

HUMA 1110 Improvisational Artists Lab

3 Credits | Fall 2026

Class	L1 Thursdays 10:30 AM–1:20 PM
Location	SA103, Shaw Auditorium
Instructor	Dr. YiFan SHAO yfshao@ust.hk
Instructional Assistant	Rod YU roderickyu@ust.hk
Office Hours	By appointment

Enrollment Requirement: Instructor approval (For enrollment approval, students should email the instructor a short video in English of no more than two minutes, including (1) a brief self-introduction and (2) a short account of a memorable or imagined experience. No previous acting experience is required, and a phone recording is sufficient.)

Course Description

Improvisational Artists Lab is a studio-based course focused on improvisational theatre and creative performance-making. Designed for a small group of students, the course integrates practical exploration with selected readings and reflective discussion, with primary emphasis placed on learning through doing.

Through guided improvisation exercises, physical and vocal exploration, and collaborative scene work, students investigate presence, listening, emotional truth, and risk-taking in performance. Class sessions include structured warm-ups, improvisational practice, open creative time, and group discussion. Students develop original monologues and short scenes that grow directly from in-class improvisations, transforming spontaneous material into performable works. Emphasis is placed on collaboration, experimentation, and reflective discussion rather than polished outcomes. The course culminates in a final studio showing of student-devised work, accompanied by critical reflection on the creative process. Instructor's approval is required for enrollment in the course.

Intended Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Explain fundamental principles of improvisational performance, including presence, listening, spontaneity, and collaborative creation, as demonstrated through in-class practice and reflection
2. Apply and implement physical, vocal, and improvisational techniques to generate original performance material, including improvised scenes, monologues, and short devised works
3. Analyze and distinguish effective choices in improvised performance by observing, organizing, and reflecting on their own work and that of peers during studio practice and group discussion
4. Produce original monologues or short theatrical scenes that emerge from in-class improvisation and collaborative creative processes
5. Evaluate and critique creative processes and performance outcomes through constructive peer feedback and self-assessment, focusing on clarity of intention, responsiveness, and collaborative engagement rather than polished results

Teaching Format

This is a **studio-based course** emphasizing learning through practice rather than lectures. Each class combines guided improvisation exercises, collaborative creation, rehearsal, performance, discussion, and reflection. Students are expected to actively participate in all activities, experiment with new ideas, collaborate with their peers, and engage in constructive

feedback throughout the semester. As the semester progresses, students will gradually develop original monologues, scenes, and an ensemble performance through an iterative creative process.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course.

Selected readings, video excerpts, and other learning materials will be provided on Canvas throughout the semester to support studio practice, class discussion, and creative development.

Recommended Reading

- Johnstone, Keith. *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*. Routledge.
- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theater*. Northwestern University Press.

Additional materials may include selected articles, interviews, and recordings related to improvisational theatre, devised performance, and collaborative creative practice.

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed assessment rubrics will be provided on Canvas before each assessment.

- Late Submission and Resubmission Policy: Late submissions will not normally be accepted unless an extension has been approved in advance or exceptional circumstances apply. Resubmission after grading is not permitted.
- Assessment in this course emphasizes the **creative process, collaboration, and development of performance skills** rather than prior performance experience or technical ability. Students are evaluated through their engagement in studio practice, development of original materials, collaborative work, and final performance.

Assessment Task	Weight	Mapped ILOs
Attendance	10%	ILO 1
Studio Engagement & Collaboration	15%	ILO 1, 2, 5
Creative Process Portfolio	25%	ILO 1, 3, 4, 5
Studio Presentation	15%	ILO 2, 4, 5
Peer Feedback	10%	ILO 3, 5
Final Ensemble Performance	25%	ILO 2, 4, 5
Total	100%	

Key Assessment Dates

Date	Assessment
Weeks 2–6	Five Short Creative and Reflective Responses (one per week)
Thu, 29 October	Studio Presentation
Wed, 4 November	Peer Feedback Record 1
Fri, 20 November	Scene or Monologue Development Dossier
Wed, 25 November	Peer Feedback Record 2
Last week of November (TBD)	Final Ensemble Performance
Mon, 30 November	Individual Collaboration and Contribution Record
Mon, 30 November	Final Critical Reflection

Attendance (10%)

Regular attendance is important in this studio-based course, as students develop trust, ideas, and performance material through ongoing collaborative practice. Students are expected to attend all sessions, arrive on time, and remain for the full class.

Each scheduled class carries equal weight. Attendance may be recorded at one or more points during each class.

Studio Engagement & Collaboration (15%)

This component evaluates the quality and consistency of students' participation in improvisation exercises, creative development, rehearsal, and group discussion. Assessment considers students':

- attentive participation and willingness to experiment;
- ability to listen, respond, and build on others' contributions;
- contribution to collaborative creative work;
- reliability in completing agreed responsibilities.

