

Brawl of America 2023 Class Descriptions

In keeping with our tradition, we are continuing to use a tag/keyword system to help you find the kinds of classes you want to take. Check out the key below!

- ✂️ - *Drills and Techniques*: These focus on acquiring new maneuvers and specific techniques
- 🎓 - *Theory*: These will introduce an approach to the weapon that can be broadly applied
- 🧠 - *Acting*: Focusing on character intentions and playing the action
- 🏃 - *Physically Demanding*: These might make you break a sweat, or be a little rougher on the frame
- 😞 - *Mentally Demanding*: These will explore some of the more psychologically sensitive areas of violence
- 📐 - *Choreography*: These include elements beneficial to choreographers' perspectives of the work

Saturday Period 1

Happy Slapsgiving! - Basic Unarmed (Lynn) ✂️🎓📐

Let's dig into the theory of unarmed strikes by looking at a variety of techniques for non-contact slaps and their geometry; and then use that knowledge to experiment with these techniques for different stage configurations.

Introduction to Sword and Shield - Basic Sword and Shield (Saubert) ✂️

In this Intro class students will explore the dual fence nature of Sword and Shield. Students will train in employing Parries and attacks from both weapons individually and in tandem through partnering. The class will culminate with a short phrase of choreography and the employment of the shield wall.

Maghrebi Stick and Sabre Fencing - Open Stick/Sabre (Stith) ✂️🎓🏃📐

In this workshop we will explore the art of el Matreg, a form of stick fencing practiced in western Algeria and Morocco. According to the Cheikhs (Teachers) the stick was used to prepare the warriors of the Maghreb (North Africa) for the sword. In fact there appear to be a number of correlations between the modern practice and the drills and movements featured in the Mamluk treatise: Kitāb al-makhzūn jāmi' al-funūn (The treasure that combines all arts).

Rapier and Dagger Flow - Intermediate Rapier and Dagger (Barbour) ✂️🎓📐

Blade traffic (which hand goes where when and through what?! Aah!) can be the hardest part of Rapier and Dagger work. By borrowing a drill from Filipino martial arts, we can work to get our hands out of their own way.

Creating the Physical Vocabulary - Advanced Unarmed (Hunter) 🎓🧠🏃📐

This class uses contact improv as a tool for creating dynamic, actor-centric violence. A shared vocabulary built through a very physical series of exercises goes a long way and helps facilitate group scenes.

Saturday Period 2

Selling the Hit - Basic Unarmed (Peters) ✂️🧠

Learn how to make your partner look good! This class will focus on reacting to non-contact strikes, and explore how we can use reactions to make our hits specific and impactful.

Singlesword as Sabre - Open Singlesword (Barbour) ✂️🎓🗡️

Learn to sword fight in three easy steps. And cuts. And parries. And one principle uniting martial swordplay and stage combat. So ten steps (three of which are actual footwork)?

Negotiation Time – How to Recognize Your Value When Booking The Gig - Open Lecture (Rubin) 🗡️

A lecture and Q&A on contracts and negotiation, from the perspective of someone who has been on both sides of the Fight/Intimacy Director and Producer table.

Cross-Body Fuckery - Intermediate Rapier and Dagger (Roccisano) ✂️🗡️

This class focuses on cross-body parries, being twisted up in uncomfortable positions and finding ways to get out of them.

All Choked Up: BJJ (chokes and locks) for the stage - Intermediate/Advanced Unarmed (Hunter) ✂️🏪🗡️

Jiu-Jitsu is a martial art that specializes in grappling and manipulating your opponent's body. Learn how to adapt this close-quarters combat to safely repeatable and legible storytelling purposes.

Saturday Period 3

We All Fall Down! - Basic Unarmed (Rubin) ✂️🏪

An introduction to safe and dramatically effective falls and rolls

Grab a Friend, Then Grab a Friend - Open Unarmed (Barbour) ✂️

Using physical communication and support, simple illusion, and a tiny bit of acting to explore chokes, hair pulls, and other grabby-type moves (spoiler: it's all the same move!)

Bolognese Greatweapons - Open Staff/Greatsword (Maldonado) ✂️🎓🗡️

As sources for Historic European Martial Arts continue to become available and more people become knowledgeable about these techniques, there is a desire to add more of these to stage combat. In this class we will use the 16th century Bolognese system of Achille Marozzo, Antonio Manciolino, and Giovanni Dall'Agocchie as a case study in how to take a historic system and translate it to the stage. We will be focusing on those techniques common to greatswords and polearms of this system.

Oh Captain, My Captain - Open Lecture (Lynn) 🗡️

Lecture/discussion on the art of fight captaining. Bring your questions!

