Fight Choreography Fundamentals  
DRAM 4391.003  

Fall 2021  

Instructor: Slade Billew  
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Office Hours: M 12:30PM – 2:30PM, TR 12:30PM – 1:30PM or by appointment  
Office: McKibben 404-Q  

Class Time and Place: TR 3:30 – 4:45  
McKibben 324  

Objectives: In this class, we will explore the foundations of thinking about fight choreography focusing on weapons disciples central to contemporary stage choreography: knife, unarmed, and short stick. From these we will build an understanding of safe use of these tools, and consider how to begin choreographing with them. Also, we will touch on a range of other weapons disciplines for the purpose of exposure to a range of tools, and to see how similar principles apply across different weapons.  

Teaching Philosophy: I do not believe that teaching is me giving you information and you receiving it. Rather, I believe that we engage together in a process of research, challenge, and negotiation. It is important to me that you consent to the work of the class. In order to consent you must understand what it is we are doing and believe that you are encouraged to ask questions and even to challenge ideas I present. Sometimes you will disagree with me, and that is what should happen. We must develop the capacity to say “no” in order to nourish our personal and artistic autonomy. It is only by being able to say “no” that we can truly say “yes.” This does not make class a free for all where everyone just does what they want. Instead, we work together to craft the class environment and there may be times when we need to discuss, negotiate, and accommodate individual difference. I recognize that there is a power imbalance in any classroom and that many, if not most of you will distrust that I really mean the above statement. We will work to create an environment where you can develop that trust. I don’t approach class this way because I want you to like me or because I am a “nice human”, rather I believe that part of what you must learn in your time at SFA is to think of yourself as an autonomous artist with your own thoughts, visions, and ideas that are just as important (but crucially not more important) than the thoughts visions and ideas of everyone else in the room.  

Required Text: None  

Grading components:  
1) Engagement  
2) Fight Scene Analyses  
3) Performance Projects  

10%  
30%  
60%  

Final Grading: (0-59) F  (59.5-69) D  (69.5-79) C  (79.5-89) B  (89.5-100) A  

Engagement: The expectation in this class is that you are present as an engaged artist for each class session. You must be present and ready to work at the beginning of each class session. You are expected to be mentally, emotionally, and physically ready for each class. You will be asked to engage as a student, artist, and collaborator every day. You should meet or exceed the expectations of the course, the School of Theatre, and the university. Your engagement will be noted and evaluated on a weekly basis. You will also be asked to evaluate your own engagement on a weekly basis when you submit your Class Reflection. Below is a general rubric for engagement.
A – Student shows a heightened level of attention, commitment, and effort.
B – Student shows an acceptable level of attention, commitment, and effort.
C – Student is present and not disruptive or obviously disengaged,
D – Student is present and mildly disruptive or disengaged.
F – Student is present and significantly disruptive or disengaged.
0 – Student is not present or asked to leave class.

Fight Scene Analysis: (15% each) Twice in the semester you will perform an analysis of a piece of filmed fight choreography. You will write a short analysis addressing the following areas: Weapons, Space, Style, Character, Story, Rhythm, & Miscellaneous Elements (costume, set, lighting, ability of actors, etc...) In addition to the written analysis, you will lead a short discussion about the scene in class.

Performance Projects:

1. _Unarmed and/or Knife Stage Combat Scene (25%):_
   a. _Choreography (15%)_ – You will choreograph a short scene using Unarmed and/or Knife techniques. You will choose a scene, analyze the scene, produce written choreography, and rehearse your cast.
   b. _Performance (10%)_ – You will also perform in a scene choreographed by another student. You will be assessed on your skill with the weapon discipline and your ability to act the fight.

2. _Final Stage Combat Scene (35%):_
   a. _Choreography (20%)_ – You will choreograph a scene using a weapon or weapons of your choice. You will choose a scene, analyze the scene, produce written choreography, and rehearse your cast.
   b. _Performance (15%)_ – You will also perform in a scene choreographed by another student. You will be assessed on your skill with the weapon discipline and your ability to act the fight.