Assessment focuses on students' development, responsiveness, and contribution rather than prior performance experience, confidence, or acting ability.

Creative Process Portfolio (25%)

Component	Weight	Due Date
1.Five Short Creative and Reflective Responses	10%	Weekly, Weeks 2–6
2.Scene or Monologue Development Dossier	5%	20 November 2026
3.Individual Collaboration and Contribution Record	2%	30 November 2026
4.Final Critical Reflection	8%	30 November 2026
Total	25%	

- **Five Short Creative and Reflective Responses (10%)**

Students are required to submit five short responses of approximately 200–300 words each. One response will be submitted each week from Week 2 to Week 6, with each response contributing 2% to the overall course grade.

The responses require students to connect classroom exercises with personal observations, creative experimentation, and relevant course concepts. They are intended to generate ideas that may subsequently be developed into characters, monologues, scenes, or ensemble performance material.

- **Scene or Monologue Development Dossier (5%)**

Students are required to select a monologue, scene, or performance segment that they have helped develop during the course and document its creative development.

For collaboratively created scenes, group members may include shared script drafts or performance materials in their dossiers. However, each student must independently document their own creative decisions, responsibilities, and specific contributions to the development of the work.

- **Individual Collaboration and Contribution Record (2%)**

Students are required to submit a concise individual record outlining the responsibilities they undertook and the specific contributions they made during the collaborative creation, rehearsal, and final production processes.

- **Final Critical Reflection (8%)**

Following the Final Ensemble Performance, students are required to submit an individual critical reflection of approximately 500–700 words.

Assessment focuses on the specificity and depth of the reflection, the student's ability to evaluate their own creative and collaborative processes, and their ability to establish clear connections among the final performance, earlier creative experimentation, feedback received, and relevant course concepts. The reflection must provide an authentic account of the student's own work, learning process, and individual thinking.

Studio Presentation (15%)

Students present original monologues or short scenes developed through improvisation and collaborative creation. The presentation serves as a work-in-progress sharing opportunity before the final performance.

Assessment focuses on:

- application of course techniques;
- development potential of the material;
- clarity of intention and relationships;
- responsiveness during presentation;
- readiness to receive and use feedback.

Presentation due 29 October 2026

Peer Feedback (10%)

Students will complete two structured feedback records on the work of the same assigned group. The first record will follow the Studio Presentation, and the second will follow a designated rehearsal-stage sharing. Each record will be submitted individually through Canvas.

Component	Weight	Timing
Peer Feedback Record 1	5%	Following the Studio Presentation, Due 4 November 2026
Peer Feedback Record 2	5%	Following the rehearsal-stage sharing, Due 25 November 2026
Total	10%	

Assessment focuses on:

- specific and relevant observation;
- analysis of the effects of performance choices;
- appropriate application of course concepts;
- respectful, concrete, and actionable suggestions.

Grades are assigned by the instructor based on the quality of the feedback provided. Peer feedback is developmental and does not determine the grade of the group receiving it. Selected comments may be shared with the relevant group in anonymized or aggregated form.

Final Ensemble Performance (25%)

Students collaboratively create and perform a final devised theatrical work developed throughout the semester.

Assessment focuses on:

- ensemble collaboration;
- responsiveness and presence in performance;
- development and integration of creative material;
- commitment to the collaborative performance process.

Ensemble Performance TBD (will happen during the last week of November)

Indicative Course Content

- Introduction: Play, Failure and Trust
- Listening, Offers and Yes-And
- Spontaneity and Collaborative Storytelling
- Space, Objects and Physical Awareness
- Character through Body and Voice
- Relationships, Status and Authenticity
- Naive and Restricted Games
- Character and Scene Games
- Sound, Rhythm and Musical Games
- Base Reality and Relationships That Matter
- Ensemble Flow and Workshop Preparation
- Final Workshop Presentation and Reflection

Academic Integrity

Students must adhere to HKUST's Academic Honor Code and maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All individual responses, observations, feedback, contribution records, and reflections must represent the student's own work and understanding. Collaboratively created materials may be included where permitted, but students must accurately identify their own contributions and acknowledge the work of others. Academic misconduct will be handled in accordance with University regulations. Please refer to Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry for the University's definitions of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

Use of Generative AI Tools

Generative AI may be used for limited purposes, such as brainstorming, language improvement, or proofreading. It must not replace students' own creative work, observations, peer feedback, contribution records, or critical reflections. Any AI-assisted material included in submitted work must be acknowledged. Students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and content of all submissions. Undisclosed or inappropriate use of AI may constitute academic misconduct.