Mission Statement:
Our mission is to serve as a leading center of Christian thought and action providing an excellent education from a biblical perspective and global context in pivotal professions to equip Christian leaders to change the world.

COURSE SYLLABUS

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & THE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

THE 711 01 (COHORT B)
THE MEISNER TECHNIQUE 2
SPRING 2011
LOCATION: COMM 128
CLASS MEETS: MW 3-4:50 PM

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Michael Hill-Kirkland
Phone: (W) 757-352-4730; (C) 757-617-7174
Fax: 757-352-4279
E-mail: michhil@regent.edu
Office Hours: TBA
Office Location: COM 224

All students are required to read and have a thorough understanding of the syllabus. Any questions or concerns need to be addressed to the instructor. Please sign and return to the instructor the statement of compliance at the end of this document.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a continuing study of Sanford Meisner’s Approach to actor training. It takes as its focal point preparing the actor to access and control release of emotion, text work, and character work. Exercise work includes: “Setting the Stage”, “Emotional Preparation”, “Coming Home to Be Alone”, “Coming Home to Do”, “Roommates”, and “The Highest Stakes.” This course continues to build upon the improvisational skills addressed in Acting 1 but shifts focus on working with text and developing a role. Acting 2 has a more demanding scene study component than Acting 1. Scene work will draw upon the dramatic works of Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov.

3 crs.

RATIONALE/PHILOSOPHY

Christ taught us, “...you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” John 8:32. For me, doing theatre is rooted in the search for truth (as opposed to pretence or illusion), albeit a heightened truth we don’t encounter every day. Indeed, much of the history of humankind has been spent in the existential search for truth. It is my belief, as a Christian artist, where truth resides there also is God. The Apostle John wrote, “…God is spirit and those who worship him worship him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24. Some refer to the “universal truths” present in a script. Paul Kuritz, author of The Fiery Serpent, refers to these enlightenments as “Kingdom Truths.” Whatever you call them, I hope we can agree that whether a playwright is Christian or not, God can make use of his or her work to reveal great truths about the human condition. As theatre artists, our responsibility is to seek out these truths and then strive to present those truths, as we understand them, as honestly and interestingly as possible. It is my contention that if we do this, God will meet us there and honor the effort. The Apostle Paul encourages us to strive to become the best craftsmen we can be, “...do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly holding the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15. The more adept you are at practicing your craft, the more effective you will be in telling the truth through your art form. Put a different way, the better adept we are the more artfully we can reveal (like peeling back the layers of an onion) the truths embedded in the play. This course is designed to equip you with additional tools (and afford you the opportunity to develop expertise at using them) so as to move you toward that goal of being an “approved workman,” that you might more effectively worship God in spirit and in truth through practicing your art.

PREREQUISITES

THE 710 The Meisner Technique 1

DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS PROGRAM OUTCOMES

• All MFA in Acting students will demonstrate mastery of objective-driven acting technique at a professionally competitive level.

• All MFA in Acting students will demonstrate objective driven acting as the cornerstone of performance in diverse literary genres.

• All MFA in Acting students will articulate and defend artistic choices in the language of acting craft, ensuring their relevance as informed collaborators in the creative process.

• All MFA in Acting students will demonstrate healthy, effective, character-driven work in the applied disciplines of voice and movement.

• All MFA in Acting students will effectively integrate and apply biblical principles of the Christian faith to their academic and creative work.

COURSE GOALS FOR THE 711 THE MEISNER TECHNIQUE 2
This course will cover:

1. The impact of Sanford Meisner’s Approach to actor training—including multiple exercises in each component:
   a. Communion (“listening” and “observing”) and adaptation (“adjusting”)
   b. Finding the core element of truth that personalizes the emotional stakes inherent in the given circumstances
   c. Defining the key phrase and key facts
   d. Developing a personal interpretation to the piece
   e. Finding the “spine” of the piece
   f. Allowing the “doings” (actions) to define the character
   g. Imagery work (creating past memories and the pictures in the mind they evoke).