Program Learning Outcomes

- This course applies to the following School of Theatre Program Learning Outcomes at an introductory level.
- PLO #2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of theatre history and a variety of theatrical styles
- PLO #3: The student will demonstrate collaborative and/or leadership competencies appropriate to participate or take a leadership role in an effective theatrical production.
- PLO #4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the component areas of theatrical creation, process, production, performance, and study, and their interrelationships.
- PLO #5: The student will be able to form and articulate a critical analysis and evaluation of a work of theatre.
- PLO #6: The student will demonstrate intermediate and advanced competence in one or more theatre specializations.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of THR 127 / Stage Movement, the student will

- Have an awareness of how the body moves (supports PLO #4).
• Have an understanding of the process of relaxation of the body and connection to the body as they relate to readiness for performance. (supports PLOs #4 and #6).
• Have an understanding of various schools of movement and movement theory (supports PLOs #2 and #5).
• Demonstrate an understanding of movement techniques and skills independently and in groups (supports PLOs #2, #3 and #6).
• Communicate understanding of the kinesthetic experiences of the course as they relate to the theories covered and the experiential work with the body (supports PLOs #4 and #5).

POLICIES and EXPECTATIONS

Course Specific General Expectations:

• All Acting, Movement, and Theatre Speech classes at SFA require the wearing of black movement clothing. This is a common practice in many Theatre training programs. It is intended to create a sense of neutrality across the performers, make it easier to step in and out of character, and help the performance classroom feel like a space where art is made. Your clothing should be solid black and not include designs, images, or words. Small brand logos are acceptable. Your clothes should effectively cover your body through a range of movement possibilities. Hats if worn must be turned with the bill backwards. If you are not wearing class appropriate clothing, you will be asked to leave, and receive an absence for the day, as well as loss of engagement points.
• This class requires significant physical interaction between students. Please come to class clean, and with nails trimmed.
• Jewelry should be removed before class. This includes necklaces, long, dangling earrings, watches, body piercings and large rings. This prevents potentially dangerous snags on your own body or other’s bodies.
• Soft soled movement or athletic type shoes shall be worn for class. On occasion, we will work with bare feet. I would encourage black shoes, but as quality movement shoes are expensive any color is acceptable.
• Bring a no-spill water bottle to class. Only water is allowed. Fill it before class; you can’t leave class to fill it. No food in class (this includes gum and candy).
• Hair should be kept out of the face.
• Assist in keeping the space clean, organized, and ready for the next class.
• As a student in a pre-professional theatre program, you should approach class in the same way that you would a rehearsal. You should be on time. You should be prepared. You should leave any outside concerns at the door.

Absences/Lateness: Theatre is an intrinsically collaborative art, and the practical application side of your training occurs largely in the classroom. Therefore, your absence from class impacts not only your learning, but also the learning of other students. **You should not miss class.** You will lose some engagement points anytime you do. However, I recognize that life happens. Please be in communication with me about any absences. If you do not communicate with me about an absence within 24 hours or if your absences become excessive your grade will be significantly impacted. The same is true for chronic lateness. It is your responsibility to obtain any missed notes from a classmate. It is your responsibility to check in with me after class if you arrive after attendance is taken.
As stated by College policy: Seven (7) absences in a T/TH class or ten (10) absences in a MWF class will result in an automatic failure of the course. As this class meets two days a week, the T/TH (7 absences) rule applies.

COVID-19

As you know, we are in a continually evolving situation because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are the recommendations and requirements from the university. Please read them carefully and let me know if you have questions. Below that, you will see specific information about how COVID protocols will be approached in this course.

