The Knowing Body:
Mind/Body Awareness for Performers
ARTS-UG 1106
Spring Term 2014
Tuesdays, 6:20pm-9:00pm
715 Broadway, Rm 430

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Course Syllabus

Course Description:

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. These techniques are valuable for performing artists who want to gain more freedom of expression, range of motion, comfort, concentration and presence in their work and daily lives. By using focused attention to sense your body in motion and at rest, muscular tension and poor body habits that interfere with performance can be released. You will deepen your understanding and abilities in the area of Breath, Posture/Alignment, Tension, Energy, Concentration and care of the body. The course is designed for the student who is ready to commit to an in-depth investigation of their body and is ready to make physical and mental changes through quiet focused attention. This course is about you improving the use of your performing instrument - the body.

You will be expected to work daily/weekly outside of the classroom and practice and apply mind/ body methods that you have learned each week to your performance piece. Your reading assignments will enhance your understanding of the material presented in class. They are assigned the week before each class. You will have written assignments including a midterm and final performance evaluation. 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.

Required Texts: Discovering The Body's Wisdom, Mirka Knaster (Bantam) Book Store
Selected Reading Packet, University Copy, 27 Waverly Place
Class Objectives:

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

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

· To gain an understanding of the theory and practice of Somatic/Body Awareness methods.

· To learn specific exercises which address; breath, posture, tension, energy, concentration and integration.

· To learn methods for performance preparation.

· To learn methods to deal with performance anxiety or blockages.

· To learn improved 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.

Course Expectations/Requirements:

· To practice daily - body scans and physical performance warm-up (30 min)
· To keep a personal journal of your experience
· To practice at least once a week new exercises (10-20 min)
· To apply methods to performance rehearsal (15-30)
· To read weekly readings (and discuss in class) (1/2-1 hr)
· To turn in written assignments on time, in person, and in hard copy, e-mails will not be accepted. (1 hr.)

Class Structure:

· Discussion
  Response to Material - What Noticing about Practice
  Discussion of Readings and How Relate to Class
  Introduction of Week’s Topic

· Experiential
  Body Scans
  Physical Performance Warm Up
  New Exercises Related to Weekly Topic
Performance

View Performance Each Week as Relates to Topic

To Consider Each Week:

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 exercise from class

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?

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 written reflection on the experience and of your academic learning. The written work will enhance and deepen your learning experience.

Journaling

Keep notes of your weekly experience with body scans and exercise as well as rehearsal.

Performance Write Up

After your first performance identify areas you will 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 (7-8 pages)

1. Discuss what have you learned and understand so far in terms of body awareness theory, cite at least 3-4 sources. Discuss such topics as posture, breath as relates to somatic theory.

2. How are body awareness methods different from other physical methods such as yoga, traditional exercise, physical therapy?

3. How do these methods inform your understanding of performance? How does having this knowledge enhance your performance?

4. What methods have specially enhanced your performance and daily body use?

Final Assignment:

Your final performance is part of your final experience.

You will turn in a written evaluation of your performance process and learning (see handout)

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 (30%)

- Written assignments (Kinetic Awareness, journal notes) (10%)

- Written observation of performance (5%)

- Mid-Term Learning Assessment (20%)

- Final Analysis Essay (20%)

Incomplete grades must be arranged in advance with instructor.
January 28: Introduction/Overview/Use
Introductions/Class Expectations
Body/Mind Use in Performance
Developing Evaluation Criteria for Performance Pieces
Experiential:
  - Body Scan and Breathing
  - Movement Sequence/Body Warm-Up
  - 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:
  - Write out how you use and see your body as an instrument in performance (or daily life)?
  - How do you feel about your body in performance?
  - Keep what you wrote

February 4: 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

February 11: 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:
  - Knaster, Discovering the Body’s Wisdom, Chapter 3
Assignment:
  - Prepare for Performance
February 18: Show Performance Pieces
Experiential:
   Body Scan/Breathing/Movement
   Performance Pieces/Performance Criteria
Assignment: When you perform
1. Write up your own performance experience and what you will be working on during the semester and turn in. Keep a copy for your self.
2. What did you see in general in these performances in terms of the criteria?

February 25: Show Performance Pieces
Experiential:
   Body Scan/Breathing/Movement
   Performances Prep
Reading Next Class Discussion:
   Knaster, pp. 263-266
   Ann-Sargent Wooster, Drama Journal
   Frances Becker, Kinetic Awareness, Contact Quarterly
   Green, The Use of Balls in Kinetic Awareness, JOHPER Journal
Assignment: Due 3/4/12
   1. Write up your understanding of the theory and key concepts of Kinetic Awareness
   2. How does it relate to your performance study and practice?
   3. Begin thinking about the MidTerm

March 4: Tension/Use
Discuss Knaster and Kinetic Awareness
Habitual Tension/Effort
Experiential:
   Exploring Tension Use
   Extension/Tension
   Flexibility Sequence
   KA Ball Work
Performance:
   Finish Performances
Reading Next Week Discussion:
   Barba & Savarese, The Secret Art of the Performer
Midterm Assignment: Due 3/11/14

March 11: 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:
Knaster, Ch. 2 plus pp. 209-222
Crow, "The Alexander Technique as a Basic Approach to Theatrical Training"
YouTube.com
Marjorie Barstow

Turn In MidTerm

March 19: Spring Break

March 25: Nina D'Abbracci Alexander Guest Lecturer
Alexander and Performance
Experiential:
The Alexander Technique
Reading:
Minton," Exploring the Mind/Body Connection with Imagery"
Powell, "Creative Visualization: A tool for Change"

April 1: Imagery and Performance
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 to share in class
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 8: Beliefs and Behaviors that Affect Performance
Identifying Problems in Performance
Experiential:
Visualization
Positive Statements
Reading:
Kohnlein, "Listening from the Physical Body"

April 15: Concentration/Integration and Review
Concentration and Performance - How to Achieve
Experiential:
Focusing
Body Scan and Focus
Review methods
Performance:
Concentration/Integration
Assignment:
Take notes and bring to class to discuss (can keep in journal)
Think about how you prepare for performance Describe in detail
Talk to another performer and ask about how they prepare for
performance
Prepare for performance

April 22: 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:
Prepare for Performance
Turn in Final Assignment

April 29: Final Performances
Experiential:
Performance Preparation
Performances

May 6: Final Performances
Experiential:
Performance Preparation
Performances
THE KNOWING BODY:
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?

· Grounding
  Read through the syllabus carefully and make sure you understand all the assignments and time lines. Then sign the sheet provided stating that you have done so and turn it in to me.
I have carefully read the contents of this syllabus and understand the requirements, assignments and time lines.