2. Script and Character Analysis—in the following areas:
   a. Defining the component parts of the play (exposition, inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement);
   b. Defining the theme or “super-objective” of the play, the scene, and the character—as well as primary “scene-objectives” for each character;
   c. Defining the primary conflict of the play;
   d. Creating a character biography (past) and physicalizing those choices;
   e. Determining the “dynamics” of a scene;
   f. Each scene and monologue will be accompanied by written analysis;

3. Improvisation and Exercise Work:
   a. Practical exercise work focusing on the various components of the Stanislavski System already outlined with extended emphasis on the techniques of Sanford Meisner;
   b. Warm-ups (both vocal and physical) to foster steady improvement of the actor’s instrument (the body);
   c. Extensive exploration of techniques developed by Sanford Meisner in an effort to train the actor to work on impulse and seek stimuli in scene partners—allowing the “other” to be a source of inspiration and aid in building characterization.
   d. Exercise work will now tend to explore the integration of improvisation and text as a means of personalization.

4. Scene work drawn from drama written during the “Modern” period (Ibsen & Chekhov)

**Course Outcomes for The 711 The Meisner Technique 2**

By the completion of the course the student will:

1. Demonstrate, via scene and exercise work, comprehension and application of “subtext” and “inner-monologue” techniques;
2. Implement, via scene and exercise work, “physicalization of given-circumstances” implicit in a scene;
3. Demonstrate comprehension and implementation of the concept of the “moment before” and “antecedent action” revealed in behavioral and action choices;
4. Demonstrate, in exercise and in scene-work, “working with and off of the other”; the importance of observing, listening, and reacting (communion and adaptation);
5. Demonstrate a deeper more detailed approach to defining a “beat”; various approaches to articulating an “objective, an “obstacle,” and “tactics and strategies” (both to inductive and threat oriented camps). Each student will be able to break a scene down into “beats” in written form;
6. Demonstrate a Meisner oriented approach to reading the scene, re-writing the scene, doing the “mechanical reading,” learning the text, and integrating the text and repetition;
7. Demonstrate a Meisner oriented approach to beat definition that derives from determining “the spine phrase” of the character and it’s relationship to “doings” (actions)
8. Demonstrate use of “free associative writing” in deepening personal connection to the people, places, and things deemed meaningful to the character.

**Course Materials**

**Required Texts:**


The student will acquire a copy of the entire play from which scene material is chosen:

**Samuel French:** 212-206-8990  
**Dramatists Play Service:** 212-683-8960  
**Drama Book Shop:** 212-994-059

**Course Structure**

Classes will consist of a combination of the following:

1. Lecture  
2. In-class exercises and out of class written assignments  
3. Discussion of material covered in the texts  
4. Unsupervised rehearsal of scenes  
5. Instructor supervised rehearsal  
6. Viewing of scenes in class accompanied by analysis and discussion

**Assignments/Projects**

1. Scene work will consist of two (2) multiple person scenes. Scene partners and choice of material will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. Scenes should not exceed ten (10) minutes in length. All in-progress showings, cumulatively, will be worth a maximum of 100 pts. In-progress showing points will be awarded prior to the final showing of each scene. The final showing of the scene will then be worth an additional maximum of 100 pts. This means it is possible to earn a maximum of 200 points on each scene. All scenes presented in class will be discussed, affording the student ample opportunity for feedback. All scenes must be presented on their scheduled dates. A 50% reduction in points for that round will be applied if you do not perform as scheduled, except in dire emergency. If an emergency arises, the student must contact the instructor BEFORE the class scheduled for performance or the 50% rule will be applied. PERFORM AS SCHEDULED.

Grading criteria follows:

1. Overall dramatic impact and storytelling quality  
2. Effective physicalization of character and environment  
3. Clearly defined “beats,” “moments”  
4. Imaginative choice of intentions/objectives/dynamics  
5. Appropriate release of emotion

Grading Criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Overall dramatic impact and storytelling quality</td>
<td>20pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Effective physicalization of character and environment</td>
<td>10pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Imaginative choice of intentions/objectives/dynamics</td>
<td>10pts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Appropriate release of emotion</td>
<td>10pts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Imaginative use of the “given circumstances” (physical environment, time, temperature, relationships, etc.) 10pts.
7. Clear use of adaptation and communion with the “other” 20pts.
8. Effective use of the voice (articulation, pitch variation, etc.) 10pts.

