

# COURSE SYLLABUS

Improv  
The University of Texas at Dallas

**Course: Drama 2372.001**

**Instructor: Kathy Lingo, Office 3.514, 972-883-4152**

**Semester: Spring 2013**

**Course Start/End Date: Jan. 14 – April 29**

**Course Place and Times: Rehearsal Hall M/W 4-5:15 pm and Monday 7:00-9:45 p.m.**

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## Course Information

### Course Description and Rational

Improvisation: This is absolutely where theatre began. When three quarters of the world was illiterate and printed materials were not heard of, entire plays were improvisational works developed through established characters and plots. These “plays” were works developed in improvisation using methods of trial and error, responses to audience and actors, along with repetition. If you have had any acting experience now is the time to try to fine tune your ability to focus, listen, respond and create. Imagine being able to create an entire scene without memorizing a script!

It is a craft, an art form, which will require practice and experience. There will be course instruction, but the classroom becomes experimental allowing students to try new ideas and forms of expression. We will work with masks and other forms of creative expression, as well. Physical movement will become imperative to visually mold your character in the audience’s mind.

As in all my theatre courses, grades are based upon student’s participation and timely completion of assignments. Its’ fun and in what other class do you get to watch improvisational scenes? However, attendance and participation is mandatory. Exercises and assignment given, in and out of class, are designed for specific objectives in skill building. So what might look like a form of “play” to others is actually an exercise designed to strengthen a professional or physical skill. Classroom rituals and practices are established to help the student create story lines and develop skills that will improve the quality of their life through personal confidence and skill building. Challenge yourself, laugh at yourself and enjoy creating characters that will enrich your life by expanding your mind and your talents.

### Prerequisites :

***College level reading and writing skills are a must, but this is only the beginning. A good actor must possess self discipline, self respect and respect for others, gracious manners and a respect for protocol and process.***

Learning objectives:

***Ability to strategically analyze information, verbally and nonverbally.***  
***Ability to strengthen listening skills.***  
***Ability to assess what information most accurately and reliably responds to the needs of the character, the action and the audience.***  
***Ability to interpret information/messages from different perspectives***  
***Ability to understand how play stimulates the mind and enhances personal knowledge of one's self***  
***Ability to understand the beginning elements necessary to shape a variety of characters within the individual***  
***Ability to work with others in groups***  
***Ability to take criticism in a positive progressive manner***  
***Ability to experience and explore spontaneity***

### Instructor Information

1. Contact information: 972.883.4152, Office JO 3.514
2. Web site: [klingo@utdallas.edu](mailto:klingo@utdallas.edu)

### Course Materials

1. Required and recommended texts and materials

***Impro Improvisation and the Theatre***, Keith Johnstone, Routledge, N.Y., N.Y, 1990.

Students must bring a notebook and writing materials to every class. Criticism should always be noted and then typed and turned in when asked.

2. Other resources or tools

***Students must sign a talent release form.***

***If your performance is filmed in class, you must bring the instructor a flash drive to procure a copy of your performance.***

***Clothing: Students must wear comfortable, flexible clothes to class. We will be working with our minds and our bodies, therefore the body must be unconstrained and free to form without worry of inappropriate exposure of body parts. We will be moving from the floor to the rafters.***

***Shoes must be comfortable, flexible and protective. No flip flops or sandals allowed. You may wear them to class, but cannot perform in them. Hard heeled or other shoes are only allowed through costuming.***

***If classes are held in the rehearsal hall, no shoes are allowed on the dancer's floor. So, be sure to wear specific soft dance shoes or bring socks if you do not choose to be barefoot.***

Textbooks and some other bookstore materials can be ordered online through [MBS Direct Virtual Bookstore](#) or [Off-Campus Books](#) online ordering site. They are also available in stock at [UTD Bookstore](#) and Off-Campus Books.

## Course Policy

1. Make-up exams: ***Exams will be in the form of performed assignments and will only be allowed if official emergency documentation can be proved.***
2. Extra Credit: ***Students will be given due dates and assignments in advance. Extra Credit work will not be given.***
3. Late Work: ***refer to make-up exams to whom the curtain is held for***
4. Participation: ***We will be doing in class activities and participation is a must, as well as part of the student's grade.***

## Technical Requirements

Must be able to use email.

## Student Assessments

### Grading Information

List point values and weights for all assessment tasks

Participation	50%
- including class assignments and instruction	
Character and Improv Skill Growth:	50%

Your attendance can seriously affect your final grade. Please read below under attendance policy.

