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■ THE EMPATHETIC CLASSROOM ■

Instructor

STEVEN STACK

Materials

Video modules, Handouts, Transcripts, MP3 Files, PDF of Powerpoint Slides, Completion Certificate

Course length

8 modules
2 hours, 6 minutes of video
4 credit hours

Course Description

Why should you take a class on empathy? And why is theatre the perfect vehicle for empathy?

Empathy, the more sought-after and inclusive cousin of sympathy, is the experiencing of someone else's experience in the world. What it would be like if you were wearing their clothes, their life?

Teaching students to understand the clothes that they're putting on, the characters and their lives teaches students not how to act but how to be. It allows the students to feel what someone else feels and experiences, which can and should translate to their fellow actors and peers away from the stage. It will lead to a stronger class connection, stronger performances and stronger students who will seek out understanding instead of isolation and fear.

About the Instructor

Steven Stack has been teaching students ranging from age 7 to adults for almost 20 years, both within and outside the public education system, and covering topics including math, science, social studies, and health - but his true love is teaching theatre. He's been involved with theatre for more than 20 years as an instructor, director, playwright, and actor.

Steven has taught for twelve consecutive summers at the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY), working with gifted and talented students in an academically challenging environment where they learn the principles of acting, directing, and playwriting. Working with WCATY and the University of Wisconsin, he also teaches online writing courses to students all over the state of Wisconsin.

He is also a published playwright, having written and directed several full-length plays, countless one-acts and many scenes for various theatres, performing arts schools and professional organizations. His plays have been performed all over the United States, as well as internationally.

Steven is currently the lead acting instructor at Forte Studios in Mount Horeb, Wisconsin, where he has the pleasure of working with amazingly talented actors of all ages.

He thoroughly enjoys teaching, directing, and writing for middle-school students, and that's been a major focus of his career. His goal in working with that age group is to help students grow into themselves by giving them stories that resonate beyond the stage. Steven believes that the key to helping students become better actors is working with them to understand who they are and helping them bring that experience to the world of the play. He stresses each individual's contribution to the play, while emphasizing that it's about everyone, not just any single person. His students are expected to come through for their fellow actors.

Course Curriculum

Lesson 1: Introduction *13:29*

An introduction to the course, including the instructor's inspiration for building an empathetic classroom.

Lesson 2A: The First Link *13:55*

This lesson covers the first link of the empathetic classroom - yourself, ourselves, the you.

Lesson 2B: The First Link *19:44*

This lesson covers activities that can help in forming the first link - students connecting with themselves.

Lesson 3A: The Second Link *15:58*

This lesson focuses on the second link in the empathy chain, a link with others.

Lesson 3B: The Second Link *14:15*

This lesson continues to introduce activities focused on building links with others.

Lesson 4: The Third Link *20:20*

This lesson focuses on the third link in the empathy chain in which students connect with their characters.

Lesson 5A: The Fifth Link and Troubleshooting *16:36*

This lesson discusses the fifth link - between ourselves and the outside world, and how students can make all links stronger.

Lesson 5B: The Fifth Link and Troubleshooting *12:42*

This final lesson wraps up the course and completes the discussion on troubleshooting issues you may encounter.

Standards Connections

National Core Arts Standards

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - Grade 6

TH:Cr1.1.6.c - Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - Grade 7

TH:Cr1.1.7.c - Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character's inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation - Grade 7

TH:Pr4.1.7.b - Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - Grade 8

TH:Cr1.1.8.c - Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation - Grade 8

TH:Pr4.1.8.b - Use various character objectives and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome an obstacle.

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - High School Proficient

TH:Cr1.1.HS1.c - Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work - High School Accomplished

TH:Cr1.1.HSII.c - Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work - Grade 6

TH:Re8.1.6.a - Explain how artists make choices based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.

Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work - Grade 7

TH:Re8.1.7.a - Identify the artistic choices made based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade HS Accomplished

TH:Cr2.1.HSII.b - Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

California VAPA Standards (2019)

6.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

6.TH:Cr1.b - Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

7.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

7.TH:Cr1.b - Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character's inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

7.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

7.TH:Pr4.b - Use various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

8.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

8.TH:Cr1.b - Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

8.TH:Pr4 Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

8.TH:Pr4.b - Use various character objectives and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome an obstacle.

Prof.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

Prof.TH:Cr1.b - Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

Acc.TH:Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Acc.TH:Cr1.b - Use personal experiences and knowledge to develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work.

6.TH:Re8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

6.TH:Re8.a - Explain how artists make choices based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.

7.TH:Re8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

7.TH:Re8.a - Identify the artistic choices made based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.

Acc.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Acc.TH:Cr2.b - Cooperate as a creative team to make interpretive choices for a drama/theatre work.

Colorado Academic Standards - Drama and Theatre Arts

Sixth Grade

DT.6.1.1.c - Students Can: Explore a scripted or improvised character by imagining the given circumstances in a drama/theatre work.

DT.6.3.2.a - Students Can: Explain how artists make choices based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.

Seventh Grade

DT.7.1.1.c - Students Can: Envision and describe a scripted or improvised character's inner thoughts and objectives in a drama/theatre work.

DT.7.2.1.b - Students Can: Apply various character objectives in a drama/theatre work.

DT.7.3.2.a - Students Can: Identify the artistic choices made based on personal experience in a drama/theatre work.

Eighth Grade

DT.8.1.1.c - Students Can: Develop a scripted or improvised character by articulating the character's inner thoughts, objectives, and motivations in a drama/theatre work.

DT.8.2.1.b - Students Can: Apply and justify various character objectives and tactics in a drama/theatre work to overcome an obstacle.

High School - Fundamental Pathway

DT.H1.1.1.c - Students Can: Generate ideas about a character that are believable and authentic using script analysis.

High School - Advanced Pathway

DT.H2.1.1.c - Students Can: Develop a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theatre work based on personal experiences and knowledge.

DT.H2.1.3.a - Students Can: Choose and interpret a drama/theatre work to connect and question beliefs.

High School - Professional Pathway

DT.H3.1.2.b - Students Can: Collaborate as a creative team to discover artistic solutions and make interpretive choices in a devised or scripted drama/theatre work.

Common Core

Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1 - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Florida Sunshine State Standards

Critical Thinking & Reflection

TH.912.C.1.2 - Create, refine, and sustain complex and believable characters for performance through the integration and application of artistic choices based on research, rehearsal, feedback, and refinement.

TH.912.C.1.5 - Make and defend conscious choices in the creation of a character that will fulfill anticipated audience response.

Skills, Techniques & Processes

TH.912.S.2.3 - Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis for one or more of its major characters and show how the analysis clarifies the character's physical and emotional dimensions.

TH.912.S.2.8 - Strengthen acting skills by engaging in theatre games and improvisations.

TH.912.S.3.3 - Develop acting skills and techniques in the rehearsal process.

Georgia Performance Standards - Theatre Arts

Grade 6 - Creating

TA6.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process., b. Interpret a character's motivation by understanding the relationship between their background and their behavior., c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters., d. Identify, define, and classify character traits., e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance., f. Use resources to identify and create technical elements of theatre.

Grade 7 - Creating

TA7.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a.

Identify and rehearse effective communication skills., b. Compare and contrast character types and relationships by analyzing character motivations, objectives, and goals., c. Compare the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a character., d. Investigate the role and responsibility of the cast and crew., e. Identify and model ensemble skills in the rehearsal process., f. Utilize staging and blocking choices to enhance the performance., g. Compare, contrast, and design elements of technical theatre., h. Utilize theatre vocabulary throughout the rehearsal process.

Grade 7 - Performing

TA7.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Execute effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills in performance (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement), b. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or theatre performance., c. Engage in various performance styles.

