

STAGE COMBAT 2

TPP 4532, 3 Credits Prerequisites: TPP 2110 (Acting 1) or Instructor Approval

Instructor: Lee Soroko

Office Location: AL 164

Class Time: T/R 9:00-10:50AM

Office Hours: T/R 11:00-12:00PM

Room: AL 130

and by appointment

E-mail: LSoroko@FAU.edu

Telephone: 561.297.4812

*“The cunning gentlemen [and gentlewoman] ...standing long time together upon this worthy ward, they both depart in peace, according to the old proverb, **it is good sleeping in a whole skin.**”*

George Silver, Paradoxes of Defense 1599

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A practical study that trains the actor to create the illusion of physical violence. The focus is on safe technique, the physical discipline of impulse response, and moment-to-moment playing and reaction. 30 hours of a single Society of American Fight Directors recognized weapon (Unarmed, Smallsword, Single-sword, Broadsword, Knife, Quarterstaff, Rapier & Dagger or Sword & Shield) will be studied. A Skills Proficiency Test in the context of scene study will be given and Adjudicated by an SAFD recognized Fight Master.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course focuses first and foremost on SAFETY! If you get hurt as an actor, you get replaced. That said, we will focus on: moment-to-moment acting choices, trust, coordination, physical control, and “selling” (emotional and physical commitment) of the fight as an actor. Therefore, all of your previously studied acting techniques should be applied to this class. You will be evaluated on your improvement, targeting, distance, footwork, “selling the illusion of violence”, moment-to-moment reaction and commitment to the illusion in your acts of violence. This is a unique physical discipline of your actor training and it requires daily repetition in order to truly excel.

This class should also be great deal of fun but also can be very dangerous if you do not follow the safety protocols at all times. Don't joke around with the well-being of your fellow students (horseplay a la none choreographed messing around). That is when someone gets a career altering injury. Treat each other and the weapon with respect and consideration so that no one is hurt. As Silver says, it is good to sleep in a whole skin. For the safety of all concerned, I reserve the right to forbid a student from taking the skill proficiency test.

There is physical contact required in this course. Students should expect to be touched at various times in the semester by other students and/or me. This physical contact is never intended to be sexual in nature nor demean the student in any way. For purposes of demonstration of technique, I will always ask if I can touch you prior to any physical contact. Should you say, “no” I will demonstrate without touch. Please note that your partner must be able to touch you for successful completion of various techniques in this class. Inappropriate touch or commentary should be reported to me immediately and sexual harassment will not be tolerated.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- The student will develop the movement skills and the body awareness so as to safely present a realistic scene of unarmed physical violence.
- Each student will both understand and demonstrate how to safely slap, punch, kick and grapple their scene partner.

- Each student will understand and demonstrate how to safely block, punch, knap, roll and fall without injury.
- To learn a series of physical exercises to promote strength, flexibility, balance and awareness.
- To strengthen awareness to physical stimuli and impulse based reaction.
- To develop the student's knowledge of the physiological aspects of breath in the creative process.
- To develop a sense of trust and ensemble.
- Each student will learn and exhibit the marriage of high stakes physical action and believable performance of character in an adjudicated scene.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *Stage Combat Arts*, by Christopher Duval

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Movement clothes (athletic pants, shorts, shirt—blacks would be best)
- Athletic shoes.
- Full finger batting gloves (for weapons work only, I will tell you if we need them)
- Secure your long hair so that it is pulled back and away from your face, before class and then leave it alone. Remove all jewelry and watches.

COURSE POLICIES:

- **Attendance Policy Statement.** Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence. This course is experiential learning and missed work performed in class cannot be make up, however you will not be penalized due to your excused absences as articulated above.
- **Punctuality and Attendance.** Being late or absent hurts the ability of the class to proceed quickly with the topics we are learning. On time is being early. Be on your feet and in a circle at the start of class. Lateness and absences are not acceptable. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class you are absent (based on my watch). Excessive tardiness will seriously affect your grade (three times tardy equates to one absence). Every absence past your 2nd will lower your grade one full letter You are responsible for all information and assignments given when you are absent.
- **Sitting Out.** Are you ill?—then go to the health center and get better. If you need to sit out more than three times in the semester, then you are not doing A level work. Your job is to listen to your body. Push yourself to achieve at a higher level, yet keep strong active and healthy.

