

University of Southern California

School of Dramatic Arts

Syllabus: Winter/Spring 2025 Semester

Course Title: Alexander Technique for Performers

Course Code: THTR 419 / Section 63121

Units: 2 Units

Schedule: Mondays, 4:00 PM – 5:50 PM

Location: MCC 109

Dates: January 13 – April 28, 2025

Instructor: Kosta Potamianos

Email: kpotamia@usc.edu

Professor Availability: By appointment

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the fundamental principles and practice of the Alexander Technique, with an emphasis on its general application toward cultivating better postural regulation, improving movement habits, and addressing musculoskeletal patterns of chronic tension. These patterns often manifest as pain, motile restriction, and unconscious barriers to positive self-expression—both in daily life and in the specific contexts of performance and activity.

Through systematic exploration, this course provides training and practice in the work of F.M. Alexander. Designed for BA and BFA students in the School of Dramatic Arts, this class emphasizes the practical application of the Alexander Technique to improve coordination, posture, awareness, and overall well-being. Furthermore, students will learn how to integrate the Alexander Technique into their performance work, with a particular focus on acting.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the core principles of the Alexander Technique, including inhibition and direction.
2. Apply the Alexander Technique to improve physical coordination, posture, and self-awareness.
3. Utilize the Alexander Technique as a tool for enhancing performance, particularly in acting.
4. Develop understanding of habitual patterns and learn to make conscious choices in movement and expression.
5. Integrate weekly readings and reflections into a cohesive understanding of the Technique.
6. Demonstrate their learning through practical applications in class and during assessments.

Course Format

Each class session will focus on a specific aspect of the Alexander Technique, progressing from foundational principles to advanced applications for performance. The course will incorporate:

- Hands-on, tactile guidance to support individual learning.
- Practical exercises to explore and implement the Technique.
- Assigned readings to deepen theoretical understanding.
- Various assignments to encourage reflection and integration.
- Individual attention tailored to each student's needs.

Week 1 (Jan 13): Introduction to the Alexander Technique

- Overview of principles: inhibition, direction, and primary control.
- Practical: Body mapping and basic awareness exercises.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 2 (Jan 20): No Class - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Week 3 (Jan 27): Understanding Habit and Inhibition

- Discussion: Identifying and interrupting habitual patterns.
- Practical: Awareness exercises in sitting, standing, and lying down.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 4 (Feb 3): The Head-Neck Relationship

- Practical: The role of the head-neck relationship in primary control.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 5 (Feb 10): Breathing and Voice

- Practical: Integrating the Technique with vocal work.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 6 (Feb 17): No Class - Presidents Day

Week 7 (Feb 24): Application to Performance I: Monologues

- Practical: Applying principles to text work.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 8 (Mar 3): Individual Hands-On Turns and Feedback

- Practical: Personalized guidance for each student with hands-on adjustments.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 9 (Mar 10): Mid-Term Assessment

Week 10 (Mar 17): No Class - Spring Recess

Week 11 (Mar 24): Application to Performance II: Scene Work

- Practical: Exploring scenes with Alexander principles.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 12 (Mar 31): Integrating Alexander Technique in Daily Life

- Discussion: Maintaining awareness beyond performance.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 13 (Apr 7): Ensemble and Partner Work

- Practical: Collaborative exercises and partner work.
- Assignments, Readings, Handouts

Week 14 (Apr 14): Review

Week 15 (Apr 21): Final Assessment Preparation

Week 16 (Apr 28): Last Class

Final Exams - Final exams will take place on a scheduled day between May 7 - 14, 2025.

Grading Criteria

- Attendance and Participation (40%)
Active participation in class discussions, exercises, and activities.
- Assignments and Journals (20%)
Timely and thoughtful completion of all assigned readings and journals.
- Mid-Term Assessment (20%)
Demonstration of understanding and application of the Technique.
- Final Assessment (20%)
Integration of principles into a final project.

Excerpted Texts*

- The Use of the Self* by F.M. Alexander
- Body Learning** by Michael Gelb
- The Brain's Sense of Movement* by Alain Berthoz
- Freedom to Change* by Frank Pierce Jones
- Thinking Aloud* by Walter Carrington
- The Free Voice* by Cornelius Reed
- Psyche and Soma* by Cornelius Reed
- Indirect Procedures* by Pedro Alcantara
- Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* Shunryu Suzuki

*** Selection is not exhaustive**

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theatre Consent Culture Statement

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate-](#) and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:**[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call**

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

