

**UNIV 241: Improv for Everyone
Spring 2016
Drexel University**



Instructors

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Course Description

Improv is not just for actors or comedians. Improv is for everyone. Whether you plan on being a teacher, a doctor, the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, or any other profession-improv can help you. The general concept of improv is all about agreement and support. Through a combination of lecture and interactive exercises, this class will explore the basic skills of 'long form improvisation', how those skills can aid you in real world experiences, how to think more quickly on your feet, and ultimately how to have more fun in life. The class will incorporate lectures that deal with the history of comedy and improv.

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and differentiate different forms of humor
2. Collaborate with colleagues to build characters and narratives
3. Produce and perform a production
4. Develop vital interpersonal (communication, listening, etc.) skills, instincts, and reaction time
5. Writing reflective pieces combining knowledge of theory, history, and experience

Required Texts

Articles and excerpts will be posted on Blackboard

Course Policies

Course Structure

The course will meet once a week (Mondays at 6pm). Each class will consist of a mini-lecture, providing context for the interactive activities planned for the remainder of the class. The majority of the class time will be spent learning, practicing, and playing with improvisation skills.

Content Advisory

While the content we pass out as readings will be fairly tame, it should be understood that what is created within groups might push buttons and boundaries.

Conduct

Improvisation is a collaborative group activity. It is important that we maintain a positive work environment – this includes being PRESENT (technology should be used only for the needs of the class), MINDFUL (placing yourself in the position of others), and CONSIDERATE (negotiate and be constructive in criticism).

Attendance is mandatory!

Class time is crucial in this course and cannot be replicated by notes from others. Every absence is a detriment to your progress in the class. Missing two classes **lowers your final grade one full letter**. Leaving town for work, having a busy week, etc. are not excused. It will be your responsibility to ensure that I receive a hard copy of any absence documentation, and determining the validity of the absence will be up to my discretion.

Course Requirements and Grading Procedures

Assignments will be Submitted on Blackboard

Weekly Reflections
Final Show
Final Reflection

Weekly Reflections

Each week you will be expected to turn in a 1-page reflection regarding the reading for that week. Papers are not summaries, but more so an act of processing the ideas proposed in the readings and how those concepts can be used to performance. These will be turned in at the beginning of class or during break.

Final Show

You will be graded upon the final show – as contributors, collaborators, and performers. You will be expected to take what you've learned throughout this class and implement ideas and practices into the performance.

Final Reflection

Your final assignment will be a reflective piece about the process of working with others and your overall experience working toward the performance. This reflection should incorporate ideas posed in class and examples from within the class.

Late Work

No late work will be accepted

Plagiarism

All students should be in compliance with the University's Academic Honesty Policy. Those who try to pass off work that is not their own will be reported to the College of Arts and Sciences and will be the subject of a judicial review. Be sure to know what constitutes as plagiarism and Academic Honesty by looking at Drexel's Academic Dishonesty Policy

http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty/

Plagiarism includes: copying and pasting from online sources, using nothing but citations to make your arguments, turning in somebody else's work as your own, and turning in the same paper/project multiple times (either in the same class or different classes). Do not try to pass off others' work as your own, be careful if collaborating on projects with others that your work is truly your own (in cases where papers being copied are suspected, both names are sent to the College), and be sure to cite all of your sources. If you have specific questions about citations or your work ask us!

If plagiarism is found, students will receive a 0 on the assignment and may lead to other consequences as per the discretion of the instructor.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that requires accommodation in order to participate in this course, please contact me via email so that we can make arrangements for such accommodation to be made (in all cases, documentation must be provided in order for reasonable accommodations to be considered). Also, please note that the University has a Disability Resource Center. Their office is located at 3201 Arch Street, Suite 210 and their phone number is 215-895-1401 if you need further information about their services.

Course Schedule

Week 1: March 28

Course Overview

1. Course expectations: source material, discussions, and projects
2. The importance of humor and improvisation
3. Getting to work – First Exercise

IMPROV

Introductions

Warmups / Group Exercises

Playing

Yes, And

Tops of Scenes

Wrap-up

Week 2: April 4

Readings for Class (to be done beforehand):

- Ziv, “The Social Function of Humor in Interpersonal Relationships,” from *Society*. Volume 47 Issue 1. 11-18
- Leonard and Yorton, “Yes, And...How to Make Something out of Nothing,” from *Yes, And*. 21-50

Class – Turning "yes, and" into general agreement with Guest Speaker

Homework: Reflection

IMPROV

Warmups

3 Line Scenes

Non-Verbal Agreement

General Agreement Vs. Yes, And

Wrap-up

Week 3: April 11

Readings for Class:

- Leonard and Yorton, “Listening is a Muscle,” from *Yes, And*. 193-204.

Class – Monologues and Listening

Homework: Reflection

IMPROV
Code of Conduct
Warmups
Truth in Comedy
Being Yourself
Listening
Wrap-up

Week 4: April 18

Readings for Class:

- Barecca, “The Laughter in the Kitchen: Growing up Female and Funny,” from *They Used to Call Me Snow White, but I Drifted*. 101-122.
- Madson, “Take Care of Each Other,” from *Improv Wisdom: Don’t Prepare, Just Show Up*. 123-137
- Chinyere, “Why I’m Quitting UCB, and it’s Problem with Diversity,” from *Medium*

Class – Perspective and Empathy with Guest Speaker

Homework: Reflection

IMPROV
Building a Relationship
Reacting Emotionally
Scenework
Wrap-up

Week 5: April 25

Readings for Class:

- Hauck, “Playing Characters,” from *Long-Form Improv*.
- Excerpts from Fey, Poehler, Kaling, and Dratch

Class: Getting into Character

Homework: Reflection

IMPROV
Warmups
Share Set
Creating Character
Scenework

Week 6: May 2

Readings for Class:

- Medhurst, “Concerning Comedy,” 9-26.
- Scarpetta & Spagnolli, “The Interactional Context of Humor in Stand-Up Comedy,” from *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 210 – 230.
- Metz, “Women in Improv Comedy Detail a Culture of Sexual Harassment,” from *The Chicago Tribune*

Class - Exploring your world with Guest Speaker

Homework: Reflection

IMPROV
Warmups
Share Set
Object & Environment Work
Scenework

Week 7: May 9

IMPROV
Warmups
Share Set
Monologues and Scenes

Week 8: May 16

IMPROV
Warmups
Share Set
Running Sets

Week 9: May 23

IMPROV
Warmups
Scenework
Running Sets

Week 10: May 30

MEMORIAL DAY – NO CLASS

Week 11: June 6

Final Show!