



DAN-121A: BEGINNING BALLET

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

06/12/2025

Discipline

DAN - Dance

Course Number

121A

Course Title

Beginning Ballet

Short Title

Beginning Ballet

Credit Status (CB 04)

D - Credit - Degree applicable

Units**Activity Units**

1.50

Total Units

1.50

Hours**Activity Contact Hours**

48-54

Out of Class Hours Activity

24-27

Total Contact Hours

48 - 54

Total Out of Class Hours

24 - 27

Total Student Learning Hours

72 - 81

Distance Education

No

Catalog Description

This course introduces students to beginning ballet technique, movement principles, and vocabulary. Students will gain knowledge of introductory ballet barre and center exercises, as well as attain increased strength, stamina, balance, flexibility, and understanding of the ballet aesthetic as part of the western tradition. The historical and cultural contexts of ballet, especially concerning race, culture, and gender will be examined.

Codes**TOP Code (CB 03)**

1008.00 - Dance

**CIP Code**

50.0302 - Ballet.

Repeatability Code

No

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Dance (Masters Required)	End

GE Information**Check GE Types Requested**

AA/AS E - Lifelong Learning and Self-Development

Learning Objectives**Learning Objectives**

Learning Objective
1. Demonstrate proper alignment while utilizing beginning arm and foot positions.
2. Demonstrate improved flexibility, strength, and balance.
3. Distinguish the ballet aesthetic of Western theatrical dance from other dance styles as shown either on a video or in a live performance.
4. Evaluate class performance and personal progress.
5. Illustrate a technical understanding of beginning vocabulary of the lower body - at barre and in center: plie, tendu, degage, releve, frappe, and fondu.
6. Develop an understanding of the etiquette of ballet.
7. Exhibit an understanding of beginning ballet locomotors: chasse, tombe, pas de bourree, glissade, and jete.
8. Analyze the structure of a ballet class and how technique is gained through the various sections.
9. Categorize the ways in which the study of a technique for dance impacts and informs the development of a plan to meet personal health and wellness goals.
10. Examine and evaluate the aesthetics of ballet and its major historical shifts, with a focus on issues of diversity, equity, exclusion, and racism in ballet.

Learning Outcome Information**Course Learning Outcomes**

Learning Outcome
1. The student will consistently stick to a task.
2. The student will demonstrate respect for diverse perspectives.
3. The student will exhibit openness to continuous learning.

Content**Course Activity Content**

(The instructor is encouraged to use his/her professional judgment to emphasize or deemphasize topics below, or to add additional content reflecting his or her interpretation and/or expertise.)

1. Introduction to Ballet
 - a. As a classical art
 - b. The ballet aesthetic

2. Appropriate clothing - ballet etiquette
 - a. tights
 - b. leotards
 - c. ballet slippers
3. Nature of the training - structure of class
 - a. Barre
 - b. Center
 - i. Adagio
 - ii. allegro
 1. petite
 2. grand
4. Introduction to various schools of training
 - a. Cecchetti
 - b. Vaganova
 - c. Royal Academy of Dance (RAD)
 - d. School of American Ballet (SAB)
5. Historical background
 - a. Ballet's roots in European Renaissance court
 - i. Development of the ballet aesthetic
 - ii. Hierarchy
 - iii. Secular development of theatrical dance
6. Technical variations
7. Introduction to famous ballets (the following is a suggested list only)
 - a. Romantic era ballets
 - i. Giselle
 - ii. La Sylphide
 - b. Classical era ballets
 - i. Swan Lake
 - ii. Sleeping Beauty
 - iii. The Nutcracker
 - iv. La Bayadere
8. Conventions utilized in classical era ballets
 - a. Stereotypical characterizations
 - i. Use of blackface, yellowface
 - ii. Use of make-up to whiten faces of BIPOC ballerinas
 - iii. Pancaking shoes of BIPOC dancers to extend line
9. Historically systemic exclusionary practices in ballet
 - a. White-dominated industry
 - b. Adherence to European standards of beauty and aesthetics
 - i. Focus on body type, gender roles, and racial uniformity
 - c. Aesthetics related to the corps de ballet
 - i. Upholds ideals of harmony, symmetry, uniformity
 - d. Limited opportunities for BIPOC dancers
 - i. BIPOC dancers perceived to stand out in a way that is not in keeping with ballet aesthetics for the corps
 1. BIPOC dancers, especially females perceived as ruining harmony and uniformity especially in "white ballets" (Romantic era ballets in which female dancers all wear white tutus, portraying otherworldly creatures)
 - a. Corps de ballet is the traditional starting place for most dancers entering a company
 - b. Springboard from which exceptional dancers can rise to soloist or principal removed if not given equal opportunities to dance
10. Critique of a ballet and the associated aesthetics
11. Healthy approaches to taking a technique for dance
 - a. Physical demands
 - i. Need for adequate sleep
 - ii. Healthy diet to support physical endeavor
 - iii. Importance of proper warm-up and cool down
 - iv. Importance of stretching to support muscular health as strength increases
 1. A tight muscle is a weak muscle
 - b. Establishing health and wellness goals