- **Attention to deadlines.** If you are absent when a project is due without accepted cause, you will fail the project.
- **Active Engagement** (open and sincere participation). Required of all students every day. Bring probing questions, open minds, consideration, and respect to every class. Failure to do so will severely affect your Active Engagement grade. Not being present in class will factor a zero into your level of positive active engagement for that day. If you are not physically able to participate in this work due to injury, you must see me privately so as to ensure the educational demands of the material are met.
- It is your responsibility to check Canvas and that you check your email for this class on a regular basis.
- Be sure your telephone is in airplane mode. If it goes off I will ask you to leave and you will earn an absence. If you have an i-watch or fit-bit, take it off prior to class.
- Proper Attire is required for each class and failure to have the proper attire will inhibit you from participating that day and you will receive an absence for that day.
- Workspace. Food and drink are not permitted in the rehearsal studio (water is highly encouraged).
- MLA format must be used in all written work. Failure to follow this **specific writing protocol** will result in a significant deduction of your grade for this assignment. For MLA help visit http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html#General. It is understood that [A] level written work operates from a supported thesis statement where seminal points are buttressed by textual support.
- It is your responsibility to retain an e-copy of all written work for this course.
- **E-mail.** Be advised that I do not check e-mail after 3:00PM on Friday. E-mail is impersonal and I can better help you succeed in person so please take advantage of this and see me during my scheduled office hours or by appointment.
- **Touch.** There is physical contact required in this course. Students should expect to be touched at various times in the semester by other students and by me. This physical contact is never intended to be sexual in nature nor demean the student in any way. I will always ask permission prior to touch. You have the right to say no and this will not affect your grade. However, we will then have to work together to discover another method to communicate what is most often a kinesthetic and tactile experience.
- **Demeanor.** Belittling comments about each other or the work will not be tolerated. As a community of learners and artists, we set the environment for this class, we shall set a positive one that creates joy and inspires confidence in each other. Try to accept others as they in turn try to accept you as you cultivate a cool head and a warm heart as an actor.
- **Esprit de corps.** Be brave. Be bold. You get to play with swords! If you are “tired” when we are working, KEEP GOING! Stretch yourself and know your limits.
- **Disability Policy Statement.** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodation due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center.** Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students

a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to www.fau.edu/counseling/.

- **Code of Academic Integrity Policy Statement.** Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high-quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN: Below please find a breakdown on how your semester grade will be computed:

Active Engagement/Commitment/Focus	50%
In-Class Scene/Project(s)	15%
Book Report	10%
Final Scene(s)	<u>25%</u>
	100%

GRADING SCALE:

A	93-100%	B-	80-82%	D+	67-69%
A-	90-92%	C+	78-79%	D	63-66%
B+	88-89%	C	73-76%	D-	60-62%
B	83-87%	C-	70-72%	F	59% or below

10 THINGS THAT REQUIRE ZERO TALENT

- Being On Time
- Work Ethic
- Effort
- Body Language
- Energy
- Attitude
- Passion
- Being Coachable (aka taking direction)
- Doing Extra
- Being Prepared

Final thoughts...

This is a physical discipline. If you are serious you will find time outside of class to work on the material. It is not fighting, it's dance so get a partner and work on your moves. The investment of time is not an accident, so if you are serious put in the time. I am here to help you succeed, so please take advantage of me so I can help you.

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, April 30 from 7:45AM to 10:15AM

I would like to bring in a Nationally recognized Fight Master to conduct a Certification (subject to Department Funding and Approval). The tentative time for this evaluation would be Saturday, April 27 and the exam and master-class would go from 10AM to 2:00PM in lieu of the scheduled final.

Course Schedule Outline

(Subject to Change as Needed)

Week 1	First Day of Class: Syllabus! Weapon intro and mantra, “this is my...” Parts of the blade, stance, cuts thigh and parry thigh
Week 2	Footwork, Attacks in all lines, Parries in all lines Blade work drill
Week 3	Footwork, Attacks in all lines, Parries in all lines Blade work drill
Week 4	Circular parries, and moulinet. Horizontal Slash head (duck), Horizontal Slash stomach (avoidance) Diagonal Slash with avoidance
Week 5	Assign Scene #1
Week 6	Catch-Up Week, Prep Scene #1 Assignment
Week 7	Scene #1 Due!
Week 8	SPRING BREAK
Week 9	SPT Choreography
Week 10	SPT Choreography
Week 11	Catch UP
Week 12	Playing The Pain
Week 13	Death and Dying
Final Week of Class	SPT Coaching
FINAL EXAM	SPT(s) and Master class with Fight Master

The Partnering Paradigm

What makes for a good partner? Asking further questions might help to answer the first question.

BY
BRIAN
BYRNES
&
RICKI G.
RAVITTS

"SAFETY AND DRAMATIC EFFECT" HAVE LONG been held as the top tenets of stage fighting. The path to reach these goals traditionally follows the acquisition of both solid technical skills and exciting acting abilities.

Unlike a Shakespearean monologue or an operatic aria, however, staged fights require a third very important factor which can bind together the technique, the acting, as well as you and your fellow performer. This essential third element is termed "partnering".

THE PURSUIT OF GOOD PARTNERING

The pursuit of good partnering has rewards even beyond the pleasant working atmosphere it helps to create. Striving to be a good partner is the link that secures your shared acting abilities and your technical skills. Good partnering can actually enhance these skills and make them more easily attainable.

Whether the activity is tennis or chess, bridge or broadsword and shield, virtually everyone likes to work with those at or just above one's own perceived skill level. Yet we have observed that in stage violence "technical skill" and "acting ability" often count for naught unless they reside in a good partner.