Fight Like Wednesday - Intermediate/Advanced Singlesword (Bronfenbrenner) 🎓🏪🗡️🏪

If you're feeling stuck in advance/retreat/passing footwork this class explores creative ways to use your full body to tell dashing and exciting stories. How to break out of your physical box with direction lunges, one leg avoidances, curvilinear dance footwork, and level changes to achieve a dastardly duel worthy of Wednesday Addams!

Saturday Period 4-5 - Special Session

Knife and Nausea - Open Knife (Hunter/Rubin) 🎓🏪🗡️🤢🗡️

Dig deep into a style of knife fighting that is gruesome and brutal. Mixing in grappling as well as fast-paced attacks to the same target, this is not what you'd put in West Side Story.

Sound the Alarm! It's a Mass Battle! - Open Mixed (Roccisano/Lynn) 🎓👥🏃🏠

Sometimes you need a lot of people fighting onstage - how do you capture the chaos of a battlefield while keeping it safe and repeatable?

'Bring a Stick to a Sword Fight'- Long Stick: Bridging the Gap Between HEMA and HAMA - Open Stick (Stith/Maldonado) ✂️🎓🏃🏠

With the rise of Historical African Martial Arts (HAMA) there is a growing interest in cross-cultural exchange with its sister discipline Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA). However, while HEMA has a long tradition of using the long sword, there is a gap in comparable and compatible weapons in HAMA. Enter: The Long Stick. The goal of this class is to delve into the vibrant history, techniques, and concepts from four specific styles; Oukaf from Algeria, Wasan Sanda from Nigeria, Sukuma Stick from Tanzania, and Donga from Ethiopia. Students will explore how these styles overlap and interact so they can, ultimately, understand and be able to employ all methodologies and strategies to effectively 'communicate' with HEMA and other practitioners. Be it through training, sparring, or competition, practitioners will be able to engage in martial dialogue with other weapon systems such as longsword, katana, miao dao, and polearms.

Rehearsal Tools - Intermediate Singlesword (Tyer/Lubke) 🎓👥🏃🏠

There's a lot of work that needs to happen between "can remember the choreography" and "is ready to perform." We know repetition is key, but mindless repetition does us no good. Learn a variety of exercises to focus your rehearsals towards fine tuning each aspect of the choreography - distance, timing, intention, rhythm and more.

Sunday Period 1

Whips! - Open Bullship (Fieldson) ✂️

Bullwhips can be intimidating, but they can also be tremendous amounts of fun and supremely cool. Learn a variety of ways to crack a bullwhip from the owner of Whipworks. *(This session and the one on Sunday period 2 are identical - presented for multiple folks to have more flexibility to take the same class)*

Fighting AS Character - Open Broadsword (Gordon) 🎓👥🏃🏠

An actor needs to be able embody their character throughout the fight, not just before and after. And arguably more importantly, they should be able to fight as multiple different characters, whether they're in

Running Blades and Flashing Steel: Knife Fighting in the African Diaspora - Open Knife (Stith) ✂️🎓🏃🏠

During the Transatlantic Slave Trade enslaved Africans brought with them their warrior traditions that interacted with the fighting traditions of Europe and the Americas to create many unique cultural arts that range from boxing, wrestling, stick and machete fencing as well as fighting with the knife or razor. In this class we will investigate the art of the knife as a subset within Capoeira (Brazil) and compare and contrast with more established bladed traditions such as Esgrima con machete (Colombia) and Garrote Larense (Venezuela) which we will use to decode and reconstruct knife play based on the bladed hand.

No Rules Smallsword - Intermediate Smallsword (Hunter) 🎓👥🏃🏠

This smallsword is down and dirty...punches will be thrown!

Fighting on the Spectrum - Advanced Unarmed (Roccisano) 🎓🧠🗺️

Students must know how to safely demonstrate multiple fundamentals and different ways to implement the same move. A class giving tools and adjustments for working with autistic students and collaborators.

Sunday Period 2

Hit 'em Where it Doesn't Hurt! - Intro to Contact Hits and Shared Knaps - Basic Unarmed (Rubin) ✂️

Asking the question of why we would choose to make contact on a hit, and how to safely and effectively do so.

Whips! - Open Bullwhip (Fieldson) ✂️

Bullwhips can be intimidating, but they can also be tremendous amounts of fun and supremely cool. Learn a variety of ways to crack a bullwhip from the owner of Whipworks. *(This session and the one on Sunday period 1 are identical - presented for multiple folks to have more flexibility to take the same class)*

Foundations of Physicality - Open Unarmed (Wright) ✂️🎓

Why make our bodies work harder than they have to? In this class we'll explore basic planes of movement and learn how to use our bodies more efficiently.

Pretend to Fight Like You Don't Know How - Intermediate Unarmed (Barbour) 🎓🧠🗺️

Using an exploration of contact improv, intention, and boundaries to create gritty, awkward, realistic fights between characters who don't know how.

