THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA – SCHOOL OF THEATRE AND DANCE

TPP 3290 SEC 1341
INTRODUCTION TO THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE
CREDIT HOURS: 3 HRS.
TU/THU Periods 5&6; 11:45- 1:40
INSTRUCTOR: KATHY SARRA, Ph OFC–352- 273 0578, EMAIL: sarra@ufl.edu
Ofc. 3rd Fl. McCarty C; Ofc hrs: By appointment: Tu/Thu 10:30-11:30. WED 11-1:30
FALL 2016

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Introduction to the Alexander Technique (AT); a mind-body approach to the use of self as applied to acting.

We will be exploring the fundamental principles of the Alexander Technique including basic terminology. You will be studying the "use of self" through self observation, developing self awareness through movement techniques such as Developmental Movement, breath work, and Contact Improvisation, journal writing, hands on work with the instructor, and feedback from both your colleagues and the instructor, plus exercises designed to spark yourself awareness, creativity, and engage your whole self. You will be expected to read all textbooks and handouts, and to dialogue with the readings in your journals in order to support your own explorations and discoveries. This is an Alexander Technique class specifically designed for actors. All exercises and techniques introduced are meant to serve you as you develop your skill as artists as well as in your life.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/GOALS: At the end of the semester you should have an understanding of how to work with yourself in everyday activity as well as ways to apply the Alexander Technique in your acting work. You should be able to define and apply the Alexander principles for yourself by the end of the semester. You should be able to convey the principles of awareness, inhibition, and direction to activate your Primary Control through the use of constructive thinking as defined by F.M. Alexander. Your study of the Alexander Technique offers you the possibility for greater ease and flexibility in all of your activities as you engage with the process.

COURSE TOPICS/OUTLINE:

- Principles of Awareness
- Breath Awareness
- Primary Control
- Inhibition
- Constructive Rest
- Contact Improv
- "I KNOW" Assignment
- Developmental Process
- Personal Monologues

EVALUATIONS and GRADING PERCENTAGES:

Body/Imagination Inquiry –	5%
Short assignments –	5%
Participation –	30%
Journals –	40%
Midterm –	10%
Final –	10%
Total –	100%

GRADING SCALE: I assign grades on a 10pt scale.

A= 100%-90%, B= 89%-80%, C=79%-70%, D=69%-60%, E=59%-0%.

I may assign –'s or +'s for individual assignments, your final grade will follow University policy.

Letter Grade	GPA Equivalency

A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	.67
E, I, NG, S-U, WF	0.00

As for my grading system, throughout the semester you will be given letter grades for each assignment to include each time you turn in your journals, your Midterm, your Final, the Body/Imagination Inquiry, and that wonderful catchall, the Participation Grade. There will be several assignments during the semester such as the "I Knows" and the personal monologues, which will receive a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory grade. You may be asked to edit, tighten, or rewrite your monologues. The final result will be your grade for this assignment.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: You are allowed 3 absences for this class during the semester requiring no documentation. If you have a medical absence due to sickness, please follow the University policy regarding documentation. If there are unexpected emergencies or unexpected problems, please contact me ahead of time. Ph 352 226 8550 or see me before or after class. Please do everything in your power to attend class. As each class builds on the one before, much of what we do in class cannot be repeated and you will miss what you are not there to witness or participate in.

** After 3 absences I will deduct 5points from your grade per absence.

REGARDING LATE ARRIVALS: Please be on time to class. It is disruptive to the rest of the class and our process for you to come in late plus it is highly unprofessional. 2 TARDIES = 1 ABSENCE. Be aware of this.

LATE WORK/MAKE UP EXAMS: Assignments are due on the date given in the schedule unless announced otherwise. Turning assignments in late will result in 5 pts deducted from your score for ½ wk late; 10 pts for 1 wk late. No papers accepted after 1 wk. NO LATE PAPERS ACCEPTED FOR YOUR MIDTERM, FINAL TAKE HOME EXAM OR LAST JOURNAL COLLECTION.

For some assignments you must be present to participate and consequently, if you miss the "I know" day, for example, it will be impossible for you to participate in the assignment. Be there. You must be present to win. NEVER MISS A WORKSHOP/PERFORMANCE DATE. Since the exams for this class are take home exams dealing with your process in this class and your application of the principles of the Alexander Technique there should be no reason for you to have to make up the exams unless for reasons of extended illness in which case you would probably take an Incomplete in the course and take it again next time.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
Barbara Conable. *How to Learn the Alexander Technique.* Andover Press, Third Edition, 1995.
Michael J. Gelb. *Body Learning.* Owl Books, Henry Holt and Company, Second Edition, 1995.

SUGGESTED TEXT:

Robert Beverly Hale and Terence Coyle. Albinus on Anatomy. Watson Guptill Publications, 1979.

