

TPP3124: Beginning Improvisation Spring 2024

Instructors: **Jade Young** (she/they), **Nicholas Bennett** (he/him)

Office Hours: By appointment

Email: jade.young@ufl.edu, bennettnicholas@ufl.edu

Class: Tuesday and Thursday 3:00 – 4:55pm

Room location: CONG012

Phone Number: (336)601-7840

Diversity Statement

At UF Performing Arts we are fostering a culture and presenting performances that reflect and celebrate the diversity of our audiences. Our organization is committed to including voices of those of varying abilities, ages, ethnicities, gender identities, races, religions, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Land Acknowledgement

A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. In particular, the University of Florida resides on land of the Timucua people and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. It is important to understand the long-standing history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation. It is also worth noting that acknowledging the land is Indigenous protocol. For more information, visit <http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland>

Description

The purpose of this course is to learn beginning improvisational skills and vocabulary as well as foster a stronger sense of self-confidence and trust in choices made both on and off stage. By participating in a variety of Theatre Improvisation games, scenes, and exercises, students will learn how to make quick decisions with assuredness and curiosity, support their ensemble, and craft engaging stories. This class will also give opportunities to watch experienced improv actors and analyze how their techniques compare with what we learn in class.

Course Objectives

- To understand and perform the fundamental elements of improvisation
- To develop careful listening and observation skills
- To create layered, entertaining characters with relatability
- To build collective trust and demonstrate teamwork with your ensemble/classmates
- To build self-trust and confidence in your natural impulses/instincts
- To learn how to apply the elements of improvisation in other facets of your life and acting craft beyond this classroom
- To inhibit self judgement, and to encourage the celebration of mistakes

Class Conduct

This classroom will be a safe space. It is difficult to succeed at improv if you are anxious about your physical safety or worried about being verbally harassed or teased. For this reason:

- Anyone is welcome to wear a mask if they so choose.
- Tearing people down onstage or off will not be allowed. We will never laugh *at* each other.
- If we follow these guidelines, however, we are likely to laugh *with* each other – a lot!
- Be kind to yourself and others, a little compassion goes a long way.
- For more information, reference the Student Code of Conduct
 - https://regulations.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/4-040_2021-12-06.pdf

Attendance, Class Participation & Performance (60% of Grade)

Attendance will be taken daily. Due to the nature of this course, both on-time attendance and full participation are essential.

Tardiness & Absence: If you are tardy, points will be deducted from your participation grade. You can miss two unexcused classes without penalty. If a third unexcused absence occurs, 5% will be deducted from your final grade. All additional unexcused absences will result in a penalty of a full letter grade (10%) from the final grade. *

Excused absences include: Illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, participation in official university activities, and court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena). Failure to provide the appropriate documentation at least one week before an excused absence may result in an unexcused absence.

IF YOU FEEL SICK, PLEASE STAY HOME. Religious observances do not require documentation, but you should inform me by the end of the second week of classes of any religious observances that will conflict with class attendance. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Class Participation & Performance: As this is an ensemble-based acting class, full participation is required. Full participation means saying yes to invitations to join in and trying your best as you play the games. You are not required to be experienced at improv, to feel comfortable onstage, or even to be funny. The point of Beginning Improv is to get outside of our comfort zones, try something new, and support each other onstage and off, encouraging our classmates along the way. Students will be assigned a participation and performance grade each week, the rubric can be found below:

	Exemplary (90%-100%)	Proficient (80%-90%)	Developing (70%-80%)	Unacceptable (<70%)
Frequency of Participation In class	Student initiates participation in Improvisation exercises multiple time during class.	Student initiates participation in Improvisation exercises at least twice during class.	Student initiates participation in Improvisation exercises at least once each class meeting.	Student does not initiate participation in Improvisation exercises each class meeting unless solicited by class facilitator
Post-Performance Feedback/ Discussion	Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate course terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments mostly insightful & constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion.	Comments are uninformative, lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion & personal taste, e.g., "I love it", "I hate it", "It's bad" etc.
Listening Skills	Student listens attentively when others perform in improvisation exercises as well as when peers present personal findings and perspectives. Exemplifies proper audience/classroom etiquette	Student is mostly attentive when others are presenting, performing, and sharing. Occasionally needs a reminder to refocus their attention and listening to the task at hand.	Student is often inattentive and needs reminder of focus in class. Occasionally makes disruptive comments while others are speaking. Inappropriate use of phone during class time.	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others perform or share their findings. Distracts from discussion. Frequent inappropriate use of phone during class time.