Total 100pts.

2. Each student must attend all three (3) productions produced by the Department of Theatre Arts and choose two (2) of those productions to do a written analysis on. These analyses are to be approximately three (3) pages in length and should focus on the acting exhibited in that production—PARTICULARLY HOW IT RELATES TO THE MEISNER TECHNIQUES COVERED IN CLASS TO DATE. Each analysis is worth a maximum of 25 points each for a total of 50 pts.

3. Each student will turn in a written analysis of scene two (2). The analysis is due when the scene performs for the final time at the end of the term. The instructor will supply a format for the analysis. THIS ANALYSIS MUST BE TURNED IN AS SCHEDULED. LATE ANALYSIS SHEETS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Carefully thought out and well articulated analysis will net maximum points. This analysis is worth one hundred (100) points.

4. The student will keep a journal for the semester recording such things as personal thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of rehearsal sessions, class sessions, peer and instructor feedback, thoughts on productions attended. This journal will be turned in a total of four (4) times during the course of the semester AND SHOULD BE EMAILED TO THE INSTRUCTOR. The student should utilize the journal as an opportunity to articulate personal thoughts and feelings for themselves, examine personal growth issues, and as an additional opportunity to communicate candidly with the instructor. Twenty-five (25) pts are possible each of the four times the journal is turned in, affording a total of 100 pts. Periodic self-evaluation is an important part of your development as an actor.

5. Small Group Presentations, not to exceed 15 minutes, will be made on selected aspects of mise en scene and the life and times of the playwrights from whose works scenes have been selected. Each group member can earn up to fifty (50) pts for their contribution to the effort. Research leads the actor to a stronger sense of ownership of the role. Outlines, handouts, and bibliographies are encouraged.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

An ensemble environment is necessary if all students are to feel comfortable enough to explore and experiment with abandon. I must insist that ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. Each student begins the semester with 100 points in the Participation “Bank”—to be awarded at the instructor’s discretion at the completion of the course. Each student is afforded one absence. Beginning with the second absence the student risks a 25 point reduction in participation points for each subsequent absence. Absences can be devastating to the flow of the class and can literally destroy a scene in progress. Emergencies occur; life happens; pick up the phone and call the instructor BEFORE you miss class. FOUR ABSENCES MAY BE GROUNDS FOR FAILURE OF THE COURSE.

IN-CLASS EXERCISE WORK

This is a lab class and all of your work is valuable—not only to yourself but to the class as a whole. You will learn from observing and from being observed. A very large portion of this class will be devoted to the “reality of doing,” and the communion/adaptation techniques developed by Sanford Meisner at the Neighborhood Playhouse in NYC. Observers will learn nearly as much as the participants in any given exercise. At times progress may seem slow and the exercises simplistic. But, to quote Meisner himself, “It’s really very simple… it just takes a lot of years to learn.”

You will literally be engaged in transforming yourself as a human being and as an actor. It’s about seeing more, hearing more, assigning meaning to what you observe, and responding to it while the moment
is still alive and breathing. Don’t expect leaps…work for the slow steady progress. Plan to attend, observe, and participate with equal energy and commitment. The student may be awarded up to 200 pts based on committed participation in exercises throughout the semester. This course is heavily weighted toward acquiring technique through exercise work as it is viewed as a fundamental to further development.

**EXTRA CREDIT**

An additional performance review can net you an additional 25 pts. An additional report on an acting text can get you an additional 25 pts. If you act during the semester and are not getting practicum credit for it extra credit may be possible. 25 extra credit points is the max you can earn.

**GRADING**

You will be graded according to your effort, progress, and product. Most of what you will do in class has a point value attached to it:

1. Exercise Work 200 pts.
2. Scene Work (2 scenes)
   a. In-progress showing(s) [100 pts. per scene x 2] 200 pts.
   b. Final showing(s) [100 pts. per scene x 2] 200 pts.
3. 2 Play Reviews @ 25 pts each 50 pts.
4. Scene Analysis 100 pts.
5. Journal (4 submissions @ 25 pts. each) 100 pts.
6. Small Group Presentations (2 @ 25 pts. each) 50 pts.
7. Attendance/Participation Grade 100 pts.

