**Course Description:**

This course is rooted in the belief that acting allows us to engage with human experience in one of the most intimate, powerful ways possible—by stepping into someone else’s story. Whether the character is drawn from a script or shaped through improvisation, this class invites students to connect with perspectives outside of themselves and share those truths with an audience.

Open to all grade levels (9–12), this class is designed to be both accessible and transformative, regardless of prior experience. We will focus on managing the fear response that often comes with being perceived, learning to feel safe, grounded, and expressive on stage. Students will develop tools for performance that include vocal projection, memorization, character development, stage movement, and organizing events or scenes. At the same time, we will explore performative texts, practicing how to interpret authorial intent and translate it into meaningful expression.

Improvisation, ensemble work, and solo performance all play a role in this class. Our goal is not just to build performers, but to help students cultivate presence, confidence, adaptability, and a stronger sense of identity—skills that extend far beyond the stage. This class is practical, collaborative, and often unpredictable—and that’s exactly the point.

**Class Expectations:**

* **Be** **Respectful**: Treat classmates, your teacher, and our shared space with respect. This includes listening actively, honoring each other’s creative risks, and helping maintain a supportive and focused environment.
* **Engage** **Fully**: You don’t have to be the loudest in the room, but your full presence matters. Participation means giving effort during exercises, performances, discussions, and feedback—even when it feels outside your comfort zone.
* **Come** **Prepared**: Bring the materials you need and show up ready to work—mentally, emotionally, and physically. Whether we’re rehearsing, performing, or analyzing, preparation shows commitment to the craft and respect for the group.
* **Collaborate** **Generously**: Theater is a collective art form. That means listening, offering constructive feedback, and staying open to the ideas of others. We will rely on each other to create honest, powerful work.
* **Stay** **Open**-**Minded**: You’ll be asked to embody characters and experiences that may be unfamiliar or even challenging. Approach this with curiosity, not judgment. The more open you are to stepping into someone else’s shoes, the more you’ll grow as both a performer and a person.
* **Take** **Risks** **and** **Own** **Your** **Growth**: There’s no “perfect” performance. What matters is your willingness to take creative risks, reflect on feedback, and keep pushing forward. Growth in this class comes from effort, not just talent.
* **Communicate**: When You Need Space: Some activities in this class may involve emotional intensity or deep vulnerability. If you feel you are not in the right space to engage in an activity or scene, please let me know before we begin. You don’t need to explain in detail—just check in so we can make sure everyone is supported and safe. Taking care of yourself is part of learning how to be a responsive and grounded performer.

**Health and Safety:**

* **Respect the Space**: Our classroom and stage are shared creative environments. Treat all props, tools, costumes, and equipment with care. Clean up after yourself and help maintain an organized, hazard-free space.
* **Physical Safety Matters**: Be mindful of your body and the bodies of others. Any physical contact or movement (including lifts, stage combat, or close proximity) must be choreographed, practiced with consent, and approved by the teacher. Never attempt risky movement or physicality without supervision.
* **Use Equipment Responsibly**: If we’re using set pieces, props, lights, or sound equipment, follow all safety guidelines. Do not use anything without permission or instruction.
* **Check In With Yourself**: Acting can be physically and emotionally demanding. If you are feeling unwell, injured, or overwhelmed, let me know. Taking care of your body and mental health is not only allowed—it’s expected.
* **Look Out for One Another**: We are responsible for keeping each other safe. If you notice something unsafe on stage, during rehearsals, or in our classroom, speak up or get help immediately.

Materials Needed:

* **Laptop or Internet-Connected Device**: for accessing scripts, submitting reflections, doing research, or reviewing recorded performances.
* **Assigned Scripts and Texts:** you’ll receive these throughout the semester. Keep them organized and bring them to class when needed.
* **Notebook:** for journaling, taking notes on feedback, blocking, character work, and script annotations.
* **Pencil and Highlighter:** for marking scripts, writing reflections, and taking quick notes during class activities.
* **Comfortable, Movement-Friendly Clothing**: You’ll often be on your feet, moving around, or sitting on the floor. Wear clothes you can comfortably stretch, sit, and move in. (This does not include costumes for your scenes).
* **Closed-Toe Shoes**: for safety during stage movement and rehearsals (especially when working with props or scenery).