University COVID Guidelines and Resources

Four things to know as we return to campus this fall:

- Students and employees are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Find a vaccination site by visiting vaccine.gov.
- Students and employees who are vaccinated should complete the voluntary vaccine reporting survey in mySFA.
- Students and employees should stay home when they are feeling sick or have symptoms related to COVID-19.
- Students and employees who test positive for COVID-19 must report their positive test in mySFA.

Face coverings – Individuals who take personal responsibility such as wearing a mask indoors help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This is voluntary, as all mandates regarding face coverings have been lifted at SFA to comply with Governor Abbott’s Executive Order GA-38.

Occupancy Levels and Physical Distancing – Occupancy on campus has opened to 100% in all areas. Physical distancing, wearing face coverings indoors and washing hands regularly are still best practices for reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Classrooms and Laboratories – The extensive remote learning arrangements made last year due to COVID-19 are now more limited.

Individuals who must isolate or quarantine need to contact professors to make appropriate arrangements to complete assignments and stay current in your classes. Such arrangements are expected to be like those offered in the past for students who missed class due to illness or other urgent matters. Faculty members will be responsible for determining appropriate arrangements, in consultation with their academic head and dean.

COVID Specifics for this Course:

Performer training is a unique circumstance as it frequently involves much more physical closeness and contact than many other forms of learning. I believe training is about going into the uncomfortable, but it is impossible to enter the uncomfortable if you do not feel safe. Therefore, I believe in a consent forward classroom, which means I want to honor the various safety needs of the students in the class. I imagine you all have diverse perspectives some of you are no doubt excited to return to pre-pandemic life with no masks and no distancing, some of you are anxious about attending in person classes during the current surge in COVID cases, and many of you are likely somewhere in between. I am willing to work with all the various needs you might have. Therefore, class will go forward with some options
outlined below.

**In person attendance:**

Anyone who wants to may attend class in person. I would encourage you to wear a mask and to be aware of your space, but those are not requirements. I would encourage you to get vaccinated, but that is also not a requirement. We will negotiate in the room what different people’s needs are. For example, if you are working with a partner who prefers social-distancing I require you to respect that or to find a different partner.

**Online Attendance:**

I will keep the availability of synchronous ZOOM attendance open for all students. You are welcome to choose to come in person or online on a day-by-day basis. If you plan to take the course entirely online, please let me know because I need to adjust some of the assignments for you. If you attend online, you must be able to have your camera and microphone on and oriented so that I can see you while you are working. You must have a working space that allows you to move around, and to lay on the floor. Lastly, you must set aside this time in your schedule to be present for class and not be engaged in other responsibilities. The link for the online class meetings will be posted on our d2l page.

**Course Work:** All course work must be completed and turned in as indicated by the course calendar, as discussed in class, or communicated on d2l. Late work will only be accepted in emergency circumstances. It is your responsibility to pursue making up missed work, not my responsibility to make sure you do so.

*Students with documented disabilities must meet with the instructor in advance of accommodation to arrange accommodations for that disability.*

**General Expectations:**

*Please respect others as well as yourself; this includes other students, the instructor, guest speakers, and performers. Most of the following guidelines for behavior reflect this principle.*

1. Recording class in any form is not allowed. Recordings of Zoom sessions will be made available.
2. Cell phones should be set to silent or turned off and stowed before you enter the room. Absolutely NO use of cell phones is allowed in class unless there is an emergency, or it is approved/requested by the instructor.
3. Use of your friend’s brain during a quiz will result in a grade of zero on that quiz.
4. Disorderly conduct or talking inappropriately in class is not permitted.
5. Failure to follow any of these expectations will result in being dismissed from class and counted absent (unexcused).

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1)
using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Diversity and Inclusion**
This class engages material covering a diverse range of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, gender, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, and disability. I encourage you to explore the myriad of identities that constitute you and to formulate and express your thoughts and opinions throughout the semester; however, discriminatory remarks will not be tolerated and may constitute disruptive behavior under the student code of conduct.

