

Ball State University, Department of Theatre & Dance
THEA434: One-Person Shows
Syllabus - Spring 2026

EVA PATTON – Email: ecpatton@bsu.edu / Phone #: (765) 285-0976 / Office: WQ 118
Office hours: Mon & Wed, 1:00 – 2:30 pm, and by appointment (Zoom also available)

VERONICA SANTOYO – Email vgsantoyo@bsu.edu / Phone #: (765) 285-4159 / Office:
WQ117 / Office hours: Mon & Wed, 11:30 pm – 1:30 pm, and by appointment

Class Time: Monday and Wednesday, 3:00 – 5:00 pm / Room: WQ (West Quad) 207

Please note: Beginning Monday, March 9th, in preparation for the show,
we will meet Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00 – 7:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce students to devising techniques based on MOMENT WORK, with the objective of providing a methodology that students can use to create staged narratives that will form the basis of original theatrical material for the creation of a one-person show. Through weekly writing prompts and improvisational exercises, students will explore autobiographical storytelling, which will culminate in an 8-minute solo piece that will be performed, self-directed, and produced by each student.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ To explore the work of past and present solo performance artists to become familiar with the many forms of storytelling that exist within this genre.
- ❖ To explore ideas and intuitions in the rehearsal room.
- ❖ To develop a daily practice of writing.
- ❖ To move beyond writing text towards writing performance in order to create fully original theatrical narratives.
- ❖ To practice giving feedback through both a structural and interpretive analysis of the performance material.
- ❖ To understand how text, gesture, objects, and the elements of stage production can be integrated to create a compelling solo performance piece.
- ❖ To create individual theatrical units, and to sequence these units into theatrical phrases, towards the creation of a one-person show.

ADDITIONAL TIME FOR CLASS:

Individual and/or group rehearsal and preparation outside of class will be necessary. The amount of extra rehearsal time will be dependent upon the nature and specific requirements of each one-person show being created.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Classroom Exercises:

Students will share individual devised material with the group. Work can be demanding, both emotionally and physically. Hence, students are expected to ‘hold the space’ adequately, even when they are not the ones performing, in order to offer constructive feedback to one another about the work being created.

NOTE: Creating an original piece of theatrical work from the ground up is more often than not, a demanding and time-consuming endeavor. Therefore, in this course, you are expected to attend all scheduled classes/rehearsals, and also to set up enough time outside of class in order to work independently on your show and have material to share with the group during our class time. Please be mindful of this when organizing your activity this semester.

2. Classroom Etiquette:

- a. Cell phones and apple watches: Turned off for the duration of the class, no calling, no texting. Not adhering to this policy will reflect negatively on the student’s participation grade.
- b. You are expected to keep your focus on your classmates’ presentations and throughout the feedback time. Your computer should only be used to take notes on the material being presented. This means that you should not be working on material that does not pertain to this class or on your own show when other people are presenting material or receiving feedback.**
- c. No food is allowed during class time.
- d. At the beginning of class, please place bags, shoes, and other articles neatly on the sides of the room. At the end of class, make sure the studio is clean and free of any objects (chairs, tables, bags, etc.) used during class time. We must leave the room clear and ready for any other group that may use it.
- e. Please observe a working environment while in the studio space and keep all conversations focused on our class material.
- f. Coursework may require physical contact and close proximity with other students. Please maintain good hygiene in respect of others (showering, wearing clean clothes, brushing teeth, etc.).
- g. Content Warning:**

This course advocates for a free expression of ideas and the exploration of diverse material that may or may not depict or describe a wide variety of potentially triggering content, including but not limited to drug usage, PTSD,

sexual assault, abuse, self-harm and suicide, child abuse/pedophilia/incest, eating disorders, body hatred, animal cruelty or animal death, violence, and pornographic content. The instructors ask all students to approach sensitive and/or difficult material with the priority placed on clear communication and respect for the group. In these cases, it is important that students exploring such material provide trigger warnings. Trigger warnings may help those who have experienced trauma to avoid fight-or-flight modes that occur when they are exposed to words or imagery that remind them of the trauma.

