

**PSYC223701 Psychology of the Actor
Summer 2015 Number of Credits: 3**

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Office Hours: by appointment

Telephone: n/a

Schedule (class times and day(s)): Tue & Thur 6:00-9:15pm

Room: Campion Hall 200

Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

We are all consumers of acting: just consider the frequency with which humans watch dramas on TV, film, and stage. What is it that allows actors to enact a character in an imaginary world? This course explores the psychology of actors. Topics include early childhood signs of acting talent, personality traits of actors, cognitive processes used in acting, mental illnesses prevalent in actors, and how acting techniques could be used by non-actors in everyday life (e.g. for hypnosis, therapy, emotion regulation and expression, and increasing empathy). Where relevant, we will compare actors to other kinds of creative individuals.

Course Objectives

By the end of this class, students will have learned:

- basic psychological research methods
- introductory acting exercises
- what is physically and psychologically required of actors
- the characteristics of people who become actors
- how acting exercises can be beneficial to non-actors

Grading

Semester grades will be calculated as follows:

	B+ 86.67-89.99	C+ 76.67-79.99	D+ 66.67-69.99	F < 60.00
A 94.00-100	B 83.34-86.66	C 73.34-76.66	D 63.34-66.66	
A- 90.00-93.99	B- 80.00-83.33	C- 70.00-73.33	D- 60.00-63.33	

WCAS Grading System

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O'Neill Library will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver's license or passport) to obtain your password.

Text(s)/Readings (Required) *Subject to change, not exhaustive*

*No textbook or other purchase required. All readings will be available on the Canvas site.

- Andreasen, N. C. (1996). Creativity and mental illness: A conceptual and historical overview. In J. J. Schildkraut & A. Otero, *Depression and the spirituality in modern art: homage to Miró* (pp. 1-14). England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Burgoyne, Poulin, & Reardon (1999). The impact of acting on student actors: Boundary blurring, growth, and emotional distress. *Theatre Topics*, 9:2, 157-179.
- Butler, L. D. (2006). Normative dissociation. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 29, 45–62.
- Goldstein, T. R. & Winner, E. (2009). Living in alternative and inner worlds: Early signs of acting talent. *Creativity Research Journal*, 21:1, 117-124.
- Goldstein, T. R. & Winner, E. (2012). Enhancing empathy and theory of mind. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 13 (1), 19-37.
- Goldstein, T.R, Tamir, M., & Winner, E. (2012). Expressive suppression and acting classes. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 7 (2), 191-196.
- Kogan, N. (2002). Careers in the performing arts: A psychological perspective. *Creativity Research Journal*, 14 (1), 1-16.
- Nemiro, J. (1997). Interpretive artists: A qualitative exploration of the creative process of actors. *Creativity Research Journal*, 10 (2 & 3), 229-239.
- Nettle, D. (2006). Psychological profiles of professional actors. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 40, 375-383.
- Noice, H. & Noice, T. (2006). What studies of actors and acting can tell us about memory and cognitive functioning. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15 (1), 14-18.
- Noice, T. & Noice, H. (2013). Practice and talent in acting. (chapter in Kaufman)
- Panero, M. E., Goldstein, T. R., Rosenberg, R., Hughes, H., & Winner, E. (under review). Do actors possess traits associated with high hypnotizability?
- Panero, M.E. (thesis). *Becoming a Character: Unpacking the Link between Dissociation and Acting*
- Thomson, P. & Jaque, S. V. (2012b). Holding a mirror up to nature: Psychological vulnerability in actors. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, (6) 4, 361-369.
- Thomson, P. Keehn, E. B., & Gumpel, T. P. (2009). Generators and interpreters in a performing arts population: Dissociation, trauma, fantasy proneness, and affective states. *Creativity Research Journal*, 21:1, 72-91.
- Winner, E. (1997). *Gifted Children: Myths and Realities*. New York: Basic Books. – Ch. 4 and Ch. 10

Important Policies

<http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html>

Written Work

Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced with 1 inch margins. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA format. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [<http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html>].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity

It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student's work.

Request for Accommodations

If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations. For further information, you can locate the disability resources on the web at <http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html>.

Attendance

Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student's obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information

about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

Deadlines

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

Course Assignments *Subject to change*

- *Class participation and attendance (25% of grade):*

Points will be deducted for unexcused absences or tardiness. Excused absences or tardiness only include those communicated to the instructor 24 hours in advanced.

Students are expected to participate in class discussions regarding reading assignments.

In order to better understand the process that actors undergo in rehearsals and its potential risks and benefits, some acting techniques will be taught and demonstrated in class. Students will be expected to participate in these exercises.

- *Short answer pop quizzes (10% of grade):*

Several times throughout the semester, unannounced quizzes will be assigned during class. They will include a question or a topic sentence. Students are expected to write a short answer (1-5 sentences) using the material learned in class. There will be no make-up quizzes in case of unexcused absences or tardiness.

- *QALMRI summaries (15% of grade)*

Outline summary of selected readings using QALMRI.

- *Group proposal presentations (25% of grade)*

With a small group, write a proposal and present it in class. Propose an original psychological experiment that studies an aspect of the psychology of the actor. The proposal must include the following sections: background of literature, questions that the study will attempt to answer, description of participants (how many, age range, and where recruited, compensation, and why), materials and procedures, hypothesis, significance and implications, references, and appropriate appendices. – Must be APA style (12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1 inch margins) and 3-5 pages (not including references). Points will be reduced if the paper is below or above the page requirement.

- *Individual paper presentations (25% of grade)*

Pick a way that acting exercises can be utilized by non-actors (it can be one not mentioned in class). Explain how you would implement that exercise and how you would evaluate its effectiveness. For example, suppose you are a therapist and you decide to teach your anxious patient how to relax using the affective memory exercise. Describe the affective memory exercise and when and how your patient would do it. Describe how you would measure whether the exercise is actually helping your patient to relax and how much. – Must be APA style (12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, 1 inch margins) and 3-5 pages (not including references). Points will be reduced if the paper is below or above the page requirement.

	Topic	Assignment due
May 12	Introduction Basics of scientific research History of acting	
May 14	How to read an article Early signs of talent: acting vs music and visual art	-Goldstein & Winner (2009) -Winner Ch. 4
May 19	Is acting talent innate or learned?	-Nettle (2006) -Smithsonian.com article and NewYorker.com article
May 21	Do actors excel in empathy and understanding of others?	-Goldstein & Winner (2012) -Goldstein, Tamir, & Winner (2012)
May 26	Do actors excel in verbal memory?	-Noice & Noice (2006) -Noice & Noice (2013)
May 28	How actors create emotions	-Nemiro (1997) -Uta Hagen (1991)
June 2	Mental illness and actors	-Andreasen (1996) -Thomson & Jaque (2012b1) -Thomson, Keehn, & Gumpel (2009)
June 4	Why do actors score higher than average on dissociative disorders?	-Butler (2006) -Panero (thesis)
June 9	Are actors particularly susceptible to hypnosis?	-Panero et al (under review)
June 11	Group proposal presentations Propose an original psychological experiment that studies an aspect of the psychology of the actor.	Group proposal presentations
June 16	Can we predict which child stars will become adult actors?	-Winner Ch. 10 -Kogan (2002)
June 18	Individual paper presentations Pick a way that acting exercises can be utilized by non-actors (it can be one not mentioned in class). Explain how you would implement that exercise and how you would evaluate its effectiveness.	Individual paper presentations