**Students with Disabilities**
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

**Mental Health and Wellness**
SFA values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students' mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
SFA Counseling Service www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices
Rusk Building, 3rd Floor
936.468.2401

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
Human Services, Room 202
936.468.1041

Crisis Resources:
Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

Additional Student Resources

Academic Assistance and Resource Center (AARC)

The webpage for the AARC is located [here](#). The AARC provides free tutoring help for students, including virtually. If you need help with your writing skills, this is the place to go!

The Career Closet

The Career Closet lends professional clothing to current students and alumni for job interviews, conferences, auditions, etc... See info [here](#).

Counseling Services

The people at the counseling center are here to help with a wide range of issues including anxiety, depression, and grief. Their information can be found [here](#). In the event of a crisis outside of business hours, please call the Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1-800-392-8343.

Disability Services

If you have a disability and require special accommodations, either during class or during exams, or both, disability services are here to help. Just remember: while we generally do everything in our power to accommodate requests, we cannot do so unless you go through the Office of Disability Services first. If you feel like this service may be of use to you, visit them as early as you can, at the start of the semester. Their information can be found [here](#).

Food Pantry

If you are struggling with food insecurity (or, alternatively have food to donate), please consider visiting SFA's Pantry. Information about the pantry (and other pantries) is located [here](#).

Health Clinic

As a student you can gain access to medical services through the health clinic. Information can be found [here](#).

Veterans Resource Center

If you are a military veteran, you may find the veterans resource center helpful. Information can be found [here](#): 

This list is a work-in-progress. If you are aware of resources that you believe should be added, please let me know!
**Tentative Course Calendar**

*PLEASE NOTE:* Dates and topics will be revised if necessary. Additional reading and assignments may be given in class. Dates indicate when assignments and reading are DUE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>T 8/24</td>
<td>AUDITIONS – NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
<pre><code>  | R 8/26      | Orientation and Begin Work                    |                     |
</code></pre>
<p>| Two  | T 8/31      | Martial Mechanics and Unified weapons Work    |                     |
| R 9/2       | Knife and basics of Choreography              |                     |
| Three| T 9/7       | Martial Mechanics and Unified weapons Work    |                     |
| R 9/9       | Knife/Unarmed and Choreography                |                     |
| Four | T 9/14      | Martial Mechanics and Unified weapons Work    |                     |
| R 9/16      | Knife/Unarmed and Choreography                |                     |
| Five | T 9/21      | Martial Mechanics and Unified weapons Work    |                     |
| R 9/23      | Begin Choreographing Fight #1                 |                     |
| Six  | T 9/28      | Fight Scene Analysis #1                       | Analysis Due        |
| R 9/30      | Knife/Unarmed and Choreography                |                     |
| Seven| T 10/5      | Martial Mechanics and Unified weapons Work    |                     |
| R 10/7      | Knife/Unarmed and Choreography                |                     |
| Eight| T 10/12     | Fight #1 Rehearsal (Slade out of town)        |                     |
| R 10/14     | Fight #1 Rehearsal (Slade out of town)        |                     |
| Nine | T 10/19     | Performance #1                                | Scene #1 Performed  |
| R 10/21     | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| Ten  | T 10/26     | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| R 10/28     | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| Eleven| T 11/2     | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| R 11/4      | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| Twelve| T 11/9     | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| R 11/11     | Fight Scene Analysis #2                       | Analysis Due        |
| Thirteen| W 11/16   | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| F 11/18     | Weapons Discipline Work                       |                     |
| Fourteen| T 11/23    | Thanksgiving Holiday NO CLASS                 |                     |
| R 11/25     | Thanksgiving Holiday NO CLASS                 |                     |
| Fifteen| T 11/30    | Fight #2 Rehearsal                            |                     |
| R 12/2      | Fight #2 Rehearsal                            |                     |
| Sixteen|            | Final Exam Period                             | Final Performance Due|
|             | Thursday December 9th                        |                     |
|             | 1:00pm – 3:00pm                              |                     |</p>