Class Procedures:

* **Students will be assessed in three main areas: participation, performance, and script analysis.** 
  + **Participation** is a vital part of this course and reflects each student’s willingness to engage in the work—this includes contributing feedback when asked, making a genuine effort to apply that feedback, and helping foster a safe and collaborative space for performance. Participation is about showing up physically and mentally, taking creative risks, and supporting the work of the ensemble.
  + **Performances** will vary in point value depending on the assignment, but all will be evaluated based on key acting elements such as voice, movement, emotional connection, and presence. **Memorization typically counts for about one-third of the total performance score and is assessed separately. Students will have the opportunity to improve their memorization grade during final performances.** While polish matters, this class values process over perfection, and students are encouraged to take risks, learn from mistakes, and grow with each performance.
  + In addition, students will complete **script and performance analysis in their acting notebooks.** These assignments may include character breakdowns, rehearsal notes, reflections on feedback, or responses to script content and authorial choices. These entries are designed to help deepen students’ understanding of the material and connect their own experiences to their performance work.
* **Phone Policy**
  + Phones are **not allowed to be out or used during class under any circumstances except for documented medical reasons. This policy is non-negotiable.** In our acting class, creating a safe and supportive environment is essential, and with the prevalence of social media and recording devices, it is important that students feel free to perform without worrying about being filmed or shared outside of class. To protect everyone’s privacy and maintain focus, **any student found using or simply possessing their phone during class without medical clearance will receive a zero for the day’s participation grade. There will be no warnings or exceptions.** This rule is intended to foster trust, reduce distractions, and allow students to fully engage in the creative process without added stress.
* **Absences:**
  + If you miss class, it is your responsibility to communicate with your partner(s) about any blocking, script changes, or feedback discussed during your absence. If you're absent on a performance day, we will try to find an alternative time for you to perform; however, this is not guaranteed unless the absence is excused. Unexcused absences will result in a loss of participation points for the day and may impact your performance grade. If you know ahead of time that you’ll miss class or a performance, please communicate with me as early as possible. While we’ll always do our best to accommodate shifting circumstances, accountability and communication are essential to the success of this class.
* **Communication:**
  + Open and honest communication is essential in this class. If something is affecting your ability to participate, perform, or feel safe in the space—please talk to me. Whether it’s a conflict in your group, a misunderstanding about an assignment, or a moment where you just need to step out and regroup, I want to support you. If we’re doing something emotionally intense and you’re not in the right headspace to participate fully, just let me know before class or quietly when it comes up. My goal is to help you stay grounded and safe while still engaging meaningfully in the work.
    - You can always reach me by email Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., and I’m also available during my plan time or after school for one-on-one check-ins. These conversations will always be handled with care and confidentiality, and my priority will be listening, understanding, and working with you to find solutions.
* **Extension Policy:**
  + If you ever need more time on an assignment, please talk to me. Life happens, and I’d rather you advocate for yourself than silently struggle. That said, extensions aren’t automatic, you’ll need to communicate with me in advance and explain why you need the extra time.
  + I’ll consider each request individually, taking into account the nature of the assignment, your overall effort in class, and what’s reasonable for both of us.
  + When we agree on a new deadline, it’s your responsibility to meet it—just like the original one—and I’ll also keep your parent or guardian in the loop.
  + Missing an extended deadline without communication will still result in a zero, so stay proactive.

**Appropriate Humor:**

* In this acting class, humor is a powerful tool—but with that power comes responsibility. Students are expected to use humor in a way that is appropriate, inclusive, and respectful during performances, scenes, and improvisation. Humor should never come at the expense of others; anything that could be perceived as offensive, hurtful, or demeaning to individuals or groups, especially regarding identity, background, or personal experiences, is not acceptable.
* Students must be mindful of how humor may be received by different people and cultures and should always seek consent from scene partners or group members before incorporating physical contact, sensitive topics, or personal information. Respecting personal boundaries helps maintain a safe and supportive space for everyone.
* I will provide guidance throughout the course on how to use humor effectively and responsibly. If students are unsure about whether something is appropriate, they are encouraged to ask me directly so we can discuss it openly.