If a student has concerns about any material, it is their responsibility to speak up and notify the instructors and the group. Students have the option to excuse themselves from watching any performance material that is troubling to them. Students' mental and emotional wellbeing are paramount. You are not obligated to disclose the reason for avoiding watching certain material.

That said, you have chosen a major (and a career) that will require your involvement with a wide range of material, some of which you may find uncomfortable. Your ability to successfully navigate this material may impact your career.

- h. All difficult material and/or stage violence will be approached with the priority placed on clear communication of expectations and respect for students. If you have concerns during a particular exercise, it is your responsibility to speak up and notify the instructors and other classmates. Exercises may be altered depending on the needs of the student. Please read below.

IMPORTANT COURSE POLICIES

GRADING POLICY

60% Performance work

10% Writing Assignments

30% Classroom Participation, demonstrated by:

- Being able to articulate questions and observations
- A receptive attitude
- Preparedness
- Staying focused
- Attention to the work of other classmates and the ability to offer constructive feedback. NOTE: This class requires active verbal participation; students should be able to comment and offer feedback to

their classmates on their performances. Just listening is not enough.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Attendance

As a department, we believe that in order to excel in class you have to be in class. Regular class attendance is vital for success and for developing the work ethic necessary to succeed in the professional world. As such, we maintain a rigorous attendance policy.

a. Allowable absences

The number of allowable absences for this course is 2. In addition to this, senior students have 2 professional days when they can miss class, but these professional absences **must be approved by the Chair's office. Please fill out the appropriate forms which you must hand in to your instructors at least one week in advance of your professional absence. Without these forms, the instructors will not approve your absence.**

Each absence over the 2 allowed (not counting your professional absences if you have any) will affect your participation grade by two letter grades up to C, as follows:

- 3 absences total = B
- 4 absences total = B-
- 5 absences total = C
- 6 absences total = withdrawal from the course

Six absences in the course are equivalent to missing three (3) weeks of class, which makes it very hard to truly take advantage of the learning opportunities in this course.

NOTE: Excused absences are ONLY allowed for the following: *religious holiday; death in the family (number of days per University handbook), pregnancy, jury duty, active military duty; and an EXTENDED and DOCUMENTED absence related to illness or health issues (mono, broken leg, pneumonia, etc.). For all EXTENDED illness related absences, students MUST receive a note from their medical professional. Colds, flu bugs, and other common illness issues are NOT excused. Rather, they are part of your allotted absences for each course.*

b. Zoom attendance

THEA 434 – One-Person Show is an in-person course, therefore taking class via Zoom is **only meant for extreme cases** when the student cannot be physically present. Students in this course should not expect to attend this class via Zoom more than 2 times during the semester (unless seriously ill). If you Zoom in to class, please make sure you are ready to connect **five minutes before the start of class**. Connecting at 3 pm when the class starts means you are late to class.

In addition, no grade of “W” will be given to a student after midterm, unless they are earning a grade of “C” at the time of withdrawal. No grade of “I” will be given to a student who is flunking. Although this is the department policy, instructors are responsible for their individual attendance policies. Further, faculty members have the prerogative to ask students to drop any class if the student has a perpetual absence problem; this is regardless of whether or not the absences incurred are excused or unexcused.

NOTE: If you have cold/flu-like symptoms, please wear a mask to class.

2. Tardies

In addition to being in class, students are required to be there on time. Therefore, tardies are not accepted, and three instances of lateness will add up to one unexcused absence.

If an emergency happens and you must be absent or tardy, please email the teachers beforehand.

NOTE: You will not be allowed to join class if you arrive after 10 minutes.