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- i. Personal responsibility
 - ii. Physical, social and psychological demands and issues
 - iii. Physical fitness and development
 - iv. Assessing self-development
 - v. Assessing the development of the class as a whole
 - vi. Performance qualities and artistic style
 - vii. Technique development and achievements at the beginning level
 - 12. Vocabulary
 - a. Basic barre shall include but not be limited to:
 - i. pli  , demi, and grand
 - ii. tendu
 - iii. relev  
 - iv. eleve
 - v. d  gag  
 - vi. frapp  
 - vii. fondu
 - viii. developp  
 - ix. rond de jambe    terre
 - b. Adagio shall include but not be limited to:
 - i. port de bras
 - 1. first port de bras
 - 2. second port de bras
 - 3. third port de bras
 - c. Allegro shall include but not be limited to:
 - i. pas de bourr  e
 - ii. saut  s
 - iii. glissade
 - iv. jet  
 - v. chasse
 - 13. Turns shall include but not be limited to:
 - a. pirouettes
 - i. en de hors
 - ii. en de dans
 - b. chaine
 - c. soutenu
 - d. pas de bourr  e
 - 14. Assessment and evaluation of health and wellness
 - a. Analysis of personal growth in regard to health and wellness goals
 - i. Categorizing achievable gains
 - b. Developing and modifying personal plan for health and fitness goals
 - i. Identifying personal goals
 - 15. Assessing self-development
 - a. Self-assessment of identified personal goals
 - i. Personal responsibility
 - ii. Physical, social and psychological demands and issues
 - b. Self-assessment of improvement in the following:
 - i. Strength
 - ii. Stamina
 - iii. Balance
 - iv. Agility
 - v. Flexibility
 - vi. Endurance
 - vii. Embodiment of the ballet aesthetic on a beginning level
 - 16. Assessing the development of the class as a whole

17. Modifying goals as necessary

Methods of Instruction

Method

Critique

Integration

Instructor-led critique of various ballets representing different periods (Classical, Neo-classical, Romantic, Contemporary), focusing on ballet choreography followed by class discussion comparing and contrasting those styles and discussing conventions utilized within different eras related to diversity, racism, and exclusion.

Method

Discussion

Integration

Instructor-led discussion and analysis of style and technique distinguishes the ballet aesthetic from other dance genres. The instructor will utilize video and possibly photography, in order to make clear qualitative differences between genres and styles within genres.

Method

In-class Exercises

Integration

The instructor will break down class exercises through physical demonstration accompanied by verbal instruction, appraising and validating the ways in which the exercises impact stability, agility, stamina, and strength, promoting overall health and fitness.

Method

Observation and Demonstration

Integration

The instructor will demonstrate the five basic positions of the feet to introduce and support students' understanding of proper alignment, placement, and turnout.

Method

Group Projects

Integration

In small groups, students will break down, drill, and rehearsal classroom combinations phrase by phrase, focusing on analysis or the movement, proper technique and identifying influences. The assignment will culminate in a performance of the choreography by each group accompanied by a report of their findings.

Method

Individual Projects

Integration

Students investigate issues embedded within ballet relating to diversity, race, culture, gender, ethnicity, body type, eating disorders, exclusionary practices, stereotypical portrayals of BIPOC peoples, allegations of abuse, power dynamics, and other systemic problems embedded within ballet as an institution, reporting their findings in informal presentations on topics of their choice.

Method

Lecture

Integration

The instructor lectures as he/she/they demonstrate how to perform an exercise en croix (to the front, to the side, to the back, to the side), to introduce and support students' understanding of proper alignment, placement, weight changes and turnout.

