

Carleton University  
**Winter 2025 Preliminary Course Outline**  
Department of English

**ENGL 3905A: *Topics in Performance***  
***Topic: Stanislavski and the “Method”***

**Prerequisites: third year standing or permission of the department**

**Instructor: Adam Barrows**  
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**\*\*\* This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.  
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

**Course description:** In this course, we will study and practice what came to be known as “Method Acting,” tracing its roots in the work of Konstantin Stanislavski and the Moscow Art Theatre through its dominance of American acting under the influence of New York acting teachers like Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler to its enduring influence on stage and screen acting today.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will learn to: identify and discuss the theoretical and experiential concept of Stanislavski-based performance; gain practical experience in “method” acting through individual and group exercises; apply theoretical knowledge to the experience of rehearsing and performing scene-work.

**Texts:**

Stanislavski, Konstantin. *An Actor Prepares*

**Evaluation:**

**Attendance: 10%**

**Short Writing Assignments: 30%**

**Performance Exercises: 30%**

**Scene-work: 30%**

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend every class in person. Attendance involves having prepared for the class by doing all assigned reading and having prepared for assigned performances.

**Short Writing Assignments:** Students will be provided with ten prompts for short writing assignments (one to two double-spaced pages maximum), ranging from reporting on additional reading to reflections on performance experiences, to character and background research. Students will choose **SIX** of these assignments and submit them throughout the course of the semester. All assignments must be received before the final class meeting, and at least three assignments must be submitted before the February reading week.

**Performance Exercise:** All students will perform three individual exercises throughout the semester. Details of the exercises are provided on a separate handout. For each exercise, students will submit, no later than 24 hours after the performance, a one-page reflection paper which will form part of the evaluation of the performance.

**Scene-work:** The course will culminate in performed scenes that have been rehearsed independently and during class-time. Each scene will be followed by an “audience” Q&A in which fellow students will be able to ask the performers about their process and choices. The response to the Q&A will form part of the evaluation of the scene-work.