

**Syllabus**  
**Improvisation Workshop**  
Porter 141W, Summer 2019

Instructor: Bob Giges

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Office: inside the Porter College Main Office. Office hours by appointment.

This course will develop participants' acting improvisational knowledge and skill through practical and theoretical readings, by viewing live performances, and by improvising in class and in small group rehearsal ensembles outside of class.

The course's key learning objectives are:

- a) To develop facility with improvisational techniques, including those related to physicality, characters, environment, storytelling, and the actor's preparation. Our ultimate goal is to strengthen each student's ability to perform with spontaneity, with abandon, and with fearlessness while taking (emotional) risks.
- b) To demonstrate an understanding of techniques and theory of improvisation in discussion, in writing, and primarily in practice.
- c) To develop skills in listening, observation, and ensemble-building in order to improvise.
- d) To organize, rehearse for, and perform in the final improvised performance.

Much of our class time will center on improvisation training/coaching; your focused and sustained engagement with in-class proceedings will be essential. In addition to participating in exercises and discussions I lead, you will prepare acting improvisation assignments for each class in your ensemble which will require two hours per week of rehearsal. You will attend two live improvisation performances and watch two videos outside of class, write a very brief synopsis for each one, and (with other students in a group) demonstrate techniques you saw performed in one of the shows. At the end of the Session, you will write a short paper exploring an improv topic of your choosing, integrating the assigned readings of the course (1000 words). You will also participate in the final class performance which will be open to people you invite.

A note about attendance: You are expected to come to class on time and prepared. While I would like you to come to every class meetings, I understand that illness, emergencies, etc. may preclude perfect attendance. You should know, however, that **you must attend eight of our ten class meetings in full** to earn any credit for the class because so much of the substance of the course occurs in class. Naturally, any absence will affect your grade for the course; on the other hand, perfect on-time attendance in class and rehearsal ensembles gives you an A+ for the attendance component of your grade.

Grades are computed as follows:

40% participation and engagement in class/group assignments/final performance

25% attendance

25% journal entries on rehearsals and readings

10% readings journal (final) paper

This may be a very different grading rubric than you are used to if you usually take classes that privilege exams or papers over attendance/participation. While most students enjoy and benefit from this change, others prefer to exercise their option to take the class pass/no pass.

Texts/Readings:

*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* T.J. Jagadowski and David Pasquesi (available at the Bay Tree Bookstore)

TJ and Dave shows on video ([Vimeo on Demand](#) 2017, two episodes of your choosing)

*Acting on Impulse* by Carol Hazenfield (I have copies to lend to you)

Articles on Canvas

See our course site at [canvas.ucsc.edu](https://canvas.ucsc.edu) for readings and assignments.

Accommodations Requests:

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At that time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can insure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu).

Guests/Visitors:

Because of the nature of the work we do with each other that relies on mutual trust developed over time, guests/visitors are not permitted in this class.

Summer Session Deadlines

Session 2:

Drop: Monday, August 5

Request for "W" (withdrawal): Friday, August 16

Neither Summer Session nor instructors drop students for non-attendance or non-payment. Students must drop themselves. Dropping results in full tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund).

For all dates and deadlines, including 'change of grade option' (P/NP) and grades due, see the summer academic calendar:

<https://summer.ucsc.edu/studentlife/index.html>

For questions about dropping, requesting a W grade for a course, or withdrawing from the summer quarter, email [summer@ucsc.edu](mailto:summer@ucsc.edu) .

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of a university education. Academic dishonesty diminishes the university as an institution and all members of the university community. It tarnishes the value of a UCSC degree.

All members of the UCSC community have an explicit responsibility to foster an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. All members of the university community are expected to present as their original work only that which is truly their own. All members of the community are expected to report observed instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty in order to ensure that the integrity of scholarship is valued and preserved at UCSC. In the event a student is found in violation of the UCSC Academic Integrity policy, he or she may face both academic sanctions imposed by the instructor of record and disciplinary sanctions imposed either by the provost of his or her college or the Academic Tribunal convened to hear the case. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript. For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the [Academic Integrity page](#) at the [Division of Undergraduate Education](#).

