

Somatics MFA
TPP6297
Fall 2025
T/TH 8:30 a.m.-10:25 a.m.
Room TBA

Instructor: Mariel Brewster
Office Hours: Zoom and/or email me to schedule an in-person appointment
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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:

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.

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) 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 professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-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 Weekly 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**

TH August 21, 2025 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

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

T August 26, 2025 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

TH August 28, 2025 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

Week 3 **The 5 Principles of the Alexander Technique: Faulty Sensory Appreciation & Direction**

T September 2, 2025 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

TH September 4, 2025 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching

Lecture: Sending Directions

Experiential: Embodied meditation/Constructive Rest/ Finger Activity

Assignment: Gelb "Direction" pg. 68-78

Week 4

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

T September 9, 2025 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

TH September 11, 2025 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

Week 5

Review 5 Principles and Applying AT to Slating!

T September 16, 2025 Warm-Up Intuitive Stretching/Meditation

Lecture: Review Day!/Discussion of 5 Principles Assignment

Experiential: Review Procedures

Assignment: Short essay response

TH September 18, 2025 Warm-Up: Intuitive Stretching/Qi Gong

Experiential: Slating!

Assignment: Finding the 5 Principles/F.M.'s Frustrations

Week 6

Opposition/Tensegrity, Walking, and Stairs and Universal Up

T September 23, 2025 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

TH September 25, 2025 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.

Week 7 **Breathing AT Style (i.e. Get Out Of The Way)**

T September 30, 2025 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 October 2, 2025 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 October 7, 2025 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 October 9, 2025 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 October 14, 2025 Due Monologue Paper 1

TH October 16, 2025 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

The Evolution of Misuse: How Did We Get This Way

- T October 21, 2025 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 October 23, 2025 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 11

Identifying Good Use

- T October 28, 2025 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 October 30, 2025 Warm-Up: Stretching/Yin Yoga
Lecture: Continued PPT Presentations/Discussion of favorite quotes
Assignment: TBD

Week 12

A Holistic Use of the Self

- T November 4, 2025 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 November 6, 2025 Warm-Up: Stretching/Qi Gong
Lecture: Microcosms within the Body
Activity: Neck, wrists, and ankles
Assignment: Study for quiz

Week 13

Thought grooves, Emotions, and Habitual Conditioning

T November 11, 2024 **NO CLASS VETERANS DAY**

TH November 13, 2025 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 14 **Balancing: The Middle Way**

T November 18, 2025 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 November 20, 2025 AT Rotations/Monologues/Performances/Project 2

Week 15 **Thanksgiving week! November 24-28**

Week 16 **Putting It All Together/Final Class**

T December 2, 2025 AT Rotations and in Class Monologues/Performances /Paper/Project 2