

TPP3124: Beginning Improvisation Spring 2025

Instructor: Nicholas Bennett (he/him/his)
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: Bennettnicholas@ufl.edu
Class: Tuesday & Thursday 3:0pm-4:55pm
Room location: CONG012

Description

The purpose of this course is to learn basic improvisational skills and vocabulary. By participating in a variety of short-form improv games and warm-ups, students will learn how to make quick decisions, support their scene partners, and build a story. This class will also give opportunities to watch experienced improvisational actors and analyze how their techniques compare with what we have been learning in class.

Course Objectives

- To understand and perform the fundamental elements of improvisation
- To develop careful listening and observation skills
- To build trust and demonstrate teamwork with your classmates
- To learn how to apply the elements of improvisation in other facets of your life beyond this classroom

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!
- 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 during each class. 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. (See Extra Credit)

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.

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/>.

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, one connection might be details about how the performers in the show utilized (or failed to utilize) the principle of “Yes, And.” The rubric for this assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Assignments may be submitted via Canvas or emailed directly to me. MLA format should be utilized.

SOTD performances: You are also required to attend both SOTD performances this semester: *Yemaya’s Belly* and *Blood at the Root*. Ticket price will be largely covered by the department. An in-class discussion, for participation points, will follow the closing of each play.

Late work policy: For each day an assignment is submitted after the due date, you will lose 10 percentage points.

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 of your missing 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/>.

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>

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.

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: 1/14-1/16

Week 2: 1/21-1/23

Week 3: 1/28-1/30

Week 4: 2/4-2/6

SOTD performances of *Macbeth*

Week 5: 2/11-2/13

Week 6: 2/18-2/20

Week 7: 2/25-2/27

Week 8: 3/4-3/6

SOTD performances of *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Week 9: 3/11-3/13

Week 10: 3/18-3/20

Week 11: 4/1-4/3

Week 12: 4/8-4/10

Week 13: 4/15-4/17

Week 14: 4/22-4/24

Week 15: 4/29-5/1

Week 16: 5/6

Syllabus, Jumping in; Ensemble building

More Ensemble; Yes, And

CROW (Character, Relationship, Objective, Where)

More CROW (*1st performance response due: 2/13*)

Story structure

Establishing conflict

Pantomime (*Discussion of Macbeth*)

Guessing games (*2nd performance response due: 3/13*)

Gimmick games

SPRING BREAK (no class)

Ensemble games

Storytelling (*Discussion of Earnest*)

Pun games

Scene games (*3rd performance response due: 5/1*)

Prep for final performance! (*ALL extra credit due 5/1*)

FINAL PERFORMANCE (details TBD)