

## THTR 342a: BASIC VOICE

**When:** FA16, MW 12:30 – 1:50 pm  
**Where:** PED 206  
**Instructor:** Brent Blair, Ph.D.  
**Office:** MCC 101b  
**Office Hours:** Th 12:30 – 1:30 pm  
**Contact Info:** email: bblair@usc.edu,  
 cell: 323-356-2552

### Course Description

This course is an examination of the individual voice centering on resonance, tone, flexibility, and support through dramatic selections for transmitting meaning and emotion of character. It will also introduce the student to the mechanics of the voice and provide the tools for a fully embodied vocal warmup.

### Course Philosophy

This course follows a progression of exercises developed by Kristin Linklater as outlined in *Freeing the Natural Voice*, a required text for the course, designed to help students develop an understanding of their individual voice and discover ways to release it from habits that can hinder spontaneity. In order to explore the connection between voice and self, the class will be encouraged to arrive at a common vocabulary for the workings of the expressive voice. Once the class agrees on a model for how the voice works, they can set to work exploring how it does not work. During the first semester students will explore the contribution of the entire body towards the free release of the voice, and observe personal barriers to this release. Course work will include student-led warm-ups, reading assignments, individual work and a group autobiographical performance collage at the end of the semester.

### Required Text

*Freeing the Natural Voice*, K. Linklater (Drama Publishers, 2006)

### Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

#### Week 1: Introductions & background of voice work Aug 22 - 24

##### Experiential

Class exercises to better know ourselves, know our voices; how voice works, doesn't work

##### Written

"My voice" reflection journal (1-2 pages)

**Due Aug 24**

*Read (and submit one paragraph personal connection to this passage)*

FNV pp. 1-28

Introduction, How voice works / doesn't work

**Due Aug 29**

#### Week 2: Physical Awareness Aug 29 - 31

##### Experiential

Class exercises to assist with alignment of spine, relaxation of muscles

##### Written

"My stance in the world" reflection journal (1-2 pages)

**Due Aug 31**

##### Read

FNV pp. 29-42

Workday One: Physical Awareness

**Due Sep 7**

#### Week 3: Breath Awareness

(No class Sept 5, Labor Day) Sep 7

##### Experiential

Class exercises to explore the natural and habitual rhythms of breath, release, depth

##### Written

"My breath dance" reflection journal (1 – 2 pages)

**Due Sep 7**

##### Read

FNV pp. 43 – 64

Workday Two: Breathing Awareness

**Due Sep 12**

<b>Week 4:</b>	<b><i>Breath (Cont'd), Vibration Awareness</i></b>	<b>Sep 12 – 14</b>
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*Experiential*

Class exercises to explore clarity, resonance, and awareness of vibrations in body, spine

*Written*

“Voice and will” reflection journal (1 – 2 pages)

***Due Sep 14***

*Read*

FNV pp. 65 – 86

Workday Three: The touch of sound

***Due Sep 19***

<b>Week 5:</b>	<b><i>Vibrations into Basic Text</i></b>	<b>Sep 19 – 21</b>
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*Experiential*

Class exercises explore humming releases and larger impulses for sound, coming onto text.

***Voice Warm-up I***

Self-led warm-ups, covering material experienced so far; 1-2 p. personal reflection

***On Sep 21***

***Due Sep 26***

*Read*

Excerpt from intro: Basho on Haiku – “The world in Haiku” – 1-2 page response

***Due Sep 26***

<b>Week 6:</b>	<b><i>Embodying and Imagining the Text</i></b>	<b>Sep 26 – 28</b>
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## Text work I:

Haiku – basic connection between image and sound, specificity and release of effort.

“To read a haiku is to become its co-author, to place yourself inside its words until they reveal one of the proteus-shapes of your own life.” (J. Hirshfield, *The Heart of Haiku*.)

