THE KNOWING BODY: 
MIND/BODY AWARENESS FOR PERFORMERS

Spring Term 2012 
ARTS-UG.1106

Tuesdays, 6:20pm-9:00pm 
715 Broadway, Rm 430

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Required Texts: Selected Reading Packet, New University Copy, 11 Waverly Place 
Discovering The Body’s Wisdom, Mirka Knaster (Bantam) Book Store

Welcome to The Knowing Body. In this arts workshop you will learn about the theory and practice of body awareness techniques (along with imagery and qi qong) and apply these methods to specific areas of performance and performance preparation. You will deepen your understanding and abilities in the area of breath, posture/alignment, tension, energy, concentration and care of the body. You will perform a short piece of performance (or body use) the fourth week of class, once during the semester and again at the end of the semester. This course is about you improving the use of your performing instrument - the body.

You will be expected to work weekly outside of the classroom, practicing and applying mind/body methods that you have learned each week to your performance piece. To help focus on ideas presented in class you will write reflective essays and journal entries. All assignments must be turned in hard copy not electronic. You will keep all of your work during the semester in a three ring binder/folder, turning in the binder at midterm and the end of the semester.

Your reading assignments will enhance your understanding of the material presented in class. They are assigned the week before each class. You are expected to be an active participant in discussions, to attend every session, arrive on time and to wear clothing you can move in.

I am available to discuss anything that has come up during or after class. Please call me to talk, or e-mail me about any concerns or questions you have. You are also encouraged to schedule an in-person appointment. You may speak with me after class as well.
Class Objectives

The overall goal of the class is to improve your performance work whether you are an actor, dancer, or musician.*

Objectives include:

1. To gain awareness of your performance instrument - your body in daily life and performance using methods presented.

2. Learn specific exercises which address; breath, posture, tension, energy, concentration and integration.


4. Learn methods to deal with performance anxiety or blockages.

5. Learn to take better care of your performance instrument.

* There are those of you who are not performers but for whom the class is appropriate. We are all body users and you will identify how or what you will do for your performance. We have had a variety of artists, readers, models, jump ropers, and an ice skater. Speak with me about what you are comfortable doing.

Class Format

· Discussion
  
  Response to Material - what Noticing about Practice
  Discussion of Readings and how Relate to Class
  Introduction of Week's Topic

· Experiential
  
  Body Scans
  Flexibility
  New Exercises Related to Weekly Topic

· Performance
  
  View Performance Each Week as Relates to Topic
Course Requirements

Written Assignments

This is an experiential class. You will learn and practice methods for your body/mind that will enhance your performance as well as your daily living. Yet, your personal experience can only be measured/graded in terms of your reflection on the experience. This reflection, whether essay or journal, will enhance and deepen your learning experience.

All written work is to be handed in, in person, in hard copy on the day it is due. Your writing is to be kept in a 3-ring folder with sleeves (found at Staples) and will be turned in, in total at mid-term and at the end of the semester.

You are required to practice methods learned in class each week and apply them to your performance area/piece.

Performance Write Up

After your first performance identify areas to focus on, using class criteria, class feedback and your own observation. Be specific, not "I think it went well". Why did it go well, in terms of what we are looking at, ie, performance criteria?

Mid-Term Learning Assessment

1. Discuss what have you learned and understand so far in terms of body awareness theory, cite sources.
2. How do you see these methods enhancing your performance?
3. What methods have you focused on specially that have enhanced your performance and daily body use?
   3-5 pages.

Journal Entry

Read these instructions carefully.
When assigned you are required to make five separate entries.
   1. reaction to class; 2. noticing body use; 3. application/practice;
   4. rehearsal; 5. readings.

Reaction to Class
   · What did you notice specifically about your body in class? For example:
     How did your body fit against the floor?
     Did your breathing change after the body scan?
     What did you notice about your spine after the flexibility work?
   · What did you learn about your body and performance?
Noticing Body Use
- During the week what have you noticed about how you use your body in daily activities? In general and as it relates to the week’s topic
- In performance practice?

Application
- Practice one exercise from class and write about it

Rehearsal/Application
- What have you noticed during the rehearsal of your piece or in performance class, in relation to the topic presented this week?

Readings
- What are the authors key ideas presented in the reading?
- How do they relate to what you are studying in class?
- What is your reaction to the reading?

Grading Policy

Your grade is influenced by the following:

- Regular attendance (grade will be lowered after two absences)
  There are no "excused" absences, all are the same

- Coming prepared to discuss, in class, reaction to readings, course work (15%)

- Showing improvement in performance (25%)

- Essay/Readings/Journals (3) (15%)

- Perform and write up observation of performance and learning goals (15%)

- Mid-Term Learning Assessment (15%)

- Final Analysis Essay (15%)

Incomplete grades must be arranged in advance with instructor.

Read through the syllabus carefully and make sure you understand all the assignments and time lines. Then sign and date the sheet provided stating that you have done so.
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I have carefully read the contents of this syllabus and understand the assignments and time lines.

Print your name:______________________________

Signature:_____________________________________

Date:________________________
January 24: Introduction/Overview/Use
   Introductions/Class Expectations
   Body/Mind Use in Performance
   Developing Evaluation Criteria for Performance Pieces
   Experiential:
       Body Scan and Breathing
       Flexibility Sequence
       Hang Out
   Reading For Next Class Discussion: (Read this Week to discuss 1/31)
       Steinmann, The Body as Home, *The Knowing Body*
       Powell, Using Breathing Exercises, *Working Woman’s Guide*
   Assignment: Essay: 2 pages Due 1/31/12
       How do you use and see your body as an instrument in performance?
       Give examples
       How do you feel about your body in performance?