Just Die Already! - Advanced Mixed (Lynn) ✂️🎓🧠🗺️

A choreography round-table session to brainstorm, innovate, and share our discoveries around building techniques for staging lethal and non-lethal wounds in choreography.

Prerequisites: substantial experience (i.e., SPT or equivalent) in multiple weapons.

Sunday Period 3

Small Human, Big Sword - Basic Broadsword (Roccisano) ✂️🎓🗺️

How to move the sword with your center on a small frame.

Rhythm Knife-Nation: Finding the Syncopations in Blade Work - Open Knife (Hunter) ✂️🎓🗺️

Variety is the spice of life, so explore ways of keeping your fighting from becoming monotonous.

Gurade: The Art of Abyssinian Sabre - Open Sabre (Stith) ✂️🎓🧠🗺️

In this class we will explore the versatility and utility use of the short recurved gurade a unique blade that merges the advantages of three distinct weapon styles - the sabre or shamshir with it's fluid sweeping cuts and its ability to deliver more traditional in line thrusting, the shotel with its shearing cuts and deceptive hooking thrust enabling it to reach around shields, and finally jile dagger used in a reversed grip can deliver powerful downward thrust as well as it can be used at close quarters for grappling and trapping.

Calculated Can Openers - Intermediate/Advanced Sword and Shield (Rubin) 🎓🗺️

Let's figure out all the ways we can use this pairing together to get past and around the shield and inside our opponent's defenses!

Fight Like a Musketeer - Advanced Singlesword (Lynn) ✂️🎓👤

Let's unearth some very old-school thoughts on how dynamic centers of movement can help clarify the physicalization of characters--and then apply that theory to our Single Sword technique.

Prerequisites: single sword cuts, thrusts, parries.

Sunday Period 4

Death Screams and War Cries - Open Unarmed (Smith) 🎓👤👤👤👤

Vocal techniques for fighters covering how to safely and repeatedly scream and vocalize in fight and death scenarios

Fighting Rhetoric - Open Knife (Roccisano) ✂️🎓👤👤

Using different devices of specificity to perform a persuasive story. Repetition, Omission, Addition, Direction, and Substitution.

Destreza for the Stage - Open Rapier (Maldonado) ✂️🎓👤

In this class we will look at the Spanish fencing system known as "Destreza" - renowned for being based on a different theory behind both footwork and bladework. In application, it produces an elegant form of swordplay used throughout the Spanish world from the late 16th to early 18th centuries that was sometimes described as dancing with swords.

Scramble: Gimme that Gun! Fighting for the Prop - Intermediate Unarmed/Firearms (Hunter) 🎓👤👤👤👤

Sometimes both characters are struggling for control of a single object (in this case a dummy firearm.)

This adds a unique dynamic to a fight scene that warrants exploration.

Showdown! - Advanced Broadsword (Barbour) 🎓👤👤👤👤

It's a mystery! But I bet there'll be broadswords, and it's for advanced students.

Sunday Period 5

Intro to Pro Wrestling - Open Unarmed (Rubin) ✂️🎓👤👤

Taking a look at some fundamentals of body agency and chain wrestling in the over-the-top world of professional wrestling!

Broadbuckling - Open Broadsword (Barbour) ✂️🎓👤

Classic stage combat broadsword has very little basis in how the real longsword was used. Classic Victorian single sword stock phrases also have little to no basis in how the weapon was actually used! What happens when we stick the one anachronism on the other?

A Bound Fist: Dambe Boxing and its Connection to Spear and Shield Fighting - Open Unarmed (Stith)

✂️🎓👤👤

Dambe represents a unique form of weaponized boxing where the dominant hand which is bound and wrapped into a club-like striking surface is called the 'Mashi' or spear and is used in powerful clubbing and thrusting strikes whereas the unbounded hand, 'garkuwa' or the shield, remains open and is used primarily for defensive actions, clinching, and grappling. In this class we will learn the fundamental guards, attacks, defenses of Dambe boxing, explore how these techniques relate to spear and shield, and discuss the connections between the Hausa and Egyptians.

Fast and Flurrious: Keep it in the Bamily - Intermediate Quarterstaff (Tyer) ✂️🎓🏠

Want to create a quarterstaff fight that isn't Robin Hood and Little John? We'll repurpose Kali to improve our short-form staff dexterity for a lightning-fast, bone-breaking bonanza.

Fighting in the Dark - Advanced Smallsword (Lynn) ✂️🎓🏠

We'll combine with some acting exercises and technique drills to help physicalize the story of characters fighting in low- or no-light conditions (for example, Romeo and Paris in Juliet's tomb), with an emphasis on varying tempo, working from engagement, and sentiment du fer.

Prerequisites: ability to adjust working tempo; cuts, thrusts, parries (all 8); some exercises will be done with eyes closed.