Description:
The Alexander Technique is a study of “human reaction” that helps us to understand how our use, structure, and functioning are completely integrated. Alexander’s method of re-education allows us to examine our use of self and how patterns of our use influence our general coordination. We cultivate, over time and often unknowingly, certain habits of use that can interfere with the efficiency and effectiveness of our movements. This course addresses these concerns and introduces you to the principles and procedures of the Alexander Technique as developed by Frederick Matthias Alexander in the early part of the 20th century. In class, you will be guided through a series of simple movements both one-to-one with the teacher and as a group. The guided instructions are intended to help you increase your attention and awareness of your movement habits, and to encourage change through energetic thinking.

The term Somatics refers to the approach of mind-body integration. Alexander referred to this integration as the “self” in describing the psycho-physical human organism. This mind-body unity facilitates the development of an internal feedback, or kinesthetic sense, helping you recognize habitual patterns of use (both at the conscious and sub-conscious level) and learning how these patterns affect your structure (poise) and functioning. Class activities will involve learning and practicing the principles of the Alexander Technique through simple activities such as sitting, standing, walking, bending, breathing, and speaking. In the one-to-one teaching of table work and chair work, gentle touch is used to guide, instruct, increase awareness, and bring attention to the amount of tensions you generally use. We will also explore the “Dart Procedures”, a developmental movement method created by anthropologist, Raymond Dart that incorporates the Alexander Technique. As the course progresses, we will apply the Alexander principles with practice of your personal area of interest (i.e. singing, playing an instrument, playing sports, computer or lab work, etc.)

To gain a deeper understanding of the Alexander Technique, there will be assigned readings, discussions, and encouraged practice of the AT concepts outside of the classroom.

Objectives: At the completion of this course, students will be able to:
1) define the basic principles and procedures of the Alexander Technique as a result of practice and discussion.
2) summarize the development of the technique by F.M. Alexander, its purpose and general benefits through writing assignments and verbal presentation.
3) recognize personal harmful habits of use and habits of thought that may be interfering with one’s natural postural reflexes by monitoring use of self.
4) recognize how general coordination and overuse or under-use of tension is reflected in physical structure and functioning.
5) observe an improvement in length and balance, and improved ease and efficiency of movement as a result of following the principles of the Technique.
6) investigate choices about how to move in a general way and for specific activities by employing skills of conscious awareness.
7) employ the skills learned to enhance performance proficiency, for self care, and to prevent injury.

General Skills Acquired (with the completion of this course):
• Enhanced self-awareness and kinesthetic sense
• An increased understanding of mind-body integration
• Enhanced observation skills
• An improved ability to engage in critical and independent thought, verbal articulation, and reflective thinking pertaining to the subject of AT.
Requirements:

1) Attendance: As a 2 credit course, you can have up to two (2) unexcused absences without penalty to your grade. I will be scheduling each of you for several mini private sessions at times throughout the semester. With that in mind, if you know ahead of time that you will be unable to attend class, we can perhaps work that into the private session schedule.


3) Other readings/articles will be given to you as handouts.

4) Assignments:
   a. Chapter Summary and Presentation: You will each be assigned to write a summary on one chapter from “Indirect Procedures”. Papers need to be typed and make enough copies for everyone in class. You will also share your summary as an in-class presentation. Include 2 questions at the end of your paper for a topic of discussion. You will present your summary to the class and lead a discussion based on your two questions pertaining to the subject matter of your assigned chapter.
   b. Journal: Keep a journal (in a notebook or computer) with weekly entries. These will be checked at mid-term and at the end of the semester. These entries should help you keep track of your experiences in and out of class, application of the technique, progress, and notes that will aid your understanding of this subject.
   c. Final Paper: Based on the information from your readings and discussions, class experiences, and journal entries, summarize your understanding of the Alexander Technique. This paper should include a description of the basic principles and procedures of the technique from your readings and our in-class discussions. Additionally, include an explanation of how you have practiced and applied these principles in your everyday life and/or in other specific situations. Explain how practicing the technique has changed or influenced any aspect of your life or specific activity. Include additional research that may support your area of interest through articles, past workshops you may have attended, or supplemental book excerpts. Papers should be a minimum of 3 pages, typed and double-spaced with 1” margins.

Grading:

Evaluation regarding this course will be based on your positive attitude and commitment to learning, demonstration of excellent effort in the class work, completion of readings and assignments, preparedness for discussion and participation, and completion of the above listed assignments.

50% - active class participation, level of effort, and punctual completion of assignments
20% - Chapter Summary - Oral Presentation
10% - Journal
20% - Final Paper

Other:

Please wear comfortable clothes – something good for lying down on the floor. NO HOODED SWEATSHIRTS – they are too bulky. Although this is not a dance or exercise class, we will still need to be able to move comfortably.

There will be times during every class where I will work with each of you one-on-one. While you are waiting for or finished with your “turn”, please make it your responsibility to stay active in the subject by: 1) learning by observing, 2) reading, or 3) working on yourself through the lie-down work, chair work, or standing work.
Chapter Assignments (from the text - Indirect Procedures):

➢ Introduction (group)

Part I – The Principles (Assignments for Chapter Summaries)

1. The Use of the Self

2. The Primary Control

3. Sensory Awareness and Conception

4. Inhibition

5. Direction

6. Action

Part II – The Procedures (Independent reading outside of class or some reading in class)

7. The Lesson
8. Breathing
9. The Monkey and Lunge
10. The Arms and Hands
11. The Whispered “Ah”
14. Working on Yourself

Part III – Applications

15. Applications