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 weekly journal of your experience, practice, and readings (15-20 min)
- To practice at least once a week new exercises from class (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 assigned written assignments on time, in person, and in hard copy, e-mails will not be accepted

Class Structure:

- Experiential
  Short Physical Warm Up

- 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 your 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.

Journal:
Keep a weekly journal that includes the following: Use guidelines from above
  • Response to Body Scans and applied exercises
  • When applicable performance rehearsal and application
• Weekly Readings
  Authors key concepts
  Write out idea, quote, issue and bring to class

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. Define Body Awareness theory using a minimum of 3-4 different sources (including Powell, Knaster and Jones). What are the key concepts of body awareness techniques?

2. What are the key concepts of Kinetic Awareness?

3. How do these methods specifically enhance performance in terms of presence, sense of self, artistic expression, preparation and concentration?

4. Since starting class what have you noticed about your body in daily use, and in performance (in classes, rehearsal, performance)?

Final Performance Write Up

Address 1-5 for your final paper:

1. Articulate the goals you have identified for enhancing your performance. Use what you have observed and what the class noticed from your first performance.

2. What methods, in general, have you applied in achieving these goals? (Breathing, Alexander Technique, Flexibility, etc).

3. What have you learned from this class in terms of performance/daily use?

4. Are you viewing performance any differently since you started class?

5. Document (Write out) your weekly rehearsal process using this format:
   
   Week I: April 7
   
   What are you working on? (breath, anxiety, energy, etc)
   What exercises are you applying/practicing to enhance your performance?
What is your rehearsal process? Warm Up and run through
What do you see is needed?

Week II: April 14

See above
What have you added?

Week III: April 21

Continue to apply body awareness methods to your daily activities and performance.
Write about your progress

Week IV: April 28

Where is your performance at this point?
What has been helpful?
How do you feel about your piece?
How do you feel about your process?

Week VI: May 6

Performance
Turn in this final analysis

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 (Observation of performance, journal) (15%)

• Mid-Term Learning Assessment (20%)

• Final Analysis Essay (20%)

• Incomplete grades must be arranged in advance with instructor.
**Academic Integrity:**
As a Gallatin student you are expected to maintain academic integrity. The University takes this matter very seriously. Behaviors that compromise this integrity include plagiarism and doubling or recycling course work. You have been asked to document author's ideas for this class. You must give credit for the ideas you discuss whether they are direct quotes or paraphrased. We will discuss this further.
**January 27: 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: Journal
- 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?

**February 3: Breath**

- Body Awareness and Performance (From The Knowing Body)

**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 10: Posture/Alignment**

- Performance and Posture
- Body Awareness Techniques and Performance - Key Concepts

**Experiential:**
- Plumb Line
- Hang Out (Review)
- KA Balls

**Performance:**
- Notice Alignment

Reading Next Class:
- Knaster, *Discovering the Body's Wisdom*, Chapter 3
- Jones, *Body Awareness in Action*

Assignment:
- Prepare for Performance
February 17: 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 yourself.
2. What did you see in general (not specific performances) in these performances in terms of the criteria?

February 24: 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:
Begin work on the MidTerm

March 3: 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 3/10/14
March 10: 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 17: Spring Break

March 24: 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"

March 31: 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: Journal
   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?

   Begin Documentation of Final Performance Write Up
   See Instructions
April 7: Beliefs and Behaviors that Affect Performance
   Identifying Problems in Performance
   Experiential:
       Visualization
       Positive Statements
   Reading:
       Kohnlein, "Listening from the Physical Body"

April 14: Concentration/Integration and Review
   Concentration and Performance - How to Achieve
   Experiential:
       Focusing
       Body Scan and Focus
       Review methods
   Performance:
       Concentration/Integration
   Assignment: 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 21: 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

April 28: Final Performances
   Experiential:
       Performance Preparation
   Performances

May 5: Final Performances
   Experiential:
       Performance Preparation
   Performances

   Turn in Final Assignment
   Turn in Journal
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.