

Somatics for the Actor II
TPP3571-8571
Spring 2025
T/TH 10:40-12:35
Room G-13

Instructor: Mariel Brewster
Office Hours: Zoom; email me to schedule an appointment
617.797.9142
mbrewster@arts.ufl.edu

Required Text: Texts will be provided in class and do not need to be purchased by students.

Course Description: This course is an undergraduate study delving deeper into somatics, the field which studies the soma: namely, the body as perceived from within by first-person perception. This field encompasses a wide range of alternative, holistic mind-body practices that aim to develop consciousness and ease within the self. In this course, we will work with several somatic modalities, including meditation, yoga, mindful stretching, qi gong, and the Alexander Technique. The main focus of the course will be on the Alexander Technique, with the other modalities adding supplemental practice to incorporate mindfulness and flow.

The Alexander Technique is a mind-body awareness (somatic) technique that helps us to recognize, inhibit, and redirect the physical and mental habits that interfere with the body's natural coordination and to consciously restore ourselves to a better functioning of the body as a whole. This knowledge of the "use of the self" will be an invaluable tool as you hone your craft as actors, both on the stage in performance and when you meet yourself in practice and rehearsal. The emphasis of this course, as much as it is possible, will be hands-on work with the teacher, in individual, small group, and workshop setting, providing you the tools for an individualized understanding of your body and your particular habits. These experiences will be further supported by a theoretical study of the fundamental principles of the technique based in reading, discussion, self-observation, and peer feedback.

Course Objectives:

- To define somatics and recognize the underlying value across multiple modalities
- To understand the principles of somatic movements and the value of establishing a regular practice of mind-body work
- To practice and apply somatic techniques in meditation, yoga, qi gong, and Alexander Technique
- To understand the fundamental principles of the Alexander Technique in both theory and practice
- To apply the principles of awareness, inhibition, and direction to activate your Primary Control through the use of constructive thinking as defined by F.M. Alexander
- To apply the Technique to everyday life activities, as well as to your craft as actors and dancers during both practice and performance

- To learn basic anatomy and physiology of the body in terms of a good use of the self and how the parts of the body work together to create a holistic use of the body

Course Evaluation and Grading Percentages:

Assignment Category	Percent of Grade	Total Points
Anatomy Assignments	15%	150
Reading Assignments	25%	250
Participation	30%	300
Midterm	10%	100
Quizzes	20%	200
Total	100%	1000

Grading Policy:

Grade	Percent	Grade Points
A	92.6-100	4.00
A-	89.6-92.5	3.67
B+	86.6-89.5	3.33
B	82.6-86.5	3.00
B-	79.6-82.5	2.67
C+	76.6-79.5	2.33
C	72.6-76.5	2.00
C-	69.6-72.5	1.67
D+	66.6-69.5	1.33
D	62.6-66.5	1.00
D-	59.6-62.5	0.67
E	0-59.5	0.00

More information on grades and grading policies is here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Late/Make-Up Work: Assignments are due on the date specified on the class schedule unless otherwise discussed. Assignments that are late will have 5 percentage points deducted per day late. Assignments over a week late will receive zero credit.

AI Policy: The assignments in this course are designed to help you develop writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. As a course requirement it is expected that you will perform work for this class without the assistance of any artificial intelligence (AI) technology such as ChatGPT and Grammarly. Therefore, if you submit assignments that have utilized an AI generator (in whole or part) you will be treated as having engaged in academic dishonesty.

In an effort to be abundantly clear, while AI technology is new and constantly evolving, please know that using ChatGPT or any other AI text generator to assist in writing your papers, or completing other written assignments, is construed as plagiarism and will be treated as such. Those found to have engaged in such academic misconduct may be subject to any additional sanctions listed in the student code.

Attendance Policy: Students are expected to be in attendance daily and to be on time. Students are allowed 2 “unexcused” absences that do not require documentation and do not conform to the UF “acceptable reasons for absence.” Any other “unexcused” absence will result in a penalty of a half letter grade (5%) from the final grade per “unexcused” absence. To be considered “excused” an absence must be accompanied by appropriate official documentation. Religious observances do not require documentation.

