



**Sonoma State University  
Department of Theatre Arts & Dance**

**THAR 327, Stage Combat, Spring 2018**

Instructor/Director: Ken Sonkin  
Office Location: TBD  
Telephone: (415) 225-9953  
Email: docsonk@sbeglobal.net  
Office Hours: F 8:30-9am, and by advance appointment.  
Method of contact: Email or phone.

**General Course Information**

Class Days/Time: F 9-10:50am  
Classroom: Ives 119

**Course Description**

Intended for Acting Concentration majors, Stage Combat is an introduction to the design, practice, and performance of theatrical violence. The main goals are to develop the ability to safely portray violence onstage and to create the illusion of danger. As with all theatrical techniques, stage combat skills are designed to facilitate the telling of a story and are to be performed in the context of character, environment, and given circumstances. Current and previous training in acting, voice, and movement will be integrated in this course. Students will begin to understand how stage combat fits into the practice of theater as a whole.

The course will focus on unarmed (hand-to-hand) stage combat, as well as an introduction to weapons. Other aspects include the development of strength, flexibility, eye/hand coordination, principles of safety, and learning how to advance your character's journey in a fight sequence. Emphasis will be placed on safety, partnering, and physical acting specificity. The course will include a Midterm Scene (Unarmed) and culminate in a presentation of a Final Scene (Swordplay).

**Course Objectives:**

- Study the art form of Stage Combat through research, practice, analysis, and reflection;
- Understand and commit to the safety guidelines used in Stage Combat;
- Learn and practice the techniques for unarmed/armed combat, as dictated by the policies and procedures of the Society of American Fight Directors;
- Empower actors by sharpening and honing skills in balance, kinesthetic awareness, flexibility, breath, eye/hand coordination, timing, musicality, focus, and flow;
- Perform scenes containing theatrical violence with clarity and safety.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

- Demonstrate safe, dramatically effective Stage Combat techniques in rehearsal and performance;
- Communicate the theory and history of unarmed and armed combat disciplines;
- Demonstrate a critical and working vocabulary in Stage Combat;
- Be an affective partner in stage combat; (safety, trust, breath, communication, etc.)
- Explore the basic elements of scene work with components of violence, i.e., how to “act the fight”



**Sonoma State University  
Department of Theatre Arts & Dance**

**THAR 327, Stage Combat, Spring 2018**

**Classroom Protocol**

1. **Punctuality.** Class begins promptly at 9am. The room will be available for Warm-ups starting at 8:45am.
2. **Preparation.** Please be prepared with class assignments for each class meeting. Be warmed-up both physically and mentally before class begins.
3. **Participation.** Students are expected to participate in all class exercises unless otherwise pre-arranged with the instructor.
4. **Safety.** Our main concern in this course is safety. Please be aware of your surroundings and respectful of the other people in the studio. Do not touch a weapon unless the instructor has given the o.k.
5. **Electronic devices.** Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices before entering the studio.

**Course Requirements**

- Movement clothing. Sweat pants and loose fitting tops. Shorts are *not* advised. You will be on the floor, doing stretches, rolls, falls, etc. No jeans, skirts or any clothing that inhibits movement.
- Rubber-soled shoes. (No flip-flops or sandals. No bare feet.)
- Remove all jewelry. Cover exposed permanent piercings with tape or a band-aid.
- Leather gloves.
- Knee pads. (optional)
- Water bottle.
- Small notebook & pencil.

**Health**

Let the instructor know of any physical injuries or conditions you currently have that may affect your participation in the class. (knee, back, shoulder problems, asthma, heart, etc.)

**Suggested Texts/Readings**

- Cheatham, James. *Acting the Fight: A Series of Exercises*. The Fight Master. 1996
- Girard, Dale. *Actors on Guard*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Hobbs, William. *Fight Direction for Stage and Screen*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1980.
- Pallaziol, Ric. *Combat Swords - Things Every Actor Should Know*. Weapons of Choice
- The Society of American Fight Directors, Policies and Procedures. 9 July 1998.
- Suddeth, J. Allen. *Fight Directing for the Theatre*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996.
- Wise, Arthur. *Weapons in the Theatre*. New York: Bames and Noble, 1968.
- Wooten, Kara. *Developing a Course in Stage Combat*. Dissertation in Fine Arts, Texas Tech University. 2000



Sonoma State University  
Department of Theatre Arts & Dance

THAR 327, Stage Combat, Spring 2018

Weekly Schedule (*Subject to change*)

**Week One:** 1/26  
Introduction to Stage Combat Hand Out.  
Safety guidelines. Warm-up, partnering.  
Trust. Leap of Faith. “4 Steps.”

**Week Two:** 2/2  
Warm-up, partnering. “Attacker/Victim.”  
Falls, rolls, take-downs. Grab & release.  
Contact & non-contact combat. Lifts &  
carries.

**Week Three:** 2/9  
Warm-up, partnering. Intro of breath and  
voice. Push away. Duck and evade. Strangle  
holds, arm bars, choking. Slaps, punches,  
“knap.”

