

Beginning Improvisation

Course Code: TPP 3124

Semester: Spring 2026

Meeting Time & Location: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00–4:55 PM, CON G012

Instructor: Emmanuel Benitez, MFA Acting (UF 2028)

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Teaching Assistant: Mack DeBernardo, MFA Acting (UF 2028)

TA Email: mackdebernardo@gmail.com

Course Description

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of theatrical improvisation. Through embodied practice, ensemble-based play, and reflective discussion, students will develop skills in spontaneity, active listening, collaboration, and confident self-expression. Emphasis is placed on process rather than product, encouraging students to take creative risks in a supportive environment. No prior performance experience is required.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate foundational improv principles including agreement, listening, and ensemble awareness.
 2. Respond truthfully and spontaneously to given circumstances.
 3. Use voice, body, and imagination effectively in improvised performance.
 4. Collaborate generously with partners and groups.
 5. Reflect on personal growth, risk-taking, and creative process.
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Required Textbooks and Materials

There are **no required or recommended textbooks** for this course.

Materials and Supplies Fees

There is an **additional course fee of \$108.20** associated with this class.

Course Structure

This is a **practice-based course**. Classes will consist of: - Physical and vocal warm-ups - Ensemble and trust-building exercises - Skill-focused improv games and scenes - Group reflection and discussion

Attendance and active participation are essential.

Attendance & Participation Policy

Improv is an ensemble art form; therefore, **attendance is mandatory**.

Tardiness & Absence

Because this is an ensemble-based course, attendance is essential.

Students may have **no more than one (1) unexcused absence without penalty**. Beginning with the **second unexcused absence, 5% will be deducted from the final course grade for each unexcused absence**.

Any student who accrues **more than four (4) unexcused absences** will receive an **automatic failure for the course**, regardless of performance or participation.

If you are tardy, points may be deducted from your participation grade.

Excused Absences

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 appropriate documentation **at least one week in advance** of an excused absence may result in the absence being counted as unexcused.

If you feel sick, please stay home and go to the doctor for an excused absence.

Religious observances do not require documentation; however, students must inform the instructor **by the end of the second week of classes** of any religious observances that will conflict with class attendance.

Requirements for class attendance and , assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with University of Florida policies outlined in the undergraduate catalog.

Students are expected to be fully present, engaged, and respectful at all times.

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.

Assignments & Evaluation

There are no exams or quizzes in this course. This class is graded using a traditional letter-grade system (A–E).

Grading Breakdown

- Participation & Engagement: **85%**
 - Final Improv Showing: **15%**
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Participation & Engagement (85%)

Participation & Engagement will be assessed **every three weeks** throughout the semester, resulting in **five (5) participation grades total**. These grades will be **averaged** to determine the final Participation & Engagement score.

Each assessment period evaluates: - Willingness to take creative risks - Active listening and responsiveness - Support of scene partners and the ensemble - Consistent effort, focus, and presence

This structure is designed to provide ongoing feedback, encourage steady growth, and allow students multiple opportunities to improve over the course of the semester.

Note: This course does not grade talent, but commitment to process.

Final Improv Showing (15%)

A structured ensemble presentation demonstrating: - Character commitment - Clear relationships and stakes - Collaborative storytelling

Assessment is based on risk-taking, clarity, and ensemble support.

Weekly Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week 1: Introduction to Improv & Ensemble Agreements

Week 2: Listening, Awareness, and Yes-And

Week 3: Status, Space, and Physicality

Week 4: Character Basics and Point of View

Week 5: Emotional Honesty and Relationships

Week 6: Integration and Ensemble Development

Week 7: Environment and Object Work

Week 8: Narrative and Group Mind

Week 9: Pattern Recognition and Game

Week 10: Playing the Moment

Week 11: Ensemble Forms

Week 12: Rehearsal and Integration

Week 13: Final Improv Showing

Week 14: Course Wrap-Up and Reflection

Classroom Environment & Respect

This classroom is a space for experimentation and vulnerability. Students are expected to:

- Respect all identities and experiences - Support peers without judgment - Maintain confidentiality of in-class work

Disruptive or unsafe behavior will not be tolerated.

Class Conduct

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional, respectful, and collaborative manner at all times. Because improvisation relies on trust, presence, and ensemble awareness, the following expectations apply:

- Arrive on time and prepared to participate
- Refrain from using phones or electronic devices during class unless explicitly permitted
- Listen actively and avoid side conversations
- Treat classmates, guests, and the instructor with respect
- Engage fully and honestly in all exercises and activities

Behavior that disrupts the learning environment, compromises safety, or undermines ensemble trust may result in disciplinary action in accordance with University of Florida policies.

Accessibility & Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations should contact the university's disability services office and inform the instructor as early as possible. The course is adaptable and inclusive by design.

Canvas

Grades, additional readings, and paper/project guidelines will be posted on the course 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/>.

Academic Integrity / 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, 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 specifies behaviors that violate this code and the possible sanctions. Students are also obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have questions or concerns, please consult 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. This process should be completed as early as possible in the semester.

University Counseling Services

University Counseling Services
3190 Radio Rd.
P.O. Box 112662
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611-2662

Grading Scale

This course follows the **University of Florida standard 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-: 60–62
E: 59 and below

Course Evaluations (GatorEvals)

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction by participating in GatorEvals. This system is designed to enhance teaching effectiveness and is seamlessly linked to UF's Canvas platform. Students can complete evaluations through the email sent by GatorEvals or via the Canvas course menu under GatorEvals.

University Academic Policies and Student Resources

To support consistent and accessible communication of university-wide student resources, this course follows all University of Florida academic policies.

Students are responsible for reviewing the policies and resources available at:
<https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>