In addition, no grade of “W” will be given to a student after the midterm, unless they have a grade of “D” at the time of withdrawal. No grade of “I” will be given to a student who is flunking. Faculty members have the prerogative to ask students to drop any course if the student has a perpetual absence problem; this is regardless of whether the absences incurred are excused or unexcused.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY

- Performance assignments: PLEASE DO NOT MISS CLASS ON THE DAY YOU ARE ASSIGNED TO PRESENT PERFORMANCE MATERIAL FOR YOUR SHOW.
 - **NOTE: Due to a tight rehearsal schedule, if you miss on the day you are scheduled to present material, we will not be able to reschedule you on another day.** If an emergency arises that causes you to be absent, you must promptly inform your teachers of the situation so that the schedule can be amended.
- Written Assignments: All written assignments should be submitted on Canvas by the due date.
- Script assignments are due by midnight EST/EDT time on the due dates indicated by your instructors.
- Technical issues are not valid excuses for late work unless the problem stems from Canvas servers.

FEEDBACK POLICY

- We will try to return emails from your official BSU address within 24 hours during business days and within 48 hours on the weekend.

- Please feel free to email us at any time throughout the course if you have any questions or concerns about your performance in class.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

THEA 434 requires that you be an active participant in class discussions, collaborative performance projects, and performance feedback.

Specifically, Classroom Participation is demonstrated through:

- Active participation in class discussions through the articulation of questions, observations, and comments on class activities and performance work of self and others.
- Attention to the work of other classmates and the ability to offer constructive feedback.
- A receptive attitude
- Preparedness
- Staying focused

You are expected to communicate regularly with the instructors and your classmates through participation in devising and performance assignments, which are outlined in the course calendar of your syllabus. For this purpose, you will need to log into your course several times each week and check your official BSU University email account daily. Doing so will allow you to view announcements, participate in class activities, and prepare for and complete assignments and assessments. You are expected to complete all assignments by the due date.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- All students are expected to act with civility, personal integrity, and respect for other students' dignity, rights, and property.
 - Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception, such as: cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another person's work as one's own, using Internet sources without citation, taking or having another student take your exam, tampering with the work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty.
 - Sanctions for breaches in academic integrity may range, depending on the severity of the offense, from an "F" grade on an assignment or test to an "F" in the course.
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INCLUSIVITY, COURSE ACCOMMODATIONS, ACCESSIBILITY AND YOUR PRIVACY

UNIVERSITY INCLUSIVITY AND ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's [Disability Services](#) [Links to an external site.](#) office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

CANVAS ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Canvas provides a user experience that is easy, simple, and intuitive. Special attention has been paid to making the Canvas screen readable. The Rich Content Editor encourages users to create accessible content pages (i.e., text formatting is accomplished using styles). Canvas is designed to allow limited customization of colors and schemes to be accessible for all users. The National Federation of the Blind granted Canvas the Gold Level Web Certification in 2010.

Find more information by visiting the [Canvas Voluntary Product Accessibility Template \(VPAT\)](#) [\(Links to an external site.\)](#).

FERPA AND PRIVACY STATEMENT

As a student, your educational records are considered confidential. Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances, your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. However, some directory information may be released to third parties without your prior consent unless a written request to restrict this is on file. You can learn more about student rights to privacy by reading [Ball State's FERPA and Privacy and Protection](#).

Calendar of Activities and Assignments

JANUARY: Exploring Form and Content

- Theatrical narrative vs. Dramatic narrative
- Exploring elements of the stage
- Making moments: I begin / I end.
- Making moments: Elements of the stage
 - Architecture/Space
 - Props
 - Costume
 - Light
 - Sound
 - Text
- Exploring autobiographical storytelling
 - Generating material
 - Finding your unique voice and persona
 - Integrating text, movement, and visual composition

FEBRUARY: Constructing Narratives - Creating 'My Piece':

- Sequencing, layering
- Refining, editing, honing your writing
- Exploring the context in one-person shows
- Adding technical elements: lights, sound, props, costume

MARCH: Final Rehearsals and Performances

- Tech & Dress Rehearsal – Friday, March 27, at Indy Fringe in Indianapolis
- Performance 1 – Saturday, March 28, 2 pm
- Performance 2 – Saturday, March 28, 7:30 pm
- Performance 3 – Sunday, March 29, 2 pm

APRIL: DEBRIEFING THE ONE-PERSON SHOW EXPERIENCE

- Monday, April 6, 3-5 pm
 - Time to fill out student evaluations.
 - Group discussion.