

Somatics for the Actor II  
TPP3571  
Spring 2024  
T/TH 10:40-12:35  
Room G-13

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

**Course Description:** This course is a graduate 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:**

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

**Grading Policy:**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Grade Points</b>
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.

**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 the 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](http://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.

**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.*

#### **Week 1**                      **Intro to Somatics and The Alexander Technique**

- T January 9, 2024      Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching  
Introductions, review syllabus, review course objectives  
Lecture: Introduction to AT  
Experiential: Picture Before & After AT Work/Setting Semester Goal  
Assignment: Gelb “Alexander: The Man and His Discovery” pg. 9-21
- TH January 11, 2024      Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Dancing  
Lecture: Recognition of the Force of Habit  
Experiential: Breaking the Habit of Acting Monologues or Scenes  
Assignment: Gelb “Use & Functioning” pg. 25-34

#### **Week 2**                      **The 5 Principles of the Alexander Technique & Intro to Meditation**

- T January 16, 2024      Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching  
Lecture: Introduction to Meditation/Inhibition/Non-Doing  
Experiential: The Critical Moment/Guided Body Soma Meditation  
Assignment: Gelb “Inhibition” pg. 59-67
- TH January 18, 2024      Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Guided Somatic Meditation  
Lecture: Recognition of Faulty Sensory Appreciation/Sensory-Motor Amnesia/Anatomy 101  
Experiential: How much tension is necessary?  
Assignment: Gelb “Unreliable Sensory Appreciation” pg. 52-58

### **Week 3**

### **The 5 Principles of the Alexander Technique & Intro to Qi Gong**

- T January 23, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching  
Lecture: Sending Directions  
Experiential: Embodied meditation/Constructive Rest/ Finger Activity  
Assignment: Gelb "Direction" pg. 68-78
- TH January 25, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture: Qi Gong/Sending Directions Continued/Universal Up/Thinking in Activity  
Experiential: Thinking Vs. Directing  
Assignment: Gelb "Ends & Means" chapter and questions

### **Week 4**

### **The 5 Principles of the Alexander Technique & Intro to Yin Yoga**

- T January 30, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/RAIN  
Lecture: The Primary Control/ Anatomy of the Occiput  
Experiential: Finding my sit bones/Turtle experiment  
Assignment: Gelb "The Primary Control" pg. 42-51; Anatomic definition of Primary Control
- TH February 1, 2024 Warm-Up Intuitive Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture: Review Day!/Discussion of 5 Principles Assignment  
Experiential: Review Procedures  
Assignment: Short essay response

### **Week 5**

### **Opposition/Tensegrity, Walking, and Stairs**

- T February 6, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Qi Gong  
Experiential: Slating!  
Assignment: Finding the 5 Principles/F.M.'s Frustrations
- TH February 8, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture: Anatomy of the Hip/Legs/Opposition & Tensegrity  
Experiential: Walking Backwards/Partner Opposition/Limbs Opposing Torso  
Assignment: Rivka Cohen on Opposition/My blog post on tension

## **Week 6**

### **Universal Up/Lowering in Space**

- T February 13, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Dancing/Embodied Meditation  
Lecture: What is Universal Up and How Does This Impact Our Sense of Direction within the Self?  
Experiential: Procedure for tilting in space  
Assignment: Rivka Cohen "Universal Up"/Gelb "Ends and Means" pg.
- TH February 15, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Qi Gong  
Lecture: Squatting/Anatomy of the legs and hips  
Activity: Squatting at the door and without  
Assignment: Amy Cuddy Power Poses Ted Talk

## **Week 7**

### **Breathing AT Style (i.e. Get Out Of The Way)**

- T February 20, 2024 Warm-up: Intuitive Stretching/Thich Nhat Hahn Mindfulness Movements  
Lecture: Tidal Breathing/Carrington Breathing Excerpt  
Activity: Breathing on the floor/Nasal cavity/Whispered Ah  
Assignment: F.M. Alexander on Breathing
- TH February 22, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture: Jessica Wolf on Breathing/Anatomy of Breathing  
Activity: What is breath support?  
Assignment: Somatic breathing exercises at home and summary

## **Week 8**

### **The Voice: Again, Stop Doing So Much**

- T February 27, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture: Anatomy of the voice/Vocal Cords Video  
Activity: Vocalizing and Singing  
Assignment: The Tao of the Voice Anatomy of the Voice
- TH February 29, 2024 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Yin Yoga  
Lecture: The Critical Moment in Speech/How much tension is necessary in projection? How do we define support? Misconceptions and new definitions/Review for Quiz  
Activity: The Critical Moment in Speech  
Assignment: Understanding Our Habits of Projection/Study for Quiz

## **Week 9**

### **Honoring Spaciousness and The Pause**

T March 5, 2024

Due Monologue Paper 1

TH March 7, 2024

Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching: Mindfulness Movements

Lecture: AT Rotations and Hands-On Work

Activity: The space between in the room/between partners/between sentences/between words

Assignment: Zen in the Art of Archery excerpts

## **Week 10**

Spring Break!!! March 11-15

## **Week 11**

### **The Evolution of Misuse: How Did We Get This Way**

T March 17, 2024

Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Yin Yoga

Lecture: Discussion of Zen in the Art of Archery/What is "it"? How do we Allow? What role does practice and discipline take?

Assignment: Read chapter "How We Came to Be Like This" and students come up with 1 discussion question for class discussion due BOC 10.11

Assignment: Find 1 actor or dancer whose use you admire. Find pictures or videos of them performing. Research whether they have ever studied AT.

TH March 19, 2024

Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Meditation

Lecture: Frustrations and Reality in AT/What does it mean to do utilize these tools for life?

Activity: Monologues and Scene work hands-on

Assignment: Nelly-Ben Or reading excerpt

## **Week 12**

### **Identifying Good Use**

T March 26, 2024

Warm-Up: Stretching/Qi Gong

Lecture: My AT Person

Activity: PPT Presentations/My AT role model

Assignment: Notes on Instruction favorite quotes/expand on one quote

TH March 28, 2024

Warm-Up: Stretching/Yin Yoga

Lecture: Continued PPT Presentations/Discussion of favorite quotes

Assignment: TBD



**Week 13**      **A Holistic Use of the Self**

T April 2, 2024      Warm-Up: Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture: Fascia trains  
Activity: Sensing the fascia connections and interpreting in AT directions  
Assignment: Practice drawing the fascia trains; journal about how you experience these connections within the body and within your AT work

TH April 4, 2024      Warm-Up: Stretching/Qi Gong  
Lecture: Microcosms within the Body  
Activity: Neck, wrists, and ankles  
Assignment: Study for quiz

**Week 14**      **Thought grooves, Emotions, and Habitual Conditioning**

T April 9, 2025 Warm-Up: Stretching/Yin Yoga  
Assignment: Articles and Lecture "Thought grooves, emotions"

TH April 11, 2024 Warm-Up: Stretching/Meditation  
Lecture/Discussion: Habitual and Societal Conditioning  
Activity: Running, dancing, and jumping  
Assignment: Looking at the habits of my family/ancestors

**Week 15**      **Balancing: The Middle Way**

T April 16, 2024 Warm-Up: Stretching/Qi Gong  
Lecture:Allowing vs.Effort/The union of Up & Down  
Activity: Falling Down to Come Up/Releasing the limbs and catching the back  
Assignment: Walter Carrington/Cohen "The Up Within the Curve"

TH April 18, 2024 AT Rotations/Monologues/Performances/Project 2

**Week 16**      **Putting It All Together**

T April 23, 2023 AT Rotations and in Class Monologues/Performances /Paper/Project 2