Methods of Evaluation**Method**

Class Participation

Integration

The instructor evaluates the students' utilization of turnout and correct alignment, including manipulative corrections, as necessary, to facilitate safe practices with an eye toward minimizing injuries. The student's understanding of turnout occurring from the hips, with contributions from the tibia, the foot/ankle complex, and if the knee is bent, the knee joint, and ability to maintain the degree of turnout that is correct for their body, (with knees aligned centrally over the toes without rolling inwards as they plie), as well as proper alignment, (with the back elongated, shoulders down, and head and neck lengthening upwards), are assessed through performance of exercises at the barre or center floor.

Method

Class Performance

Integration

The instructor will evaluate the technical progress of individual students, concerning alignment, turnout, and the five positions of the feet through a movement examination in which students perform a beginning level exercise at the barre or center floor. The student's ability to maintain proper alignment while keeping their knees squarely over the center of the feet with each plie and ability to perform seamless weight shifts as they move through a sequence en croix (front, side, back, side), will be assessed for improvement in accuracy, balance, and proper technique.

Method

Class Work

Integration

Students will be evaluated on performance of dance combinations, which assess the student's technical mastery of movement sequences, musicality, style, and performance techniques.

Method

Exams/Tests

Integration

Written examinations on concepts, terminology, and historical perspectives will be given in quiz format.

Method

Group Projects

Integration

In small groups, students analyze and demonstrate the ways in which specific exercises and/or combinations impact stability, stamina, agility and/or strength. The instructor will evaluate the thoroughness of their findings through both demonstration and discussion of how a specific ballet exercise impacts stability, stamina, agility, and/or strength.

Method

Oral Presentation

Integration

The student will give a short oral presentation examining a selected topic based on issues of diversity, equity, exclusion and racism and other ills in ballet, such as the expectation of extreme thinness, eating disorders, discrimination based on body type, power differentiations and dynamics, stereotypical portrayals and/or storylines within a classical ballet, or experiences related by individual BIPOC dancers that made them uncomfortable or feel isolated from their peers based on race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and intersections of these identities. The presentation will be evaluated on clear discussion identifying the specific issue, impact of the issue on the individual and/or company, and overall impact of the issue on ballet as it struggles to reckon with systemic, institutionalized discrimination based on race, culture, ethnicity, gender and intersections of these identities.

Assignments**Assignment Type**

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Read Madison Mainwaring's discussion of Alice Robb's book, "Don't Think, My Dear: On Loving and Leaving Ballet," in the article, "Balancing Act: The Struggle to Save Ballet From Itself, A Former Dancer Reckons with the Rigors and Ordeals of Life in Ballet," The New Republic, April 19, 2023. List three aspects from the article which struck you, and why. Come to class prepared to participate in a discussion about issues in ballet training, and current expectations made on both professional dancers and those training for professional careers in ballet, and the toll they take. Be able to answer the following questions: As a college student taking a beginning ballet class, what issues brought up in the article and book concern me the most, and why? Why should these issues matter? What benefits do I see in my ballet training at the college level that positively impact my overall fitness, health, confidence, and self-image? How do we reconcile 21st century feminism with the rigors and ordeals of life in ballet experienced by its professionals and those seeking a professional career? What changes still need to be made to save ballet from itself?

<https://newrepublic.com/article/171909/struggle-save-ballet-alice-robb-think-dear-review>

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Watch and critique specific live or videotaped ballet performances as to the quality of the classical technique observed. Write down your observations, and be prepared to engage in discussion of aspects you recognized and observed.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Practice ballet technique at the barre with a focus on dynamic alignment and proper articulation of the legs and feet.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Prepare, practice, and perform a combination as demonstrated in class with regard to technical proficiency appropriate to the beginning level, musicality, and style.

Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Write a three-page self-evaluation detailing your goals for the semester, the obstacles you faced, and your overall growth as a student of ballet. In what ways have you improved as a student of ballet? How does a technique for dance impact your overall health, wellness, and self-development?

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Prepare an oral presentation examining a specific issue associated with ballet. You may elect a specific topic related to diversity, equity and inclusion, or other ills identified in ballet such as power differentials, allegations of abuse, sexual improprieties, discrimination against dancers whose gender identities are outside traditional constructs, and/or ballerinas who do not fit into

traditional aesthetics of whiteness and extreme thinness, stereotypical portrayals of BIPOC peoples within some ballets, demands made by ballet companies that dancers of color “white up,” or wear yellowface or blackface, especially dancers whose cultural and ethnic identities align with Asian, Black or African characters portrayed, or experiences related by individual BIPOC dancers that made them feel uncomfortable and/or isolated from their peers based on race, culture, ethnicity, gender, body type, or intersections of these identities.

