

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Department of Music & Theatre Arts  
Introduction to Acting 21M.600  
Fall 2014 | Tuesdays & Thursdays

**Instructor**

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**Office Hours**

By Appointment

**Course Materials**

STOP KISS by Diana Son | *Will email PDF*

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF by Tennessee Williams | *Will email PDF*

MACHINAL by Sophie Treadwell | *Will email PDF*

AUDITION by Michael Shurtleff | *Paperback Edition, [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), or iBook*

TBA, Supplemental Materials Provided by Instructor

**Course Requirements / Grade Formulation**

In accord with MIT Rules and Regulations of the Faculty section 2.62, Music and Theater Arts does not grade on a curve. Students are assessed individually, and there is no pre-determined grade spread in any subject. Consistent with this, after Drop Date, students who remain in a class are not in jeopardy of seeing their grades change due to the change in class composition.

**I. Attendance – Mandatory**

- Because acting is an embodied practice, attendance in class is mandatory.
- ONE unexcused absence will be allowed. EACH unexcused absence thereafter will result in the deduction of one half of a letter grade (e.g. an A becomes an A-).
- Three instances of tardiness will equal ONE unexcused absence.

**II. Classroom Etiquette**

- Arrive on time in comfortable clothes that allow you to move. No jeans, and no overly baggy sweatpants, pajamas, etc.

- Absolutely no cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices shall be allowed in class. All of these items shall be left with your personal belongings, which shall be stored to the side of the room. All scripts shall be printed on paper – no reading from laptops, tablets, etc.
- Bring a pen and paper to every class.
- No food is permitted in the classroom. Beverages only.
- When other students are working in front of the class, sit at attention. Do not drink anything or look down at your paper, your watch, or anything else while your colleagues are working.
- **Chronic failure to follow the classroom etiquette guidelines shall, at the discretion of the instructor, negatively impact a student's final grade.**

### III. Breakdown of Assignments

All assignments carry a numerical point value – the aggregate sum of all assignments is 200 points. Final grades will be calculated based on the number of points you earn out of the total possible 200. Below, please find each assignment and its corresponding point value.

- **Written Quiz (10 points)**
- **Written Assignments, Part I – Plays Studied in Class. (20 points each, total of 60 points)** Each student shall write three responses, each two pages in length, each in response to the plays we read in class. Prompts can be found at the back of the syllabus in Appendix A.
- **Written Assignments, Part II – Performances Attended Outside of Class. (20 points each, total of 40 points)** Each student must attend a minimum of TWO professional productions outside MIT, and submit a written response of two pages for each production. Prompts can be found at the back of the syllabus in Appendix A.
  - o NOTE: All written assignments must be font size 12 with one-inch margins. All assignments must be printed out and stapled. Failure to follow these rules will negatively impact grades on written assignments. The writing itself will be graded on both content and execution.
- **Presentation of Working Rehearsals. (30 points each, total of 90 points)** Students will present three working rehearsal sessions in class, one for each play listed in the Course Materials, above.

## SEPTEMBER

Thurs, Sep 4

Work in class - Registration, vocal warm up

Work for next class - Read *Stop Kiss* and Guidepost 9

Tues, Sep 9

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, physical warm up, "Yes"

Work for next class - Read *Stop Kiss* and GP 9

Thurs, Sep 11

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, assign short scenes, scene coaching

Work for next class - Print script & annotate for GP 9; Read GP 1; Rehearse

Tues, Sep 16

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, teach given circumstances, scene coaching

Work for next class - *Stop Kiss* Response Paper due; Rehearse

Thurs, Sep 18

Work in class - Vocal warm up, teach status, scene coaching

Work for next class - Annotate script for GP 1; Read GP 2; Rehearse

Tues, Sep 23

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, Guidepost 2 free write, scene coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse

Thurs, Sep 25

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, GP 2 continued (actions, objectives, tactics), scene coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse; Annotate actions/objectives/tactics; Read GP 3

Tues, Sep 30

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, GP 3 covered entrances, scene coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse; Craft and annotate for GP3

## OCTOBER

Thurs, Oct 2

Work in class - Vocal warm up, scene coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

Tues, Oct 7

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, in class presentation of working rehearsals

Work for next class - Read *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Thurs, Oct 9

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, assign short scenes

Work for next class – Rehearse; Annotate for GP 9, 1, 2 & 3; Read GP 4

Tues, Oct 14

Work in class – Vocal warm – up, upward inflection, coaching scenes

Work for next class – Rehearse

Thurs, Oct 16

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse; *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* Response Paper due;  
Read GP 5