CRITICAL DATES:
Aug. 30 – Body Imagination Inquiry
Sep 13 – Journals
Sep 20 – "I knows"
Sep 22 – Draft of Personal Monologue
Oct 6 – Journals & Midterms
Oct 27– Journals
Nov 29 – Final Project Presentations
Dec 1– Final Project Paper & Journals

REGARDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
The university's policies regarding academic honesty, the honor code, and student conduct related to the honor code will be strictly enforced. Full information regarding these policies is available at the following links:

- Academic Honesty: http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html#honesty
- Honor Code: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php

Student Conduct: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php

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." Please make sure that you understand the University's Academic Guidelines and policies regarding Academic Honesty and Ethical Conduct.

RE: STUDENT HONOR CODE:
(3) Violations of the Student Honor Code
(i) Unauthorized Recordings. A student shall not without the express authorization from the faculty member and, if required by law, from other participants, make or receive any recording, including, but not limited to audio and video recordings, of any class, co-curricular meeting, organizational meeting, or meeting with a faculty member.
* from: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES:
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"By decision of the faculty in the School of Theatre and Dance, the following statement is included on all school syllabi: Since production is the laboratory for all theatre courses, attendance at all maintstage

School of Theatre and Dance productions is required of students enrolled in classes with the following prefix designations: THE, TPA, TPP, ORI. Critiques of and/or responses to these productions may be required. Attendance at all related events are encouraged."

Introduction:

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing
There is a field. I'll meet you there.
- Rumi

Aim for success, not perfection. Never give up your right to be wrong, because then you will lose the ability to learn new things and move forward with your life.

Remember that fear always lurks behind perfectionism. Confronting your fears and allowing yourself the right to be human can, paradoxically, make you a far happier and more productive person.
- Dr. David Burns

Among my colleagues and actor friends we have a saying (you've probably heard it) we often use to remind ourselves that acting, like life, is an ever unfolding process: "It's always ever only Acting I." Although this is, not strictly speaking, an acting class, this statement implies what I have come to believe is our fundamental work: that we actors are engaged in a lifelong learning process which demands the full use of our hearts, bodies, minds, and souls. If we get sidetracked by our need to be right, by creeping perfectionism, then we lose sight of the process. The Alexander Technique is about you and no matter how far you go in this field, the Alexander Technique as well as Acting with a capital "A" will always be about you. You are the subject and object of your study. To that end, you will be studying your body, your voice, your imagination, your awareness, and your use of self. You are your instrument and these are your tools. I have a great respect for the process as well as a deep appreciation for the commitment demanded to develop our craft. As one of my acting teachers once said to me, "You've got to dare to be stupid." Another acting teacher comforted me with a similar remark, "It's okay to hang out in 'not knowing land' because it's there, in the field "beyond wrongdoing and rightdoing" that you are able, as Rilke says, to "love the questions themselves, to live the questions now" for it is here that the learning begins and continues to unfold. Here is where you develop your awareness, your powers of observation, and sensitivity to your body/voice and its creative possibilities.

As an actor as well as a teacher, I have come to believe strongly in the 'd' word, discipline, which means, among other things, "to train or develop by instruction and exercise." Consequently, I see my job as helping students learn how to prepare their instruments for performing and how to apply those skills in performance. However, the work of the class is yours, not mine. You will be expected, if you have not already done so, to develop your own personal 'daily discipline' since this class is part of your professional training. Your attitude toward the work should be a professional one. The habits of work you establish here will serve you in the short run of this semester and the long run of your career and your life.

As an actor, educator, and Alexander Technique teacher, I am interested in how we do what we do, 'the means whereby' and because of my background I have come to believe that the answers live in the body and that the work will ultimately, always take us there. If the root word for educate, 'educe' means to draw out, then I am concerned with introducing you to pathways that will help you learn how to work. None of these pathways for releasing unwanted tensions that inhibit your physical, mental, and creative use can work without your wholehearted commitment and participation. You must show up with your whole self in order to discover how to wake up.

Let the learning begin…

Some say that my teaching is nonsense.
Others call it lofty but impractical.

But to those who have looked inside themselves,
This nonsense makes perfect sense.
And to those who put it into practice,
This loftiness has roots that go deep.

I have just three things to teach:
Simplicity, patience, compassion.
These three are your greatest treasures.
Simple in actions and thoughts,
You return to the source of being.
Patient with both friends and enemies,
You accord with the way things are.
Compassionate toward yourself,
You reconcile all beings in the world.
-Lao-Tzu

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

BE ON TIME: Preferably a few minutes EARLY. This is a professional class. Promptness is expected. If you are late 2times to class, those tardies will count as 1 absence. More than 3 absences lower your grade (5 pts per absence). If you have a good reason to be absent, please let me know in advance. You are responsible for checking with me on assignments. You will be expected to hand in assignments when due (unless you make arrangements otherwise with me).