Dress Code: Improv can be physically demanding. Please wear comfortable clothes that allow you to move easily.

Performance Attendance & Response (30% of Grade)

You are required to attend three improv shows during the course of the semester and to write about what you see. At least one of these must be a live improv show. You may go anywhere for the live show, but the simplest option would be to attend a Theatre Strike Force show on campus: <https://www.theatrestrikeforce.com/>. Their Instagram can be found @tsf_uf

For each show, you will write a 2-page paper summarizing the performance and connecting it in at least three ways to what we have learned in class. For example, if you offer details about how the performers in the show utilized (or failed to utilize) the principle of ‘Yes, And’ that would be one such connection. The rubric for this assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Assignments may be submitted via Canvas. MLA format.

-Paper 1 Due Date: February 29 @ 11:59pm

-Paper 2 Due Date: March 28 @ 11:59pm

-Paper 3 Due Date: April 25 @ 11:59pm

Final Performance (10% of grade)

The culmination of your work will be a final Short-Form Improvised performance with your classmates. Dates and details to be announced as the semester progresses.

***Extra Credit**

Because this class is largely participation-based, you are unlikely to need extra credit if you attend regularly. You are, however, allowed to complete up to five extra credit assignments rather than losing points for days you are absent.

Extra Credit Assignment: Watch 30+ minutes of improv (online or in-person) and write a 1-2 page paper describing the techniques you noticed, identifying elements of CROW (Character, Relationship, Objective, Where), and explaining whether you thought they “failed fantastically.” Include the date, time, title, and name of improv group/performer. Note that you will have to submit 1 extra credit assignment per absence if you wish to make up all your points.

Canvas

Grades, additional readings, and paper/project guidelines will be posted on the class website Canvas. Log on to <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/> (no “www”), click the button that reads “LOG IN TO ELEARNING,” and then enter your Gatorlink username and password. This course should appear if you are officially registered. If you require assistance, start with the UF Computing Help Desk at <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>.

Honor Code

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor

and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates the academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565), by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

University Counseling Services

3190 Radio Rd.
P.O. Box 112662
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611-2662
352-392-1575
www.counsel.ufl.edu

Grading Scale

A 93-100
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79
C 73-76
C- 70-72
D+ 67-69
D 63-66
D- 60-63
E 59-

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by participating in the evaluation system called GatorEvals. The new evaluation system is designed to be more informative to instructors so that teaching effectiveness is enhanced and to be more seamlessly linked to UF’s CANVAS learning management system. Students can complete their evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>.

Your ongoing enrollment is confirmation that you understand and will comply with the requirements of this course. I reserve the right to alter this syllabus if necessary.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: 1/8-1/11	Syllabus, Jumping in; Ensemble building
Week 2: 1/16-1/18	More Ensemble; Yes, And
Week 3: 1/23-1/25	CROW (Character, Relationship)
Week 4: 1/30-2/1	More CROW (Obstacle, Where) & Find the Game
Week 5: 2/6- 2/8	Story structure, Pantomime, Levels
Week 6: 2/13- 2/15	Establishing conflict, Review
Week 7: 2/20- 2/22	CROW Review
Week 8: 2/27- 2/29	Guessing games, Gimmick Games, Puns
Week 9: 3/5-3/7	Review and Introduce Callbacks
Week 10: 3/19- 3/21	Continuing to Build on Skills
Week 11: 3/26- 3/28	Ensemble games
Week 12: 4/2- 4/4	Long Form Review and Class Leads
Week 13: 4/9 -4/11	Class Leads Continued
Week 14: 4/16- 4/18	Dress Rehearsals and Prep for Final Performance
Week 15: 4/23-	Final Dress!
	FINAL PERFORMANCE (details TBD)