



OWL GLASS ACADEMY

The Practicing Mind (Or How to Get Good at Anything)

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ABOUT THE COURSE

Practicing is self-teaching, the means by which we develop expertise in a skill. Though I am a musician, practicing is not an exclusively musical phenomenon. Dancers, actors, athletes, speakers, and writers all must engage in practice to refine their skill sets. This course is for anyone who practices regularly in any discipline and wishes to develop a greater understanding of the biological and psychological underpinnings of skill practice and execution/performance. These underpinnings can be leveraged to practice and execute/perform more optimally.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through reading, discussion, and recorded practice of specific, pre-determined skills, you will learn and demonstrate that you have learned:

- strategies for developing a practicing process that is effective and satisfying.
- strategies to cultivate a growth mindset.
- the biological mechanisms behind successful learning and how to take advantage of them in practice.
- the psychological mechanisms behind successful learning and how to take advantage of them in practice.
- key differences in the psychology and neurobiology of practicing and performing that can inhibit or promote optimal performance.
- strategies designed to promote optimal performance.

MATERIALS

You will need the following materials:

- A notebook and pencil, computer, or tablet for regularly assigned journaling related to assigned readings and personal practice
- An audio-visual recording device (such as a smartphone) to capture footage of personal practice
- The following texts, many of which are available from public and academic libraries:
 - Carol Dweck: *Mindset*
 - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: *Flow*
 - Matthew Syed: *Bounce*
 - Daniel Coyle: *The Talent Code*
 - William Westney: *The Perfect Wrong Note*
 - Sharon Sparrow: *Six Weeks to Finals*
 - Sian Beilock: *Choke*

ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE

The class meets via Zoom once per week for 90 minutes to discuss possible applications of assigned reading and examine recorded footage of practice/performance for evidence of application of concepts covered in readings and discussion.

Outside our weekly meetings, I will correspond with individual students regularly, regarding weekly assignments. Many assignments will come in the form of recorded practice, for which I will offer constructive commentary and suggestions.

Regular journaling is expected, to which your peers and I will add commentary. There is no set length for these entries; you will write a response to the given prompt each week that you feel is complete, and you are expected to edit your entries in response to my commentary.

All assignments should be uploaded to our course Google Drive.

The course will be broken into three large modules:

1. Creating a Mental Framework for Successful Practice (Weeks 1-3)
 - Framing success and failure (Dweck: *Mindset*)
 - Finding satisfaction in your work and inducing flow (Csikszentmihalyi: *Flow*)
2. Understanding and Engaging in the Process of Successful Practice (Weeks 4-8)
 - Understanding and using the neuroscience of learning (Syed: *Bounce*; Coyle: *The Talent Code*)
 - Understanding and using the psychology of learning (Duke: *Intelligent Music Teaching*; Westney: *The Perfect Wrong Note*)
3. Transitioning Between Practicing and Performing (Weeks 9-10)
 - Understanding the differences between performing and practicing (Syed)
 - Developing and using strategies for successful performance (Sparrow: *Six Weeks to Finals*; Beilock: *Choke*)

The final two weeks of the course will be devoted to your final projects, wherein you will engage in work designed to demonstrate absorption and synthesis of concepts covered cumulatively. Details of the final project will be shared in week eight.