## Title IX:

The university cherishes the free and open exchange of ideas and enlargement of knowledge. To maintain this freedom and openness requires objectivity, mutual trust, and confidence; it requires the absence of coercion, intimidation, or exploitation. The principal responsibility for maintaining these conditions must rest upon those members of the university community who exercise most authority and leadership: faculty, managers, and supervisors. The university has therefore instituted a number of measures designed to protect its community from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, and other related prohibited conduct. [Information about the Title IX Office](#), the [online reporting link](#), applicable campus [resources](#), reporting responsibilities, the [UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment](#) and the UC Santa Cruz Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment can be found at [titleix.ucsc.edu](http://titleix.ucsc.edu). The Title IX/Sexual Harassment Office is located at 105 Kerr Hall. In addition to the [online reporting option](#), you can contact the Title IX Office by calling 831-459-2462.

## **Improvisation Workshop Schedule (A Work in Progress) Porter 141W, Summer 2019 Bob Giges**

Monday July 29

Introduction/Getting Organized

Establishing a foundation for collaborative work

Character development, status, cultivating real responses, building relationship

Wednesday July 31

**Readings Due:**

Review or Read *Acting on Impulse* Chapters 2, 4, 6, 7  
Rehearsal Ensembles—set weekly rehearsal schedule  
Platforms and tilts (working with plot)  
“Two Chairs”

**Monday August 5 by Noon**

**Rehearsal and Readings Journal Worksheet due** (upload to Canvas).

*Due every Monday through August 26.*

**Watch TJ and Dave Episode** (see Shows and Videos assignment) and **upload assignment** to Canvas.

Monday August 5

**Readings Due:**

Review or Read *Acting on Impulse* Chapter 5  
Study *Acting on Impulse* Chapter 11  
*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Foreward and “A Key and a Caveat” pp. ix-x  
and xv-xvi, Chapters 5-6  
*Week 2 Readings on Canvas*

**Rehearsal Ensemble assignment due**

Moving Beyond “The Rules” (When to Say No to “Yes And”)  
Relying on objectives  
CROW (Character Relationship Objective Where)

Wednesday August 7

**Readings Due:**

*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Chapters 7-10 and 12  
Study *Acting on Impulse* Chapter 9  
Protagonist-driven storylines  
Working with multiple scenes  
Levels (Environment)

**BY THIS WEEKEND: see Improv Show #1**

Monday August 12

**Readings Due:**

*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Chapters 13-14  
Review or Read *Acting on Impulse* Chapters 13 and 15  
*Week 3 Readings on Canvas*

**Improv Show #1 Assignment Due (Parts A in class; upload Part B to Canvas)**

**Rehearsal Ensemble assignment due**

Narration and monologues  
Longform improvisation I: Tap-In, La Ronde, Opening Monologues  
Split Scenes

Wednesday August 14

**Readings Due:**

*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Chapter 15 and 20  
Longform improvisation II: Freeform  
Defining “The Game”

Monday, August 19

**Readings Due:**

Read *Acting on Impulse* Chapter 14

*Week 4 Readings on Canvas*

**Rehearsal Ensemble assignment due**

**Watch TJ and Dave Episode** (see Shows and Videos assignment) and **upload assignment** to Canvas.

Style and Genre, Point of View Shifts (*Rashomon*)

Playing with Time (Jumps, Regression)

Wednesday August 21

**Readings Due:**

*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Chapters 11 and 19

Study *Acting on Impulse* Chapter 16

Emotional Truth and Relationship

Between the Words: Subtext and Emotional Power

(Moving Vehicles)

**BY THIS WEEKEND: see Improv Show #2**

Monday August 26

**Readings Due:**

*Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Chapter 21

*Acting on Impulse*: Read the 2 chapters that haven't been assigned that are most relevant to your work (you choose)

*Week 5 Readings on Canvas*

**Improv Show #2 Assignment Due (Part B only—upload to Canvas)**

**Rehearsal Ensemble assignment due**

**Readings Journal Paper Due**

Raising the Stakes in relationships

(Topics selected by class members)

Wednesday August 28

**Self-Evaluation Due**

Your Rehearsal Ensemble Performance (in class)