The presentation will be assessed for clear discussion identifying the specific issue, analysis of historical background and/or influences related to the problem, impact of the issue on the individual(s) involved, and the overall impact of the issue on ballet as it struggles to reckon with systemic, institutionalized discrimination based on race, ethnicity, culture, gender, body type and intersections of these identities.

Course Materials

Textbooks

Wallace-McMillon, Takiyah, (2023). The Color of Dance: A Celebration of Diversity and Inclusion in the World of Ballet. ISBN-13: : 978-0762479559

Grant, Gail (2014). Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet bnpublishing.com. ISBN: 1607963337

Other Resources

Mainwaring, Madison. "Balancing Act: The Struggle to Save Ballet From Itself, A former dancer reckons with the rigors and ordeals of life in ballet, The New Republic (online), April 17, 2023.

<https://newrepublic.com/article/171909/struggle-save-ballet-alice-robb-think-dear-review>

Class Size Information

Class Size

32

Class Size Category

G - Large lab 32

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Design and Materials: Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

Inclusive Learning Environment: Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

Accessible Instruction: Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

Equitable Teaching Practices: Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies: Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

Ongoing Reflection and Improvement: Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.

Ballet as an art form inherited elitist ideas and values from its origins in the royal courts of Italy and France that have resulted in centuries of systemic, exclusionary practices and embedded racism. This revision is in alignment with current trends in Dance Studies, advocating for continued changes in how ballet is taught, discussed, analyzed, cast, and performed. Through lecture, discussion and analysis, and the viewing of ballet on video, the revised course seeks to examine systemic inequities, and present the case that ballet as an art form is in fact, enhanced by the contributions of all dancers and choreographers, regardless of race, culture, gender identity, body type, or intersections of these identities. As students dance side by side in the space, not only is their spatial awareness improved, but they make important realizations about how dance is a communal activity that is enhanced by the contributions of all, and see with their own eyes that the notion that dancers of color, those whose body types do not fit the standards of extreme thinness, and those whose gender identities do not conform to the traditional constructs are every bit as able to accomplish ballet movement vocabulary and aesthetics. Additionally, this revision seeks to present opportunities for our students to understand that despite inroads that have been made by increased hiring of BIPOC dancers within the ranks of professional companies in the west, there is still much work to be done to save ballet from itself, as many major companies continue to herald classical ballets containing harmful stereotypical portrayals of BIPOC peoples, ask ballerinas of color to whiten their faces with makeup and continue to use yellowface and blackface, citing history and tradition as acceptable reasons for their resistance to change. Through this revision these systemic issues are addressed, bringing our students awareness and making them more informed students of ballet. Students enjoy the many benefits of studying ballet technique, experiencing the impact this august dance form has on overall fitness, health, wellness, and the ability to handle stress, while also realizing that embedded discriminatory practices have no basis in truth, and that ballet today is an art form that represents humanity, not simply one elitist segment of it. Through this course revision, equitable and beneficial experiences are offered all students, regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, creed, gender, body type, or intersections of these identities, and all reap the benefits of the discipline it offers. Finally, the course seeks to foster positive change that will ensure the continued evolution of the art form as our students continue to grow and evolve as human beings.

Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.

This course is taught through various methods of instruction and evaluation, assignments, course content, and interactions of students with the instructor, the material, and finally, with one another, and is designed to be inclusive of all races, cultures, identities, genders, and intersections of those identities in a way that presents the basic material as a beautiful art form and practice providing the opportunity for self-expression through dance, that is also an excellent way of developing and maintaining a supple, strong, and fit body that serves us in our everyday lives. This course utilizes various methods of instruction and evaluation: lecture, viewing of video, implementation of course content, and assignments to introduce ballet technique on a beginning level in a way that is accessible to and inclusive of all races, cultures, identities, genders and intersections of these identities. This is done through the employment of various teaching modalities through which students of diverse backgrounds and learning styles can engage with the material and succeed in the class, while also gaining personal insight into the historical problems inherent in ballet: racism, exclusionary practices, and harmful stereotypical portrayals in many classical ballets (still being performed). Students enjoy the benefits of a beautiful but physically and mentally demanding dance technique hand in hand with learning about historical and cultural developments as well as the newest trends in ballet. Because ballet is process and product oriented, students have the opportunity to excel within their own predispositions while engaging in a course of study that ultimately teaches them about discipline. An added benefit is that studying any dance technique offers opportunities for personal expression. Through this course, students also have the opportunity to examine the ugliness of ballet while also maintaining the ability to appreciate it for its beauty and many benefits, augmented by the knowledge that change is imperative to save this art form from itself.

