

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

FALL 2025 M/W 9:30am-10:45am Marshall Auditorium	Bret Scott, Assoc. Professor Office: FAB 208 432/837-8794 bscott@sulross.edu Regular Office Hours: By appointment only via Zoom until my kids are vaccinated, thanks to COVID-19.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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*.

As a general rule, we don't 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 (you'll hear this a lot this semester).
- 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

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

REQUIRED MATERIALS

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

You will also be expected to purchase a pine closet pole at McCoy's for Quarterstaff work. This will cost \$10-15.

THEATRE PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This course is designed to meet one or more of the student learning outcomes applied to all Theatre majors. The graduating theatre student will demonstrate:

1. A knowledge of the eras and contributions made throughout Theatre History and Musical Theatre History.

Additionally the graduating student with a concentration in Acting/Directing will demonstrate:

2. The ability to express themselves creatively through appropriate theatrical performance.
3. The ability to analyze script.
4. The ability to work creatively with actors and technicians in mounting a laboratory theatrical production.
5. The ability to apply standard requirements to all aspects of technical production.

Additionally the graduating student with a concentration in technical/design will demonstrate:

6. The ability to apply all approaches to theatrical design and rendering of the design.
7. The ability to address all technical aspects of a theatrical production.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- 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.

PREREQUISITES

None.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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 and transcript
- 4) Hand-to-Hand fight and transcript
- 5) Quarterstaff fight and transcript
- 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
8/25	SYLLABUS, EXPECTATIONS, ETC. CLASS DISCUSSION: WHAT IS STAGE COMBAT, AND WHY?
8/27	Intro to safety, warrior stance, safe distance, and slow rehearsal
9/1	LABOR DAY – hug a union member.
9/3	Intro to Rapier
9/8	Parries and Attacks
9/10	Parries and Attacks
9/15	Parries and Attacks
9/17	Review all Rapier moves

9/22	Rapier Fights rehearsal
9/24	Rapier Fights rehearsal
9/29	TEST: Rapier Fights – TRANSCRIPTION DUE
10/1	Intro to Hand-to-Hand
10/6	H-t-H moves 1 Upper Body
10/8	H-t-H moves 2 Lower Body
10/13	H-t-H moves 3 On the Ground
10/15	Review all H-t-H moves
10/20	TEST: H-t-H Fights – TRANSCRIPTION DUE
10/22	Present fight deconstructions
10/27	Present fight deconstructions
10/29	Intro Quarterstaff
11/3	Quarterstaff Techniques 1 - Parries
11/5	Quarterstaff Techniques 2 - Attacks
11/10	Quarterstaff Techniques 3 – long moves
11/12	Quarterstaff rehearsal
11/17	Quarterstaff rehearsal
11/19	Test: Quarterstaff Fights – TRANSCRIPTION DUE
11/26- 11/28	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK – eat to the point of physical pain, and be thankful for it.
12/1	Rehearse Final Fights
12/3	Rehearse Final Fights
12/9	8:00am FINAL EXAM • You will perform your final combined fights. Transcription due at same time.

GRADING

Assignments are valued as follows:

1) Quiz	5%
2) Midterm Paper – Fight Deconstruction	10%
3) Rapier Fight	10%
4) Hand-to-Hand Fight	10%
5) Quarterstaff Fight	10%
6) Participation and attendance	30%
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

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 six, no questions asked.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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.