is to view ourselves as a whole, a "bio-machine" working in the present tense. To this end, we'll focus on exercises to heighten our sensory awareness and work on scenarios that inspire us to embrace the present moment.

Task: Reading 1 from An Actor Prepares, Second Diary Entry

## UNIT 3

### CIRCLES OF ATTENTION

How do actors maintain their composure whilst under the pressure of performance? What techniques allow them to stay in the moment and focused? Here, we'll unpack Stanislavski's idea of the Circles of Attention. Once understood, they allow us to develop our concentration skills and shut out distractions from the task-at-hand. Finally, we'll undertake the challenge of learning and delivering a poem together in 30 minutes.

Task: Reading 2 from An Actor Prepares, Third Diary Entry

## UNIT 4

### STATUS

It's all around us: status. What does it mean? Is it all do with social position and material wealth, or is something more complicated going on? In this class, we'll look at how our physical disposition affects both our self-confidence and how we are perceived by others. Status is ancient, and our awareness of it comes straight from the "lizard brain." Via a series of improvisations and exercises, we'll learn how to feel and look more confident as we speak and present. The instructor will also introduce the mid-term task: Present your passion.

Task: Prepare your presentation for Class Six, Fourth Diary Entry

## UNIT 5

### ZOO STORY, A FIELD STUDY

We'll meet at CAPA reception and head to London Zoo at Regent's Park for a session looking at specific groups of animals. We'll take a tour, then in groups of three and four, we'll undertake an observation exercise based on status in groups and packs. Wolves and primates will be of particular interest to us, and we'll consider how the basic elements of status are evident in the natural world. Prepare to make notes, sketches, and share your findings in the final debrief.

Task: Prepare you presentation for next week, Fifth Diary Entry (for submission Week Six)

## UNIT 6

### PRESENT YOUR PASSION

In the first half of class, the instructor will collect in your Journals for midterm assessment. We'll discuss what we've learned so far, then we'll each stage a five-minute presentation on a specific hobby or interest. Your objective is to make us feel as excited about the topic as you are. At the end of each presentation, we'll offer each other positive feedback for development.

Task: Reading 4 from *To The Actor: On the Technique of Acting*

## UNIT 7

### FINDING YOUR VOICE 1

In this class, we'll look at the anatomy of our voice. How is it made, and where does it come from? How can we improve its strength, tone and ensure variation in the way we deliver what we want to say? What aspects of anatomy do we need to develop to ensure we are vocally strong? After undertaking a workshop, you'll each be issued with a short speech by Shakespeare to work on for next week's class.

Task: Learn a Shakespearean speech, Sixth Diary Entry

## UNIT 8

### FINDING YOUR VOICE 2

In the first half of class, we'll work on further developing and strengthening our vocal delivery, ensuring its clarity and consistency. In the second half, we'll use our speeches to create situations for improvisation and vocal development, before each of us delivers our speech to the group. At the end, we'll reflect on the experience and draw up a skills audit of the areas to work on in advance of our visit to Speaker's Corner in Week 12.

Task: Work on your final speech, Seventh Diary Entry

## UNIT 9

### ONE-TO-ONE SESSIONS

This session will be given over to personal, one-to-one work. We'll discuss our speech topics and the best ways to deliver them, and we can refresh any practical areas that are causing us concerns. We'll also look at our journal entries so far.

## UNIT 10

### MASTERING THE MATERIAL

In this class, we'll form groups of two or three to discuss our final speech topics in depth. We'll then exchange topics

and attempt to present each other's areas of interest. What can we learn from watching someone else engage with an idea that inspires or interests us passionately? Our objective is to identify "the lure" of an idea, what attracts us to it, and what will interest an audience. We'll discover this "lure" has direct parallels with how actors work.

Task: Work on your final speech, Eighth Diary Entry

## UNIT 11

### REHEARSAL

In the final class before the Speaker's Corner task, we'll revisit the skills we've learned over semester, then each of us will present our speech to the class. We'll then positively critique each one before holding a second round of presentations, which we will film and watch back.

Task: Work on your final speech, Ninth Diary Entry

## UNIT 12

### COMMUNICATE FINAL EVENT—A SPEECH AT SPEAKERS' CORNER, HYDE PARK

We'll meet a little earlier than usual for a vocal warm up and mental preparation, before heading to the site and delivering our speeches before actual Londoners. Each speech will be recorded. Afterward, we'll head back to the center (probably in triumph) for refreshments and a debrief.

Task: Tenth Diary Entry—your reflection on the Speakers' Corner experience

## UNIT 13

### FINAL REFLECTION & SUMMING UP

In this class, we'll deliver our completed journals and watch film clips of our work over semester, reflecting on how we've learned and grown in confidence and skills. We'll draw up a plan for future development and consider how best to realize our goals on our return home.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

**SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:**

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

**STUDENT CONDUCT:**

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.