

**SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY  
THEA 2307 Stage Combat**

FALL 2015  
M/W/F  
9:00-9:50am  
Marshall Auditorium

Bret Scott, Asst. Professor  
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Regular Office Hours:  
M/W 12-1, T/TH 11-12, on walk-in basis  
All others by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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FINALLY, an opportunity to OVERACT.

Stage Combat is the title we give to the SAFE, ORDERLY, WELL-PLANNED, WELL-CHOREOGRAPHED, and **VERY** WELL-REHEARSED expression of violence in dramatic scenework.

Let's break that down.

First, every fight is in a show to express the idea that the dramatic conflict between characters has reached such a level that the conflict can only be resolved through violence. In a well-written play, the fight is there to serve a dramatic purpose.

Which means, in summary, that a stage fight is *really*, first-and-foremost, a *scene*.

We don't, as a general rule, go around beating each other up on stage. If someone gets hurt – really injured – it can end up not only ending the run of the show, but ending a *career*. I'm talking about disfigurement, permanent disability, paralysis, etc.

Serious stuff.

Since avoiding that outcome is a top priority, we place our emphasis on SAFETY. To be safe in stage combat, we

- 1) Plan
- 2) work out-of-distance as much as possible
- 3) Rehearse in slow motion until the moves are in muscle memory, and
- 4) never work without eye contact.

If I see you behaving in an unsafe manner, you get one warning only. A second warning means you leave the class for the day. There's no room for unsafe behavior in this art.

Finally, this is your opportunity to William Shatner the crap out of your work. Overact! Sell the pain to the back row. Done well and safely, this is some of the most fun you can have on a stage. Let's FIGHT!

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

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*None. There is no text that teaches the physical skills of stage combat.*

## **REQUIRED MATERIALS**

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*Each student must bring a pair of leather work gloves. This is not optional. No gloves? No work that day.*

## **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

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- 1) Your positive attitude is the difference between success and failure in art, life, and this class.
- 2) You will be on time. Which means, at minimum, five minutes before start of class.
- 3) Dress to move in clothes you're willing to sacrifice – you'll be on the floor, in the air, carrying each other, etc. What this means, practically:
  - a. Men: No shorts. Take a shower.
  - b. Women: leggings, sweats...something you can move in.
  - c. BOTH: No flipflops, open toes, high heels. No loose jewelry. Tie your hair back and get it out of your face.
- 4) Come to class ready to move. If that means getting up an hour before and guzzling coffee, do that.
- 5) Refer to Mick Napier's "Advice and Guidelines for improvisers" *Improvise*, Napier, pp 88-97.

## **PREREQUISITES**

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None.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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By the end of this class, students will:

- Demonstrate a working vocabulary of terminology of stage combat
- Demonstrate beginning mastery of the physical skills of combat
- Articulate the skills needed to create the illusion of violence on the stage
- Evaluate and critique combat work from the standpoints of both art and craft.
- Synthesize the elements of staged combat as they apply to scripted acting.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

- 1) Terminology / Definitions Quiz
- 2) Mid-Term Paper – fight transcription
- 3) Rapier fight
- 4) Hand-to-Hand fight
- 5) Quarterstaff fight
- 6) Full participation in class discussion / critique
- 7) Final multi-weapon fight scene

**CLASS DATES: Assignments and Deadlines**

*Note that these dates and the details of each class are subject to change at the instructor's discretion, as class progress warrants.*

DATE	TOPICS/ACTIVITY
8/24	SYLLABUS, EXPECTATIONS, ETC. CLASS DISCUSSION: WHAT IS STAGE COMBAT, AND WHY?
8/26	Intro to safety, warrior stance, safe distance, and slow rehearsal
8/28	Intro to Rapier
8/31	Parries and Attacks
9/2	Parries and Attacks
9/4	Parries and Attacks
9/7	LABOR DAY. GO THANK A UNION MEMBER FOR MAKING THIS COUNTRY GREAT.
9/9	Rapier Fights rehearsal
9/11	Rapier Fights rehearsal
9/14	TEST: Rapier Fights
9/16	TEST: Rapier Fights
9/18	Intro to Hand-to-Hand
9/21	H-t-H moves 1 Upper Body
9/23	H-t-H moves 2 Lower Body
9/25	H-t-H moves 3 On the Ground
9/28	H-t-H rehearsal
9/30	H-t-H rehearsal
10/2	TEST: H-t-H Fights
10/5	TEST: H-t-H Fights
10/7	Present fight deconstructions
10/9	Present fight deconstructions
10/12	Intro Quarterstaff
10/14	Quarterstaff Techniques 1 - Parries
10/16	Quarterstaff Techniques 2 - Attacks
10/19	Quarterstaff Techniques 3 - long moves
10/21	Quarterstaff rehearsal