Interactions**Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.**

Students in dance technique classes interact with one another in various ways. A dance technique class is simultaneously a communal and individual process. Students are engaged in learning together as they take class. Part of that process is giving and receiving feedback from one another as they work together to learn sequences of movement presented at the barre, center floor and in across the floor movement combinations, learned and practiced in and outside of class. Students will often work together on their own while other groups perform combinations. Small group final performances may also be utilized within this course, through which students work together to refine and demonstrate knowledge of choreography created by the instructor. This includes performance qualities in which they begin to integrate the ballet aesthetic and express themselves through the movement. In performing these combinations, students work together to implement and refine the choreography, including going over difficult steps, ballet aesthetics, and other class concepts. Additionally, students in dance technique classes typically give one another encouragement throughout class.

Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.

The instructor demonstrates, breaks down, and verbally explains movement sequences, exercises and combinations, provides tactile feedback, and lectures to impart knowledge to students on various aspects of ballet technique, theory, history, politics, etiquette, vocabulary, terminology and aesthetics. Discussions are implemented, which the instructor leads, participates in, and moderates regarding concepts, aesthetics, historical issues, and student accountability in the study of ballet. The instructor also gives tactile corrections, and verbal and written feedback to students, as indicated. Within a dance technique class, the instructor literally walks

through the room, calling out cues, theoretical information, and instructions, and interacting with both individuals and the class as a whole, to give corrections, and encouragement as students perform movement combinations. These methods of instruction are utilized throughout a ballet class, and this level of interaction continues throughout the semester. Additionally, the instructor may show video of professional ballet performances to give examples of ballet form and aesthetics, to excite students about ballet as a performing art form, and to illustrate conventions embedded within classical ballets which often include stereotypical portrayals of people of color.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.

In any dance technique class, students engage with content in each class, as they perform barre exercises, center-floor work, movement sequences across the floor, and combinations performed in class. This interaction is led and facilitated by the instructor, as he/she/they teach technique, actions, aesthetics, and terminology within the movement vocabulary taught in class. This builds week-to-week, as students gain and develop beginning-level skills in the genre of ballet, also practicing it outside of class to deepen their understanding of ballet aesthetics as well as to ingrain choreography within their bodies. Content is also accessed via video, and readings, which reveal aspects of ballet's historical and cultural development, including exclusionary practices and harmful stereotypical portrayals of people of color within ballet. The instructor contextualizes these conventions, within the growing movement in Dance Studies to save ballet from itself that is prevalent at universities and colleges, especially in the West, and which have contributed to the reckoning occurring in professional ballet companies today. Through this course, students engage with the material in many ways, including embodied learning, and metacognitive responses of knowing when and how to engage particular problem-solving strategies to enhance their study of ballet at the beginning level.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).

Within any dance technique class, regardless of genre or level, students continually analyze movement, and how to achieve it correctly, while also assessing their own growth and development as they perform each movement combination. This internal thought process, including self-assessment, is both continual and necessary in dance technique classes, and is complemented by the instructor, whose interaction with the students and the material is also constant. Additionally, in a ballet class at this level, students are beginning to incorporate the proper aesthetic, as well as instructor feedback, which they must first assess in relation to their own awareness of their moving body. The ability to do this is an important developing skill assisted by tactile corrections. Once the student can discern and feel the difference between how to perform a movement properly, and the way they previously performed it, they can truly implement corrections, and their technical abilities and skill levels will grow. This demands an internal process that continues throughout each class. Especially in beginning level classes, students utilize the mirror as a visual tool to aid in this constant internal analysis. Assigned written work may assist students in self-evaluating and reflecting on their personal progress. The instructor is integral in all of this, facilitating each aspect of a dance technique class, helping students to learn to see the many aspects inherent in a single movement, let alone a sequence or combination. Beginning level classes are where students learn to implement the internal thought process that accompanies any embodied learning.

Key: 1140