Total 1000 pts.

Grades are assigned according to following scale:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>960-1000</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>930-959</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>900-929</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>850-899</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>810-849</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>780-809</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>750-779</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>700-749</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>670-699</td>
<td>1.33</td>
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<td>630-669</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>600-629</td>
<td>.67</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>Failing</td>
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**UNIVERSITY HONOR CODE**

It is expected that the student will, at all times, adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty in all aspects of scholarship and training. Use of another author’s material must always be properly documented and clearly cited. It is expected all work turned in during the semester will be a result of that semester’s scholarship. Retooled papers from previous courses, even at other universities, are not acceptable. Violating this policy may result in failing the course.

*Students are on their honor to complete assignments with honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty involves intentionally or unintentionally stealing the intellectual property of others. Students are expected*
to be familiar with the university’s policy on academic integrity found in both the University Student Handbook and School of Undergraduate Studies Catalog (http://www.regent.edu/general/catalog/) and to follow it. As an academic and Christian community, Regent University takes seriously the call for integrity and penalizes breaches of academic integrity.

Students should be aware that submitted papers may be checked using Safeassign (Blackboard’s plagiarism detection feature). This feature will determine the percentage of the submitted paper that matches other sources and will generate a report. Scores below 15% include quotes and few common phrases or blocks of text that match other documents, these papers indicate no evidence of the possibility of plagiarism. Scores between 15% and 40% include extensive quoted or paraphrased material or may include plagiarism and will require further review. Scores over 40% indicate a high probability the text in the paper was copied from other sources and should be reviewed for plagiarism. The professor or instructor will contact the student if plagiarism is a concern.

**STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION**

Before the semester concludes, the student will have the opportunity to evaluate and comment on course content and effectiveness of instruction. However, if the student has a particular grievance or is struggling with any particular unit of the course, the student is encouraged to seek out the instructor sooner rather than later (not just during office hours) that a remedy might be immediately sought to rectify the situation. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are instructed in Matthew 18:15, to go to each other, at first one-on-one, and express our concerns. We are then admonished to listen—not just talk; and then to address and fix the situation. Let us at least begin by following this sage advice.

**INCOMPLETES, IPs AND/OR EXTENSIONS**

A grade of “I” or “Incomplete” will be submitted by the instructor only under the direst of circumstances—such as a death in the family or severe illness—and only if properly documented. Regent University’s policy regarding the awarding of an “incomplete” is that the student has exactly one academic semester in which to receive a grade reflecting the completion of the course. Should the student fail to complete the requirements for completion of the course, the “I” on record will automatically convert to a “WF”. My personal policy is that the student will enter into a contract with specific and detailed deadlines for completion. Extensions for work missed due to illness or emergency must be negotiated and are granted at the instructor’s discretion.

**UNIVERSITY WITHDRAWAL**
Students who have not attended or logged into a class, will, at the end of the second week of the session/semester—in accordance with university practice—be assumed to have unofficially dropped and will be administratively dropped from that class.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

Please review the following links for important information on University policies:

- Academic Calendar/Registrar Information
- Bookstore
- Honor/Plagiarism Policy
- Regent Library
- Student Services (includes links to student handbook, disability services, University calendar, University Writing Center, etc.)
- Technical Support – University Helpdesk
- Disability Statement – the student is responsible for contacting the assistant director of Student Services at 757.352.4486 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangement with each instructor. The following website is designed to help our disabled students learn of their rights and responsibilities with regard to disability services. The site also has resources for faculty to become better informed of their responsibilities toward the disabled students in their classes. [www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm)

**DISABILITY STATEMENT**

_The student is responsible for contacting Director of Student Life at 757.352.4867 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangements with each instructor. The following website is designed to help our disabled students learn of their rights and responsibilities with regards to disability services. The site also has resources for faculty to become better informed of their responsibilities towards the disabled students in their classes._ [http://www.regent.edu/disabilities](http://www.regent.edu/disabilities)

**FINAL COMMENTS**

Every role, every production, every class is always a journey. I eagerly look forward to seeing what I can learn from you as we travel together. May God bless all of our endeavors, and now…let’s go to work.

Dr. Michael Hill-Kirkland