Grade 7 - Connecting

TA7.CN.1 - Explore how theatre connects to life experience, careers, and other content., a. Compare and contrast theatre with other art forms., b. Articulate relationships between theatre and life., c. Utilize a multi-disciplinary approach to create original theatre., d. Describe the careers and professional responsibilities associated with theatre production (e.g. director, stage manager, designer, technician, playwright, actor).

Grade 8 - Creating

TA8.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Differentiate the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a variety of characters., b. Compare the relationships and interactions between characters by analyzing character motivation (objectives, obstacles, strategy, action, stakes, outcome), c. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., d. Connect theatre vocabulary to the application of theatre performance., e. Identify and demonstrate both ensemble and leadership skills in the rehearsal process., f. Evaluate the effectiveness of artistic and technical elements used in a theatre production., g. Design and create scenery, props, costumes, lighting, and sound., h. Assume different roles and responsibilities in the rehearsal process.

Grade 8 - Performing

TA8.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Demonstrate the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a character in different types of theatre performances (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, motivation, physical movement), b. Demonstrate appropriate ensemble skills throughout a performance., c. Use appropriate listening and response skills during performances.

Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Creating

TAHSFT.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Recognize and/or employ realistic and conventional speech patterns within dialogue or dramatic verse., b. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., c. Recognize and interpret artistic choices in performance.

North Carolina Essential Standards 2024

Beginning High School Create

B.CR.1.1 - Devise a variety of scenarios and scenes through improvised and scripted activities.

Accomplished High School Create

AC.CR.1.1 - Improvise a variety of extended scenes or performance pieces reflecting specific situations, styles, or genres.

Advanced High School Connect

AD.CN.1.1 - Analyze the impact of theatre throughout the world from the 1900s to the present on trends, styles, and artists, and their future implications.

Advanced High School Respond

AD.RE.1.2 - Evaluate the impact of theatrical works on intended audiences.

North Carolina Essential Standards 2010

Beginning High School Standards - Communication

B.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization in a variety of theatre exercises.

Proficient High School Standards - Communication

P.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization, to create extended scenes.

Advanced High School Standards - Culture

A.CU.1.1 - Interpret theatre arts from personal, cultural, and historical contexts.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre Arts

MS 117.211 LI - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.A - develop characterization based on sensory and emotional recall.

MS 117.212 LII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

B.1.A - explore characterization using sensory and emotional recall.

MS 117.213 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

B.1.B - explore preparation and warm-up techniques.

HS 117.315 LI - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.A - understand the value and purpose of using listening, observation, concentration, cooperation, and emotional and sensory recall.

C.1.B - develop and practice theatre preparation and warm-up techniques.

C.1.E - analyze characters by describing attributes such as physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions through reading scripts of published plays.

HS 117.316 LII - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.B - explore creativity as it relates to self and ensemble.

HS 117.316 LII - Critical evaluation and response

C.5.B - analyze theatre as an art form and evaluate self as a creative being.

HS 117.317 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.A - apply theatre preparation and warm-up techniques effectively.

HS 117.317 LIII - Critical evaluation and response

C.5.B - recognize theatre as an art form and evaluate self as a creative being.

HS 117.318 LIV - Critical evaluation and response

C.5.F - employ technology such as portfolios, research projects, and journals to communicate and present findings in a clear and coherent manner.