Failure to adhere to this expectation will result in a failing grade in the applicable activity/assignment. Comments will be documented, and parents/guardians will be contacted. Depending on the severity of the situation, the administration will become involved.

**Academic Honesty:**

* Students are expected to put forth their best effort and maintain integrity in all aspects of their work. Academic honesty is essential not only in written assignments but also in performance preparation, analysis, and collaboration.
  + Any student found to be academically dishonest will receive a failing grade on the assignment, have the incident reported to school administration, and their parent/guardian will be contacted.
    - Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:
      * Submitting work that was completed collaboratively when it was meant to be done individually.
      * Copying from another student or using another’s work without proper credit.
      * Plagiarizing from published or online sources without citation.
      * Submitting work that is primarily generated by artificial intelligence or other unauthorized tools.
  + Maintaining honesty in your creative and academic work ensures a learning environment built on trust, growth, and authenticity

**Unit Overviews:**

* **Quarter 1: Foundations & Fundamentals:** Building essential acting tools and introduce key theater vocabulary and concepts.
  + **Vocal Projection & Physicality**
    - Exercises to strengthen breath control and projection, including vocal warm-ups and outdoor projection drills.
    - Movement activities focused on posture, gesture, and spatial awareness to develop stage presence.
  + **Emotional Connection & Authenticity**
    - Activities to identify and express genuine emotions, connecting personal experiences to character emotions.
  + **Theater Basics**
    - Introduction to essential theater terms such as stage directions, plot diagram (exposition, rising action, climax), and character archetypes.
  + **Intro to Script Analysis**
    - Breaking down simple scripts and monologues by identifying beats, objectives, and emotional shifts.
  + **Performance Application:**
    - *Ramble*: A short, unstructured speech emphasizing projection and presence.
    - *Cold Read Practice* to build confidence with brief scripts.
* **Quarter 2: Script & Scene Work:** Deepen script analysis skills and connect foundational skills with scripted performances.
  + **Advanced Script Analysis**
    - Exploring authorial intent, subtext, and character motivation.
    - Applying the plot diagram to understand story structure within scenes.
  + **Incorporating Projection, Physicality, and Emotion**
    - Applying Quarter 1 skills to scenes and monologues.
    - Rehearsal strategies including memorization, blocking, and pacing.
  + **Stagecraft Introduction**
    - Basic staging and movement, including props and set awareness.
  + **Performance Application:**
    - *Monologue* (50 points): Showcasing memorization, emotional depth, and stage presence.
    - *Two-Person Scene* (100 points): Emphasizing teamwork, blocking, and character interaction.
* **Quarter 3: Improvisation & Ensemble Work:** Develop quick thinking, collaboration, and adaptability on stage.
  + **Improv Fundamentals**
    - Games focused on listening, agreement ("Yes, and..."), and spontaneity.
    - Developing emotional flexibility and character creation on the spot.
  + **Ensemble Building**
    - Trust exercises and team dynamics to foster collaboration.
    - Sharing stage space and supporting fellow actors.
  + **Advanced Improv Concepts**
    - Introduction to long-form improv and thematic storytelling.
    - Developing monologist skills for solo improv storytelling.
  + **Performance Application:**
    - *Team Showcase* (50 points)
    - *Improv Olympics* (100 points)
    - *Improv Showcase* (100 points)
* **Quarter 4: Integration & Public Performance:** Synthesize all skills in polished performances and introduce event production basics.
  + **Event Preparation & Hosting Skills**
    - Voice modulation, pacing, and audience engagement techniques for MC roles.
  + **Advanced Performance Techniques**
    - Refining stage presence, timing, emotional nuance, and managing performance anxiety.
  + **Production Elements**
    - Basics of lighting, sound cues, and backstage etiquette.
  + **Final Performances & Reflection**
    - Students will create and execute a culminating performance event worth **200 points**. This can take the form of a one-act play, hosting or MCing a school assembly or event, leading an improv show, or any other performance-based project that showcases the skills developed throughout the year. Final reflections or portfolios documenting their growth and process will accompany the performance.