Any absence from class for the following reasons must be supported by official acceptable documentation to avoid a grade penalty:

- Illness—doctor's note must be on official letterhead with address and phone number, noting the date and time of visit and diagnosis verifying that an absence from class is warranted, doctor name and signature
- Serious family emergencies
- Special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences)
- Military obligation
- Severe weather conditions (e.g., hurricane-related events)
- Participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate
- Court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena)

To help organize accommodations, students should inform the instructor by the end of the second week of classes of religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance this semester.

Any student that acquires 3 absences (either excused or unexcused) will be required to meet with this course's instructor and/or area faculty to discuss the student's continued participation in the course.

Failure to attend this meeting will result in Artistic Probation.

Due to the participatory nature of the course that includes in-class collaboration along with partner and ensemble work, if a student acquires more than 2 unexcused absences, the student may be prohibited from participation in partner/group exercises which will affect the student's final grade.

If you must miss a class meeting for any reason, notify the instructor and your scene partner previous to the missed class, this does not "excuse" your absence this is simple professional courtesy.

Tardiness: Please arrive on time or early to class. Two tardies within a semester are equal to 1 unexcused absence, which is your only unexcused absence for the semester before it starts to impact your grade.

Work Clothes: If wearing a dress or skirt, please make sure that it is long or that you are wearing leggings underneath. Be prepared to take your shoes off. If this means you would prefer to wear socks, then please bring socks.

Class Demeanor: Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones. There is no eating in the classrooms. This is a space where we will need to step out of our comfort zone and try new things. It is very important that we are supportive of each other. Trust is a two way street. In order to be successful in this technique, you have to break yourself open and not be afraid to look at reality. This can be physically, emotionally, and psychologically difficult work. We need to have a protective spirit for each other. Please remember this every day we are in class together. We will celebrate each other's triumphs and pick each other up when we fall.

Students Requiring Accommodation: Students with disabilities requiring accommodations should first register with Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Materials and Supplies

Fees: There are no additional fees for this course. Instructional materials for this course consist of only those materials specifically reviewed, selected, and assigned by the instructor(s). The instructor(s) is only responsible for these instructional materials.

University Honesty Policy: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Counseling and Wellness: Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Course Outline

This is a basic outline of the course that is subject to change as the course progresses. If there are any changes, they will be communicated both in class and by email in a timely manner.

Please note that all assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the set due date.

Unit 1: AT Review Weeks 1-3

Week 1: January 14 & 16 Reviewing the 5 Principles of the Alexander Technique

- Tuesday: Review the Syllabus/5 Principles/Introductions
- Meditation: Concentrative Meditations/Singularity of Mind/Sound Meditation
- AT:
- Review the 5 Principles/Have students describe
- Hands-On Work in Chair
- Lying on the floor with directions

Assignment Due Thursday: Self-Reflection: Challenges and Successes over the break

- Thursday: Anatomy Review
- Meditation: Concentrative Meditations Continued
- AT:
- Review Anatomy
- Working Slowly with Stimuli in Constructive Rest

Assignment Due Tuesday: Read F.M.'s Evolution of a Technique and Find the 5 Principles in the text

Week 2: January 21 & 23

- Tuesday: Review the 5 Principles
- Meditation: Concentrative Meditations
- AT:
- Go over 5 Principles Assignment
- Work on tilting

Assignment Due Thursday: Nelly Ben-Or article and questions

- Thursday: Somatics Lens
- Meditation: Concentrative Meditations
- AT:
- Reading discussion
- Look at broader definitions of somatics
- Standing and walking/Being on Stage

Assignment Due Tuesday: Introduction – pg. 15 of *Somatics* by Thomas Hanna

Week 3: January 28 & 30

- Tuesday: Fascial Lines/Somatics Continued
- Meditation: Walking/movement concentrative meditation

- AT:
- Reading Discussion
- Scene analysis by me
- Anatomy Review: Fascia
- Trying to sense the fascial connection using AT

Assignment Due Tuesday: Scene Analysis Presentation, listen to podcast How the Alexander Technique can enhance your presentation skills

- Thursday: Applying the AT
- Meditation: Concentration
- AT:
- Student suggestions

Assignment Due Tuesday: Scene Analysis Presentation

Unit 2: The Freedom of Choice Weeks 4-6

Week 4: February 4 & 6

- Tuesday: Scene Presentations!