January 31: Breath
   Body Awareness and Performance (From The Knowing Body)
   Breath and Performance
   Experiential:
       Body Scan
       Breathing Work
       Jaw/Sounding
       Animal Movement
   Performance:
       Look at Performance Focusing on Breath
   Reading Next Class Discussion:
       Knaster, *Discovering the Body's Wisdom*, Chapters 1
       Powell, Body Therapies, *Journal of Holistic Nursing*
   Assignment: Journal Entry
       Journal Entry (see instructions)

February 7: Posture/Alignment
   Performance and Posture
   Body Awareness Techniques and Performance
   Experiential:
       Plumb Line
       Hang Out (Review)
       Chair Work
       KA Balls
   Performance:
       Notice Alignment
   Reading Next Class Discussion:
       Knaster, *Discovering the Body's Wisdom*, Chapter 3
   Assignment: Prepare for Performance
February 14: Show Performance Pieces
Experiential:
Body Scan/Breathing/Flexibility
Performance Pieces/Performance Criteria
Assignment: Due 2/21/12
1. Write up your performance experience and turn in (if you performed)
2. What did you see in general in these performances in terms of the criteria?

February 21: Show Performance Pieces
Experiential:
Body Scan/Breathing/Flexibility
Performances/Performance Criteria
Reading Next Class Discussion: (Read this Week)
Knaster, pp. 263-266
Ann-Sargent Wooster, Drama Journal
Green, The Use of Balls in Kinetic Awareness, JOHPER Journal
Assignment: Due 2/28/12
1. Write up performance experience and turn in (if performed)
2. Discuss readings on Kinetic Awareness

February 28: Tension/Use
Habitual Tension/Effort
Experiential:
Exploring Tension Use
Extension/Tension
Flexibility Sequence
KA Ball Work
Performance:
Finish Performances
Reading Next Week:
Knaster, pp. 209-222
Crow, "The Alexander Technique as a Basic Approach to Theatrical Training"
Assignment:
Journal Entry 3/6
Begin to Write Learning Summary (See Instructions) for 3/20
March 6: Nina D'Abbracci Alexander Guest Lecture
Alexander and Performance
Experiential:
   The Alexander Technique
Reading: (Start)
   Barba & Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer*
Assignment:
   1. Discuss your response to the Alexander Lesson
   2. How does it relate to your performance work

March 13: Spring Break

March 20: Energy
Evaluate Class and Rate Learning Experience
Energy and its Use in Performance
Experiential:
   Using Energy in Standing/Walking
   Sensing Chi Energy
   Qi Qong Exercise
   Pulling up Energy (Sitting)
Performance:
   Notice Energy
Reading for Next Class:
   Minton, "Exploring the Mind/Body Connection with Imagery"
   Powell, "Creative Visualization: A tool for Change"
Assignment:
   Catch up with energy reading

March 27: Imagery and Performance
Announce Gallatin Arts Festival April 2-7
Use in Performance
Experiential:
   Visualization Exercises
   Mental Rehearsal for Performance
Reading for Next Class Discussion:
   Powell, "Using Your Mind to Decrease Stress"
   Knaster, Chapter 6
Assignment:
   Take notes (can put in folder) and bring to class to discuss
   Think about yourself as a performer (or a body user) and write about any
   performance blocks, beliefs, concerns, anxieties or behaviors that
   influence your performance. How have you handled these in the past?
April 3: Beliefs and Behaviors that Affect Performance
Identifying Problems in Performance
Experiential:
  - Visualization
  - Positive Statements
Reading:
  - Kohnlein, "Listening from the Physical Body"
Assignment:
  1. How do you prepare for performance? Has it changed since starting class?
  2. Talk to another performer and ask about how they prepare for performance

April 10: Performance Preparation
The Performer Prepares/How to Use Methods
Review all Methods of Performance Preparation
Experiential:
  - Body Scan/Breathing/Flexibility
  - Energy
  - Mental Rehearsal
  - Kinetic Awareness
Assignment: Essay 4-5 pages

Pick one or two aspects of learning that have been particularly influential or of interest such as breathing, tension, energy, posture, discuss citing a minimum of 3 authors from your readings.

April 17: Concentration/Integration
Concentration and Performance - How to Achieve
Experiential:
  - Focusing
  - Body Scan and Focus
  - Review methods
Performance:
  - Concentration/Integration
Assignment:
  - Prepare for Performance
  - Turn in Notebooks (Work from the whole semester)

April 24: Final Performances
Experiential:
  - Performance Preparation
Performance

May 1: Final Performances
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AWARENESS FOR PERFORMERS

MIND/BODY CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

Use these categories to view each performance piece. Use them as guidelines when thinking about and working on your own work. Bring to class when viewing performance.

· Overall Posture/Alignment
  Balanced?
  Stiff?
  Collapsed?

· Tension
  Use - appropriate to performance?
  Excess? Lack of?
  Frozen tension - how manifest?

· Breath
  Visible?
  Flowing/integrated/appropriate?
  Held?
  Shallow?
  Irregular?

· Energy
  How much?
  Low? High?
  Integrated/appropriate?

· Concentration/Focus
  Consistent?

· Integration
  Head/Body?
  Words/Body?