Character and Improv Skills can be determined by some of the following factors:

### Embodiment of character

#### Executes basic rules of Improv

1. Do not say NO
2. Listen to what others say and do not speak over them.
3. Project and develop vocal skills
4. Do not block others when performing/be aware of physicalities
5. Use physical levels and positions for staging discussed in class
6. Use and develop different characters
7. Do not hog the Improv or let others do all the work
8. Respond to action on stage when not speaking
9. Be original and try new things

- 10, Understanding of timing
11. Sensitivity and respect to others
12. An understanding of when to lead and when to develop background
13. Staying focused in character at all times

**List grade criteria for course**

Scaled Score	Letter Equivalent
90 -100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D

***Your instructor also keeps an old fashioned grade book. Due to past technological misfortunes, some operator errors and some systems errors with webct and other systems used, your instructor chooses to use elements of both, maintaining the whole organization of the class in written format. You may always set an appointment with me to discuss your grades, if assignments are not posted on the web. There might be assignments and submissions posted on the web. The instructor will let you know in class if there are postings.***

**Participation**

***How can one take an improvisation course and not participate, mentally and physically, at all times? Theatre is a collaborative art. Participation in this course is a physical and mental activity. Students must be able to handle criticism with a positive attitude and work to incorporate those critiques/suggestions into future performances.***

***Absences are taken seriously and only two “free get out of jail” cards are given per semester if your class meet twice a week and ten points will be taken off your participation and potentially performance grade for each absence that follows. If your class meets once a week, students receive one “free get out of jail” card and 20 points will be taken off their participation and potentially their performance grade with each absence that follows. Only absences where emergency/medical documentation is provided or University sponsored field trips/events will be excused. Theatre requires discipline. Use your absences wisely!***

***Please do not come to class ill. Remember, it’s a collaborative event and we don’t want to create a tragedy or comedy of errors with others health. Please bring me a copy of your medical documentation to avoid penalty.***

***Participation includes contributions and reactions to classroom and studio work, verbal expression of ideas to others, enthusiasm for topic in those expressions and overall involvement/behavior in class activities. Students must speak up, but do so***

***appropriately. It is also the ability to accept criticism in a positive light and work to improve on those observations.***

## **Assignments**

***This is a performance based course. Performances will be graded in written and oral forms at the discretion of the instructor. Performances will be discussed openly in class for learning purposes. Students are to take detailed notes of criticisms and comments made by the instructor and others during critique sessions.***

***Exercises, rituals and improvisations require physical involvement. There will be individual assignments, but most will involve groups of people. Theatrical and improvisational work is collaborative. Actors must learn to work, listen and literally feed off other people. Therefore, theatre games and physical types of exercises will be employed throughout the semester. Students will be expected to research and lead in such exercises.***

***We will be playing lots of theatre games in this class, as long as time allows. These games require group work and are a part of your participation grade. These games may also be incorporated into specific group projects of performance. I.e. Critique groups maybe formed to work on character development in a peer review type of setting.***

**Assignment submission instructions: Again, this is a performance based class and you will be critiqued orally in class. You will be responsible for keeping up with those comments and grades. In other words, keep every critique and grade sheet you are given until you receive your final grade. I recommend this for any class you take.**

## **Online Tests/Quizzes**

Exams and quizzes are in the form of performances.

## **Final Examination**

***Your final in this course will be a formal assignment with specific requirements to be fulfilled. It will be a piece of work that should demonstrate all the skills you have acquired throughout the semester. It maybe a continuation of a previous work explored in class or a specific project developed between the student and the instructor. Detailed requirements will be given in class based upon individual and class needs.***

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## **Course Evaluation**

As required by UTD academic regulations, every student must complete an evaluation for each enrolled course at the end of the semester. An online instructional assessment form will be made available for your confidential use. Please look for the course evaluation link on the course Homepage towards the end of the course.

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## Course Outline/Schedule

*This course outline and schedule is purely tentative. It is a form of organization that is intended to help the instructor reach the objectives of the course, but when dealing with human elements and development, there are always variables. The instructor has the right to change the dates, times and assignments as she deems necessary. Instructions will be clearly discussed in class and students are required to take notes of all class discussions.*

WEEK	STARTING DATE	TOPIC/LECTURE	ASSESSMENT / ACTIVITY
1 (First class day)	<b>Jan 14</b>	Welcome Syllabus Review Importance of Play	
2	<b>Jan 28</b>	Basic Rules of Improv Being in the moment Observation skills  Focus and mirror work  Developing story lines	In class exercises  Adding to the size of the group,  First small group assignment.
3	<b>Feb 4</b>	The Group Becomes One  Positions of power	Work on individual involvement. Student participation.
4	<b>Feb 11</b>	Workshop	Students need to come to class with topics and story lines
5	<b>Feb 18</b>		Individual Improvs Due in class Begin Small Group
6	<b>Feb 25</b>	Begin Big Group Assignment	
7	<b>March 4</b>		
8	<b>March 11</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>	

9	March 18	Begin 2 <sup>nd</sup> Small Group Assignment	Skill sharpening and impromptu games. Student performance.
10	March 25		
11	April 1	One Word Theme Practice	
12	April 8	Begin 2 <sup>nd</sup> Big Group Assignment	
13	April 15		
14	April 22		2 <sup>nd</sup> Big Group Assignment Due
15	April 29	Final	Performance and Participation
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**These timelines and descriptions are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.**

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## **Syllabus Addendum**

### **Prof's notes on dishonesty:**

Performances can be plagiarized by the cutting selected, movements copied and mimicking. Your performances must be your own. Imitating someone else's performance is cheating. Don't use someone else's work. Make your own decisions, cut your own work and incorporate your own talents.

### **Withdrawal from Class**

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

Please go to <http://provost.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies/>