“A good book reads you.” (W.H. Auden)

“Stop speaking the text; let the text *speak you*.” (K. Linklater)

<b>Week 7:</b>	<b><i>The Channel: Jaw</i></b>	<b>Oct 3 – 5</b>
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*Experiential*

Class exercises exploring jaw tension and techniques to release this

*Written*

“Grin and bear it: jaw challenges” reflection journal (1-2 pages)

***Due Oct 5***

*Read*

FNV pp. 129 – 138

Workday Five: Freeing the Channel: Jaw ...

***Due Oct 10***

<b>Week 8:</b>	<b><i>The Channel: Tongue</i></b>	<b>Oct 10 – 12</b>
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*Experiential*

Class exercises exploring tongue tension and stretches to release, free mouth cavity

*Written*

“Lump in my throat: tongue challenges” reflection journal (1-2 pages)

***Due Oct 12***

*Read*

FNV pp. 139 – 160

Workday Six: Freeing the Channel: Tongue ...

***Due Oct 17***

***Mid-term Written Exam***

Take home Mid-term Exam (accessed through Blackboard; time sensitive)

***Due Oct 24***

<b>Week 9:                      <i>The Channel: Soft Palate</i>                      <b>Oct 17 – 19</b></b>		
<i>Experiential</i>		
Class exercises to explore limitations in the back of the throat; stretches, openness		
<i>Written</i>		
“When I’m open...” reflection journal (1-2 pages)		<i>Due Oct 19</i>
<i>Read</i>		
FNV pp. 161-172	Workday Seven: Freeing the Channel: The Soft Palate	<i>Due Oct 24</i>
<b>Week 10:                      <i>Lower Resonators: Chest, Mouth, Teeth</i>                      <b>Oct 24 – 26</b></b>		
<i>Experiential</i>		
Class exercises to explore pitch and resonance in areas of chest, mouth & teeth		
<i>Written</i>		
“Masks that reveal and conceal”		<i>Due Oct 26</i>
<i>Read</i>		
FNV pp. 187 – 198	Workday Ten: Developing and Strengthening...	<i>Due Oct 31</i>
<b><i>Voice Warm-up II</i>                      <b>On Oct 26</b></b>		
Self-led warm-ups, covering material experienced so far; 1-2 p. personal reflection		<i>Due Oct 31</i>
<b>Week 11:                      <i>Blending Lower Resonators: Triads, Swings</i>                      <b>Oct 31 – Nov 2</b></b>		
<i>Experiential</i>		
Class exercises to explore pitch and resonance in areas of chest, mouth & teeth		
<i>Written</i>		
“My voice rainbow”		<i>Due Nov 2</i>
<i>Read</i>		
FNV pp. 199 – 212	Workday Eleven: Releasing the voice from the body Review “Intermission Workout”, do on your own or with a friend	<i>Due Nov 7</i>
<b>Week 12:                      <i>Breath Power</i>                      <b>Nov 7 – 9</b></b>		
<i>Experiential</i>		
Class exercises to explore power of breath in intercostals, pelvic floor, etc.		
<i>Written</i>		
“The power of my voice”		<i>Due Nov 9</i>
<i>Read</i>		
FNV pp. 213 – 244	Workdays Twelve & Thirteen: Breathing Power	<i>Due Nov 14</i>
<b>Week 13:                      <i>Upper Resonators, Full Range</i>                      <b>Nov 14 – 16</b></b>		
<i>Experiential</i>		
Class exercises to explore upper range in sinuses, nasal and skull resonators		
<i>Written</i>		
“The range of my experience”		<i>Due Nov 16</i>
<i>Read</i>		
FNV pp. 245 – 294	Workdays Fourteen – Eighteen: Range...	<i>Due Nov 21</i>

<b>Week 14:</b>	<b>Articulation</b>	<b>Nov 21 (Thanksgiving Nov 23)</b>
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**Experiential**

Class exercises to explore jointedness in language and ease of articulation

**Written**

"My articulate voice"

**Due Nov 28**

**Read**

FNV pp. 295 – 324

Workdays Nineteen, etc.: Articulating the voice...