**Week Four:** 2/16  
Warm-up, partnering. Review Slaps, punches.  
Hair pull, Ear pull, Arm bite. “Combat with  
Acting Intention.”  
Assign: Hand out Midterm Combinations.

**Week Five:** 2/23  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Introduction of Kicks. Kick to the face, groin,  
stomach. Foot stomp. Eye poke. Rhythm and  
movement work. Yat/Laban.  
Rehearse Midterm Combinations.

**Week Six:** 3/2  
Warm-up, partnering. Review.  
Rehearse Midterm Combinations. Musicality.

**Week Seven:** 3/9  
Warm-up. Review. Midterm.

(*Spring Break Friday 3/16. No class.*)

**Week Nine:** 3/23  
Warm-up, partnering. Introduction to  
Weapons. History and Maintenance. Hand  
out Pallaziol’s *Combat Swords*. {Gloves  
required.}

**Week Ten:** 3/30  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Show Combat Videos.  
Intro to Choreography.

**Week Eleven:** 4/6  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Choreography swordplay. Kinesthetics.

**Week Twelve:** 4/13  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Review choreography. “Acting the Fight.”

**Week Thirteen:** 4/20  
Warm-up, partnering.  
“Performance Anxiety And Stage Fright”  
Review choreography.  
Assign Final Scenes.

**Week Fourteen:** 4/27  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Rehearsal of Final Scenes.

**Week Fifteen:** 5/4  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Rehearsal of Final Scenes.

**Week Sixteen:** 5/11  
Warm-up, partnering.  
Dress rehearsal of Final Scenes.  
Final papers are due Fri. 5/11

**Final Scenes:** TBD  
**Group Evaluations:** TBD



**Sonoma State University  
Department of Theatre Arts & Dance**

**THAR 327, Stage Combat, Spring 2018**

**Campus Policy on Disability Access for Students**

If you are a student with a disability, and think you may need academic accommodations, please contact Disability Services for Students (DSS), located in Salazar Hall, Room 1049, Voice: (707) 664-2677, TTY/TDD: (707) 664-2958, as early as possible in order to avoid a delay in receiving accommodation services. Use of DSS services, including testing accommodations, requires prior authorization by DSS. See SSU's policy on [Disability Access for Students](http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/disabilitypolicy.htm) <http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/disabilitypolicy.htm>.

**Emergency Evacuation**

If you are a student with a disability and you think you may require assistance evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, you should inform your instructor about the type of assistance you may require. You and your instructor should discuss your specific needs and the type of precautions that should be made in advance of such an event (i.e. assigning a buddy to guide you down the stairway). We encourage you to take advantage of these preventative measures as soon as possible and contact the Disability Services for Students office if other classroom accommodations are needed.

**Academic Integrity**

Students should be familiar with the University's [Cheating and Plagiarism policy](http://www.sonoma.edu/UAffairs/policies/cheating_plagiarism.htm) [http://www.sonoma.edu/UAffairs/policies/cheating\\_plagiarism.htm](http://www.sonoma.edu/UAffairs/policies/cheating_plagiarism.htm). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at Sonoma State University and the University's policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified.

**Attendance**

Learning in Theatre Arts classes occurs through interaction, discussion, and hands-on exercises. Students who are late or absent in class deprive other students of the possibility of valuable learning opportunities and disrupt the creative and intellectual atmosphere of the course. As a result, absence and tardiness will have a profound effect on your grade.

**Grading**

Your performances will be assessed according to your own ability to comprehend and execute the work. In terms of performance projects, you will be evaluated with consideration of your individual progression and not in comparison to your classmates' level of previous knowledge, experience or progression.

Participation refers to your willingness to volunteer with a positive attitude for class work and exercises; to speak up in discussions with pertinent comments or questions; being supportive, safe, and respectful to your classmates at all times.



**Sonoma State University  
Department of Theatre Arts & Dance**

**THAR 327, Stage Combat, Spring 2018**

**Midterm and Final**

Each student will present a 2-person Midterm Scene (Unarmed Combat) for the Midterm on Friday March 9, 2018, and a Final Scene (Swordplay) at the end of the semester (Date: TBD).

You will write a 2-page Final paper discussing problem solving, choreography, partnering, and integration of acting choices into your Final scene. Final papers are due Friday May 11, 2018.

*Note: You are expected to meet with your partner outside of class to rehearse your Midterm and Final scenes.*

- 15 Punctuality and Attendance: All classes, rehearsals, and performances.
- 15 Attitude: Participation. Respect for colleagues and collaborators, enthusiasm for the subject. Preparation for each class, rehearsal, and performance.
- 15 Memorization: Honoring the choreography and movement.
  
- 20 Midterm Scene: Unarmed Combat
  
- 10 Written: Final paper. 2-pages (500-700 words.)
- 25 Final Scene: Swordplay
  
- 100 Possible points