Assignment Due Thursday: Meditation Reflection

- Thursday: The Spaciousness of Choice
- Meditation: Identification with Self
- AT:
- Finding Freedom in the confines of blocking
- Workshopping blocked scenes

Assignment Due Tuesday: *Somatics* by Thomas Hanna pg. 17-36

Week 5: February 11 & 13

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Connecting to Something Greater
- AT:
- Reading discussion
- Habits, Choice, and the Critical moment
- Saying No Out Loud – Lowering in Space

Assignment Due Thursday: Notes of Instruction favorite quotes; Podcast episode: The Actor's Secret: The Alexander Technique and how we can all Benefit from It

- Thursday:
- Meditation: Who Am I?
- Michael Singer excerpt
- AT:
- Reading discussion
- Anatomy review
- Squatting/lunging

Assignment Due Tuesday: Work on paper and scene performance; meditation reflection

Week 6: February 18 & 20 Paper 1

Tuesday & Thursday Scene Performances and Workshopping

Assignment: Scenes and Paper 1 due Tuesday February 25

Unit 3: Finding Flow State Weeks 7-9

Week 7: February 25 & 27

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Detachment
- AT: Inhibition, Non-Doing, Letting Go
- Anatomy review

Assignment due Thursday: Zen Mind Beginner's mind excerpt

- Thursday:
- Meditation: Detachment continued
- AT:
- Bench game
- Homework discussion

Assignment due Tuesday: Walter Carrington As I See It excerpt

Week 8: March 4 & 6

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Equanimity
- AT:
- Homework discussion
- AT procedure group choice

Assignment due Thursday: *Flow State* part 1

- Thursday:
- Meditation: Detachment
- AT: Reading discussion
- Working on group projects

Assignment due Tuesday: Somatic group practices presentation

Week 9: March 11 & 13

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Impermanence
- AT: Group presentations!

Assignment due Thursday: Somatic practices group presentations

- Thursday:
- Meditation: Impermanence continued
- AT: Anatomy review
- Procedures review

Assignment due Tuesday: Mediation reflection, Bringing Somatics into life

Spring Break: March 15-22

Unit 4: Voice and Breath Weeks 10-14

Week 10: March 25 & 27

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Chanting Om
- AT: Anatomy of the voice
- Whispered Ah

Assignment due Thursday: *Flow State* part 2

- Thursday:
- Meditation: Heart practices: Felt Sense of Appreciation
- AT: Allowing the breath/the beginning of it all
- Reading discussion

Assignment due Tuesday: *Tao te Ching* excerpt/*Tao of the Voice*

Week 11: April 1 & 3

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Forgiveness
- AT: Reading discussion
- Lying on the floor and vocalizing
- Lying on the floor and breathing

Assignment due Thursday: *Radical Acceptance* excerpt; Podcast: Alexander Technique for Singers with Peter Jacobson

- Thursday:
- Meditation: Reading discussion/Compassion
- AT: Podcast discussion
- Using the voice continued

Assignment due Thursday: Walter Carrington, Patrick MacDonald, Rivka Cohen, F.M. Alexander breath and vocal use comparison Ven diagram

Week 12: April 8 & 10

Tuesday:

- Meditation: Joy

- AT: Discussion of Ven diagrams
- Working with vowels, tongue tension; solar plexus tension

Assignment due Tuesday: Work on performance paper

- Thursday:
 - Meditation: Compassion and the Activists Heart
 - AT:
 - Responding to highs and lows; coloring the voice
-

Week 13: April 15 & 17

- Tuesday:
- Meditation: Heart Practice
- Final performances/workshopping!
- Thursday:
- Meditation: Heart Practice
- Final performances/workshopping!

Assignment: Performance of choice; Paper 2

Week 14: Last class April 22

- Tuesday:
- Mediation: Heart Practices
- AT: Finish performances/workshopping/Where do we go from here? Applying AT without a teacher

Final performances paper due at the beginning of class