When two good partners work together, the excellence of the pair can exceed the skill level of either individual. Conversely, bad partnering can yield not just an ineffective fight scene but a potentially dangerous one as well.

These observations led us to ask ourselves:

- What makes a good partner?
 - How does one know if he/she is a good partner?
 - How does one become a better partner?
- Following are some thoughts to consider.

A GOOD PARTNER

- Projects enthusiasm for the work
- Shows an appreciation for his/her partner's work, thereby enhancing confidence and performance
- Works to improve upon and expand his/her techniques

- Has an awareness of his/her partner (both in physical and acting relationship to oneself)

- Has an awareness of the fight as part of a larger stage picture (again incorporating both physical stage awareness and how the fight scene supports the play as a whole)

WHAT KIND OF PARTNER ARE YOU?

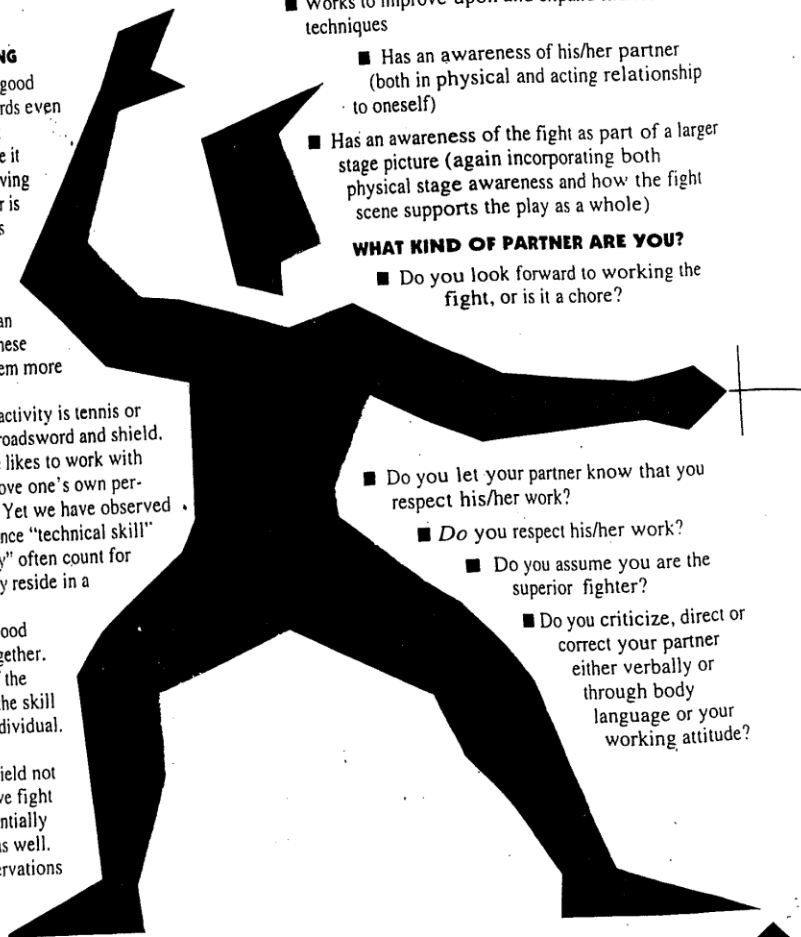
- Do you look forward to working the fight, or is it a chore?

- Do you let your partner know that you respect his/her work?

- Do you respect his/her work?

- Do you assume you are the superior fighter?

- Do you criticize, direct or correct your partner either verbally or through body language or your working attitude?



- When something goes wrong, do you automatically assume your partner is at fault? (or the fight director, or the stage manager, etc.)
- Is your focus inner-directed (concerned first with your own intentions, techniques, speed), or outer-directed (concerned with the fight as a whole, trying to balance individual needs, abilities with the requirements of scene and safety)?

One motto to keep in mind is: The quickest way to learn something, is to learn it slowly. Strive toward that partnering paradigm and you will enhance your learning and your enjoyment by including others in your partnering process.



Brian Byrnes is a certified teacher based in Houston.
Ricki G. Ravitts is a certified teacher based in New York.

“If you truly are the “superior partner”... try to inspire and support your partner, recognizing all the good fighters who did and do the same for you..”

- Does your frustration with your own or your partner's work bring rehearsal to a halt?
- When you make a mistake, is there usually a good explanation for it?
- When your partner makes a mistake, is it yet another example of his/her inferior fight skills?

TOWARD BETTER PARTNERING

As with many artistic pursuits, certain elements of partnering are gifts given to the fortunate, similar to the ability to lead or follow when dancing. Nonetheless, many of the traits of good partnering can be learned: both fight skills and people skills.

Patience is indeed a virtue — patience with yourself and with your partner. If you truly are the “superior fighter,” congratulations on your good

work; now try to inspire and support your partner, recognizing all the good fighters who did and do the same for you.

THE WORK OF MANY YEARS

We live in an era of immediate gratification, but swordplay and stage fighting should not be considered as such. Excellence in stage fighting is the work of many years, through all of which the learning should continue.