10/23	Quarterstaff rehearsal
10/26	TEST: Quarterstaff Fights
10/28	TEST: Quarterstaff Fights
10/30	INTRO Fight Choreography
11/2	Film clips – analysis of choreography
11/4	Review Rapier
11/6	Review Rapier
11/9	Review H-t-H
11/11	Review H-t-H
11/13	Review Quarterstaff
11/16	Review Quarterstaff
11/18	Terminology quiz
11/20	TBD – contingency day
11/23	TBD – contingency day
11/25	THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS
11/27	EAT MANY FOODS TO THE POINT OF REGRET
11/30	Final Fight rehearsal
12/2	Final Fight rehearsal
12/9	8AM FINAL EXAM • 8AM FINAL EXAM • 8AM FINAL EXAM • 8AM. YES, THAT'S NOT A TYPO. 8AM.

## GRADING

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Assignments are valued as follows:

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| 1) Quiz                                 | 5%  |
| 2) Midterm Paper – Fight Deconstruction | 20% |
| 3) Rapier Fight                         | 10% |
| 4) Hand-to-Hand Fight                   | 10% |
| 5) Quarterstaff Fight                   | 10% |
| 6) Participation and attendance         | 20% |
| 7) Final Fight Performance              | 25% |

### **Grading Criteria:**

A = Exceptional. Demonstrates mastery of material beyond expectation. Professional quality of work. Highest level of scholarship.

B = Above average. Demonstrates mastery of material. Work is of better-than-expected quality, but not quite professional. High level of scholarship.

C = Average. Demonstrates proficiency with material. Work is of amateur quality. Ordinary level of scholarship.

D = Below Average. Less than proficient with material. Work shows errors, careless mistakes, or is just plain wrong. Poor scholarship.

F – Failure. Material incomplete. Work grossly negligent or incomplete. No evidence of scholarship present.

### **LATE PAPERS**

Deadlines are an inescapable part of responsible, professional, adult life. Late papers will lose a letter grade for each day that the paper is late.

If you discover, *a week or more in advance*, that you have multiple deadlines converging on the same day, you may request a change in deadline> Such a change may be granted at the instructor’s discretion. Once the deadline has passed, it’s too late to ask for exceptions. Manage your time and deadlines wisely.

### **TARDINESS / ABSENCE POLICY**

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Attendance is 25% of your grade. That’s the difference between an “A” and a “C”...or a really easy way to earn an “F.”

### **TARDINESS**

Class **BEGINS EXACTLY AT THE APPOINTED TIME**. It is your responsibility to be prepared to begin **BEFORE** the class starts.

Three instances of tardiness is equivalent to one absence. See below for the class absence policy.

**THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO DENY ENTRY TO STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT PRESENT AT THE START OF CLASS\* – ON THE HOUR. PLAN ACCORDINGLY. ON-TIME is EARLY!**

\*Exceptions will be made only for those with classes located in RAS whose end time makes on-time arrival impossible.

Punctuality is essential in this business. Tardiness will not be tolerated.

Absence Policy, from the Sul Ross State University 2012-2014 Course Catalogue:

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE**

Regular class attendance is important to the attainment of the educational objectives of the University. Each instructor will keep class attendance records, and the instructor's policy on class attendance will be explained at the beginning of the semester or term.

The instructors will drop a student from a course when the student has a total of nine absences. A student will be dropped for excessive absences in remedial courses after nine absences.

An absence is defined as non-attendance in fifty minutes of class; for example, non-attendance in a one and one-half hour class will constitute one and one-half absences and non-attendance in a three hour class will constitute three absences. An absence because of participation in an official University activity is considered to be an authorized absence.

### **MY ABSENCE POLICY:**

Participation and attendance is necessary for your success and the success of the class. You get two absences. Only two. Period. Any more than that, and your overall grade goes down 5% with each absence. I drop you at nine, no questions asked.

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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*Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility services must contact Grace Petty in Counseling and Accessibility Services, Ferguson Hall, Room 112. The mailing address is P.O. Box C-171, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832. Telephone: 432-837-8203.*