BE PREPARED: All assignments MUST be handed in on scheduled due date. Lateness will affect the grade adversely.

RESPECT THE WORKSPACE: We are not the only ones to use this space. Before class everyone should prepare the space for work, removing unnecessary items, picking up trash, moving furniture out of the way, etc.

WORK CLOTHES REQUIRED: Changing for class can be an important part of your preparation ritual. Loose fitting, easy to move in clothes (sweats, leotards, t-shirts, footless tights). No jeans. No jewelry or watches.

MAINTAIN A QUIET TIME FROM THE TIME YOU ENTER THE WORKING SPACE: Take any personal conversations outside the workspace. Turn off ALL cellular devices. This is part of your 'daily discipline.' Use the quiet time on the floor to begin releasing outside distractions; to stretch and relax the body; to record last minute observations in your journal; to bring your whole self into the space prepared to work.

YOU ARE REQUIRED TO KEEP A DAILY OBSERVATION JOURNAL: (7 days per week) Use a notebook with pockets for articles, handouts, clipping, images, etc., as well as a section for your daily journal and the written assignments you will be doing. Better yet, use a loose-leaf notebook, but keep your journal in a separate composition book so that you can turn it in separately when called for. As we explore the Alexander Technique together you will discuss in your journal entries what you notice about yourself in class as well as in your daily life, including your other acting work. You will find that the Alexander Technique is applicable to anything you do, so your whole life and activities are all fair game and awareness and self-observation are keys to this work. ALWAYS BRING YOUR JOURNAL TO CLASS. There will often be time during class for journal entries. I will collect these journals several times during the semester plus they will be one of the sources you will use for some of your other writing assignments. Be sure to date all entries. Your daily journal entries can include reviewing what happened in class that day, observations about you and your colleagues' "use of self", dialogue with the readings from text, handouts, questions you may have, questions and ideas you may be wrestling with, notes from show or scene rehearsals, etc., and how you are applying the Alexander Technique in your daily life and work. You get the idea.

THERE WILL BE OTHER WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: I will be giving you articles to read which you will want to save for your files. Keep them handy in your class notebook during the semester. You will be expected to read the textbooks and I will expect you to comment on or question what you are reading in your journal entries. At various times during the semester I may ask you to write short response papers to the work and readings. There will be a Take Home Midterm and a Take Home Final at the end of the semester, both based on our work in class, the readings, and most importantly, your observations, discoveries, and application of the work.

I expect all assignments, with the exception of your journals to be typed. If you are keeping your journals always handy, they will have to be handwritten, but please make them legible. Have compassion on your reader (me) who will want to be able to respond intelligibly to your legible entries. Of course, artwork and images are another thing and always useful, if you are so inclined. Let your journals be your outlet for creative inquiry. Start your journals today!!

YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT: To complete The Body/Imagination – Personal Inquiry. Please enjoy these questions and respond with as much detail as you can. Your typed response is DUE TU/AUG 30 I look forward to getting to know you better in these papers.

Of course, most of what we will be doing will be in class, so you will be graded on your participation. At the same time, in this work, we each learn at our own pace. I am well aware of this and you will have to trust me to cultivate your progress with all the skill available to me. At he same time, grades have to be given in college courses although this is, in some ways, contradictory to Alexander Technique principles. Nevertheless, I expect you will all do just fine if you engage in the process with your whole selves.

We have a saying among Alexander teachers: to take the work seriously, but not ourselves. This work requires a light touch and a light heart. You will be making discoveries about your own 'habits of use.' Part of the work is to put the heavy handed, negative, mean voices (your judgmental voices) on 'pause.' You can always invite them back again later, but they will interfere with what we will be doing, so send them on a coffee break for a while, at least for the purposes of our class.

As you can see by now, I love to quote other writers. The choice of quotes, I think, also lets you know a little bit about where I'm coming from as a teacher, so indulge me one more time.

"The body is your clay home, your only home in the universe. The body is in the soul; this recognition confers a sacred and mystical dignity on the body. The senses are divine thresholds…When you cease to fear your solitude, a new creativity awakens in you. Your forgotten or neglected inner wealth begins to reveal itself. You come home to yourself and learn to rest within. Thoughts are our inner senses. Infused with silence and solitude, they bring out the mystery of the inner landscape…The invisible hungers to become visible, to express itself in our actions. This is the inner desire of work. When our inner life can befriend the outer world of work, new imagination is awakened and great changes take place…We will secretly explore memory as the place where our vanished days secretly gather and acknowledge that the passionate heart never ages. Time is veiled eternity." – from Anam Cara by John O'Donohue

For me, the Alexander Technique is about coming home, coming home to yourself. During our journey together, I hope you will discover how these works illuminate the actor's work.