Tues, Oct 21

Work in class – Vocal warm up, GP 5 video example, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse; Craft & Annotate for GP 5; Read GP 6

Thurs, Oct 23

Work in class – Vocal warm up, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse

Tues, Oct 28

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, GP 6 listening spine, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse; Annotate for GP 6; Read GP 7

Thurs, Oct 30

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, GP 7 active listening, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse

NOVEMBER

Tues, Nov 4

Work in class – In-class presentation of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* working rehearsal

Work for next class – Read *Machinal*; Prepare for Quiz

Thurs, Nov 6

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, quiz, assign short scenes

Work for next class – Rehearse; Annotate for GP 1 – 7 and 9; Floorplan

Tues, Nov 11 – No Class

Thurs, Nov 13

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse; Read GP 8

Tues, Nov 18

Work in class – Vocal warm-up, GP 8 free write, scene coaching

Work for next class – Rehearse; Read GP 10

Thurs, Nov 20

Work in class - Vocal warm - up, sense memory, coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse; Read GP 11 & 12

Tues, Nov 25

Work in class - Vocal warm-up, scene partner exercise, coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse; *Machinal* Response Paper due;

Thurs, Nov 27 - No Class

Tues, Dec 2

Work in class - Vocal warm up, scene coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse

Thurs, Dec 4

Work in class - Vocal warm up, evaluations in class, scene coaching

Work for next class - Rehearse

Tues, Dec 9

Work in class - Vocal warm-up, evaluations in class, scene coaching

Work for next class - In class presentations of *Machinal* working rehearsals.

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ALL ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, AND OTHER INFORMATION ARE  
SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

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Reminder: You are responsible for seeing TWO productions of your choice outside of MIT, and for writing a two-page response on each. These assignments can be handed in any time prior to the end of the semester. Papers will not be accepted after the last day of class. More details can be found in Appendix A.

## APPENDIX A: PROMPTS FOR WRITTEN RESPONSES

### Plays Read In Class

#### 1. *Stop Kiss*

You will write two pages total. Start with an analysis of the character you are playing. Begin with a more literary analysis -- how does the character function within the text? -- then move on to describe your personal interpretation of the character. In other words, make the shift from approaching the play as an *academic scholar* to interpreting it as an *actor*. What is your interpretation of the character's status? What is the character's point of view regarding the other characters? Is there a particular way the character uses language? What are the "given circumstances" impacting the character? Finally, take a moment to describe your rehearsal process. As you rehearse on your feet, do you make discoveries that do or do not line up with your initial assumptions and choices about the character? What are you learning about physical and vocal presence?

#### 2. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

Please write a two-page paper, focusing first on what you consider to be your character's strengths, and how those strengths are manifest in your scene. Then write about your character's weaknesses, and practice both personal empathy as well as analysis of the text to explain *why* your character behaves the way he/she does. You may draw upon facts that are given to you in the play -- perhaps something another character says about you, or something you say about your own past -- or you can use your imagination to make up a history or storyline to flesh out your character. Finally, switching into a mode of literary analysis, are there any broader themes or motifs in the play that are magnified through the lens of your character?

#### 3. *Machinal*

Please write a two-page analysis of your character and scene, incorporating vocabulary from at least 8 of the twelve guideposts. You may also incorporate additional vocabulary from any exercise or technique we practiced this semester.

### Productions Seen Outside of Class

For both productions, please focus first on the tone of the production. If it were a color, what would it be? A smell? An animal? Any other kind of non-literal representation? Next, describe three moments/examples of how an actor is using his or her voice and body to communicate story to you. It is not enough to say, "the actor portrayed the character's sadness" -- instead, you must describe what you see and hear the actor *doing* with his instrument in order for you to understand or infer

“sadness”. Use as much vocabulary from class as you have under your belt at the time that you write the responses. When you hand in your assignments, please also include a playbill (program) from the performance you attended.

To find performances:

[www.bostontheatrescene.com](http://www.bostontheatrescene.com)

Or try any of these companies and venues:

- Bridge Rep of Boston (my company!)
- New Repertory Theatre (my play!)
- A.R.T. and OBERON at A.R.T.
- Actors’ Shakespeare Project
- Lyric Stage Company (\$10 student rush)
- SpeakEasy Stage Company
- Central Square Theatre

There is a lot more to choose from, but that gives you a start.