Alberta, Canada

Improvisation Drama 10

7 - examine and express feelings

8 - tell a story spontaneously

Acting Drama 20

1 - analyze a script for explicit character clues

Acting Drama 30

19 - create a character's life that extends beyond, but is consistent with, the script

Improvisation/Acting Level III - Advanced

29 - use improvisational skills and concepts in exploration of text

30 - analyze text for meaning and character development

32 - rehearse, polish and present text

Junior Goal II Objectives

develop belief in, identification with, and commitment to a role

Junior Orientation

demonstrate trust by becoming comfortable, physically and emotionally, with others

listen effectively

meet deadlines and follow through on individual and group commitments

offer and accept constructive criticism, given specific guidelines, with a desire to improve

recognize the purposes of and participate in warmup activities

support positivity the work of others

work cooperatively and productively with all members of the class in pairs, small groups and large groups

Improvisation/Acting Level I - Beginning

11 - create a dramatic situation in response to varied stimuli: objects, pictures, music

5 - create and tell a story spontaneously

Junior Goal I Objectives

develop a positive self-image

develop a sense of responsibility and commitment

develop self-confidence

develop self-discipline

extend the ability to explore, control and express emotions

extend the ability to think imaginatively and creatively

extend the ability to understand, accept and respect others-their rights, ideas, abilities and differences

Theatre Studies Level II - Intermediate (Theatre History)

5 - recognize that “theatre is a mirror of society”.

Senior Goal I Objectives

demonstrate a sense of inquiry and commitment, individually and to the group

demonstrate a sense of responsibility and commitment, individually and to the group

demonstrate respect for others-their rights, ideas, abilities and differences

demonstrate the ability to contribute effectively and constructively to the group process

demonstrate the ability to recall and use sensory information

develop a positive and realistic self-image

extend understanding of, acceptance of and empathy for others

increase self-confidence

increase self-discipline

Orientation Drama 10

cope with success and failure in positive ways

demonstrate self-discipline, self-direction and a sense of responsibility

demonstrate trust by becoming comfortable with others, physically and emotionally

display consideration and respect for self and others

positively support the work of others

work cooperatively and productively

British Columbia (2018)

GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Exploring and creating

Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through dramatic experiences

Take creative risks to experience and express thoughts, emotions, and meaning

GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Reasoning and reflecting

Receive, offer, and apply constructive feedback

GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Connecting and expanding

Demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the audience

GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Connect and expand

Demonstrate personal and social responsibility associated with creating, performing, and responding to dramatic performance

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and the audience

Make connections with family and community through drama and theatre

GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect

Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

Receive and apply constructive feedback to develop and refine ideas

GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Connect and expand

Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

Demonstrate personal and social responsibility associated with creating, performing, and responding to dramatic works

Make connections through drama with family and community on local, regional, and national scales

GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Connect and expand

Demonstrate personal and social responsibility associated with creating, performing, and responding to dramatic works

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and audience

Make connections through drama with family and community on local, national, and global scales

Ontario, Canada

Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Responsible Practices

C.3.2 - identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama works (e.g., use active listening and cooperative problem-solving skills; practise punctuality; use tact in suggesting changes and improvements; demonstrate willingness to accept criticism and build consensus)

Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Context and Influences

C.2.2 - describe how drama is used for various purposes in a range of social contexts (e.g., to express or celebrate group or community sentiments or values in street theatre or parades; to mark important historical or religious anniversaries of a country or culture; to raise awareness of social, environmental, and political issues; to explore personal relationships or social arrangements)

Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Connections Beyond the Classroom

B.3.1 - identify and describe skills, attitudes, and strategies they used in collaborative drama activities (e.g., brainstorming, active listening, and cooperative problem-solving skills; strategies for sharing responsibility through collaborative team roles)

Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Drama and Society

B.2.2 - explain how dramatic exploration helps develop awareness of different roles and identities people have in society (e.g., explain what they learned through role playing characters from different socio-economic groups)

Grades 9 & 10 - Creating and Presenting - Elements and Conventions

A.2.2 - use a variety of conventions to create a distinct voice that reflects a particular global, social, or personal perspective (e.g., use voices in the head, role on the wall, and hot seating to create a complex character from another region or country)

Grades 9 & 10 - Creating and Presenting - The Creative Process

A.1.3 - use role play and characterization to explore personal and social issues (e.g., with a partner, create or assume a role that explores an issue such as bullying; create a scenario that reveals details about a character’s motivation)