**Due Nov 28**

<b>Week 15:</b>	<b>River Stories</b>	<b>Nov 28 – 30</b>
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**Experiential**

Class exercises to explore personalization of voice and connection to text.

**Written**

River story journals

**Due Nov 30**

<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>Fri Dec 9 11 am – 1 pm</b>
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**Experiential**

Individual warm in small groups, evaluated

River Stories Group Performance – 3 genres each: 6 words, autobiographical poem ("My voice"), and an original poem.

**Grading:** (note changes from 1/11/16 to 1/20/16)

Attendance & Participation:	10%
Weekly Journal Responses and Reading Questions	30%
Voice Warm-up I	10%
Midterm Exam	10%
Voice Warm-up II	10%
Final Exam: Warm-ups	15%
Final Exam: River Stories + Warm-up	15%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>

A = 94 – 100
A- = 90 - 93
B+ = 87 – 89
B = 84 – 86
B- = 80 - 83
C+ = 77 – 79
C = 74 – 76
C- = 70 – 73
D = 60 – 69
F < 59

**Presence in class:**

The nature of this work is such that any class missed by one is a loss for all, as it is collaboration that provides the canvas for most of the learning in this course. Therefore, the only excused absences are extreme illness (accompanied by physician's note) or bereavement leave.

**Personal Reflections:**

These reflections, 1-2 pages typed and double-spaced, pertain to the vocal material covered during the week. The expectation is for the student to *personalize* their class experience and describe, with *direct references to the class exercise(s)*, how this relates to their own experience. Format for submission is through MS Word or equivalent (.docx format). NO PRINTED PAPERS; THIS IS A PAPERLESS CLASS.

**Reading Questions:**

Reference the reading material (FNV) directly via specific quote, then respond briefly in the form of open ended questions. "I wonder why..." or "It seems to me...". NO CLOSED QUESTIONS (i.e. "How many..." or "What does she mean by ..."). These open questions should interrogate the text from a big picture perspective or philosophic, personal, and curiously critical point of view. Think philosophical/personal as opposed to clinical/logistical.

**Protocol for Submission of Papers: BLACKBOARD**

Again, this is a PAPERLESS CLASS. Please do not kill trees or waste paper by printing out the syllabus or by handing in printed documents in class. They will not be accepted, and will only end up in the trash. All papers can be submitted through Blackboard for the week that is appropriate to the assignment. For clarity, please observe this format.

The format for titling your papers is as follows: **"2digitweek#.yoursurname.papertheme.docx"**

So, for example, the reflection assignment for week 1 is titled "My Voice." Here's how you submit:

- 1) Go to the Blackboard site for this class.
- 2) Open up the "assignments" section.
- 3) Open the folder for "Week 1"
- 4) Look for the page "My Voice" – you'll see the icon of a piece of paper with a diagonal ruler.
- 5) Read and respond to the prompt by typing a 1-2 page MS Word document.
- 6) Upload your paper with this title: **"01.blair.myvoice.docx"** (use your own surname of course!)
- 7) If it's a reading assignment, use this: **"01.blair.FNV1-28.docx"**

**Promptness:**

Tardies of less than 15 minutes lose half points from attendance grade for the day. Tardies of more than 15 minutes result in no points recorded for the day.

**Attire:**

Students should wear loose, comfortable clothes -- shorts or sweats, and loose t-shirts or tank tops, etc. Be prepared to work barefoot, in stocking feet or with ballet slippers or the like. You may want to bring a towel or blanket for floor work, and a small container of water.

Do not show up in: tight jeans, belted trousers, skirts (unless over leotards), dresses, good nylons (unless you don't mind working barefoot in them), or any other hindering garments. We will do a lot of moving and getting on the floor, so be prepared. Coming unprepared to class may result in being counted absent.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

Since this work is often physically demanding, any chronic ailment that would impede the performance of exercises (back or neck injuries, etc.) needs to be verified and logged with the DSP.

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.