



DAN-122A: BEGINNING MODERN DANCE TECHNIQUE

Effective Term

Fall 2025

BOT Approval Date

12/17/2024

Discipline

DAN - Dance

Course Number

122A

Course Title

Beginning Modern Dance Technique

Short Title

Beginning Modern Dance

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 focuses on the skills, approaches, and aesthetics of beginning modern dance technique within the context of its cultural and historical foundations. Students will develop contemporary dance movement vocabulary and artistic skills while increasing flexibility, endurance, balance, musicality, and dynamic alignment.

Codes**TOP Code (CB 03)**

1008.00 - Dance



CIP Code

50.0301 - Dance, General.

Repeatability Code

No

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

GE Information

Check GE Types Requested

AA/AS E - Lifelong Learning and Self-Development

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives

Learning Objective
1. Illustrate a beginning range of modern dance movement utilizing the availability of one's personal kinesphere.
2. Employ fundamental modern dance swings, collapses, suspensions, vibratory movements, sustained movements and percussive movements.
3. Discover the dynamic alignment of modern dance, vacillating between moving off center and balancing in center.
4. Demonstrate improvement in flexibility, strength, endurance and core support through the performance of modern dance techniques introduced in class.
5. Develop mastery of beginning modern dance falls, recoveries, and turns.
6. Assemble a 48-count movement phrase that demonstrates an understanding of musicality, space, and dynamics as related to modern dance.
7. Examine the origins of modern dance as an American art form noting its complex history and diverse cultural influences. An appreciation of the marginalized communities that developed the form, some of whom were embraced in the profession and others who were excluded, will be understood as a reflection of broader systems of race-based oppression in the U.S.
8. Analyze live or recorded selections of modern dance performance, and examine the Europeanist and Africanist elements as well as themes about gender and sexuality that are common in the form. POC and queer choreographers will be centered, understanding the appropriations as well as race-based exclusions that were enacted in much of the early history of the genre.
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.

Learning Outcome Information

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome
1. The student will engage in inclusive, respectful conversations with others.
2. The student will develop confidence and remain open to continuous learning.
3. The student will create original responses to new and diverse perspectives.

Program Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome
Apply knowledge and skills gained to new and varied situations through dance expression.
Compose, perform and evaluate works of artistic expression.
Develop an awareness of the history, diversity, and cultural significance of dance.
Discover and evaluate movement through the use of aesthetic tools gained.
Examine anatomical ideas and discover the connections required to demonstrate depth of knowledge and technical ability.

Institutional Learning Outcomes

Aesthetic Awareness: The student will identify and evaluate how aesthetic expression leads to an appreciation of social and cultural context as well as the values of art and nature.

Communication: The student will effectively express and exchange ideas through listening, speaking, reading, writing, visual works, and other modes of interpersonal expression.

Critical Thinking: The student will analyze problems, gather and synthesize relevant information, evaluate ideas, information, and evaluate alternative points of view to create, innovate and implement effective solutions.

Cultural Awareness and Humility: The student will demonstrate knowledge of and sensitivity toward individuals of diverse ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, and religious affiliations, as well as toward those individuals with diverse abilities and socio-economic classes to respectfully interact with individuals of diverse perspectives, beliefs and values while being mindful of the limitation of their own cultural frameworks.

Social Awareness: The student will recognize and analyze the interconnectedness of global, national, and local concerns, analyzing cultural, political, social, and environmental issues from multiple perspectives and appreciate similarities and differences among cultures.

Civic

Personal

and Professional Responsibility

Content

Course Activity Content

1. Introduction to modern dance technique
 - a. Warm-ups/introduction to technique will include one or more of the following:
 - i. Stretches for tight muscle groups
 - ii. Strengthening for weak muscle groups
 - iii. Center technique
 - iv. Floor barre
 - v. Spinal/core support work
 - vi. Aerobic and/or breath work
 - b. Exploring space and the body's relationship to it through guided explorations
 - i. The dancer's environment
 - ii. Space as a tool for support and expressivity
 - iii. Explorations and exercises to help free the body to move fully spatiall
 1. As warm-up and mind/body liberator
 - c. Beginning techniques--standing
 - i. Development of the body's center/dynamic alignment as well as a sense of the floor and gravity
 1. Vertical throughness
 2. Head/heel connections
 3. Head/tail connections
 4. Heel/sit bone connections
 - ii. Pliés and élèvés in parallel and turned out positions—first and second
 1. Balances on two feet: first and second positions parallel and/or turned-out
 - iii. Weight shift
 - iv. Weight support on one leg while the other leg is gesturing (brushes, lifts, kicks, swings)
 - v. Balances
 - vi. Torso work
 1. Releases
 2. Roll-downs
 3. Swings
 4. High chests
 5. Hovers
 - vii. Arms

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1. Full range of motion—hand/scapula
 2. Placement
 - d. Small center combinations building on the above
 - i. Musicality
 - ii. Dynamic Alignment
 - iii. Connecting through the movement
 - iv. Facings, spatial integrity
 - v. Focus
 - e. Across-the-floor
 - i. Locomotor and axial movements
 - ii. Travel through space
 - iii. Rhythm/timing
 - iv. Phrasing
 - v. Correct technical execution
 - vi. Spatial awareness of other dancers--spacing
 - f. Center combinations/dances
 - i. Putting it all together
 - ii. Dynamic alignment
 - iii. Phrasing
 - iv. Expression
 - v. Musicality
 - vi. Dynamics
 - vii. Focus
 - viii. Presence
 - g. Structured Improvisations:
 - i. Discovering new movement and qualities of movement
 - ii. Creating a more flexible mind and body
 - iii. Strengthening group work
 - iv. Authentic presence
 - v. Spatial clarity
 - vi. Making spontaneous/informed choices
 - h. Personal performance and artistic goals
 - i. Technical development and achievements
 - ii. Performance qualities and artistic style
 2. Introduction to Dance Education
 - a. Etiquette
 - b. Dance pedagogy
 - i. How dance is learned
 - c. Why group work?
 - d. Dress
 - e. Kinesthetics
 - f. Teaching modalities
 3. Introduction to modern dance—its history and theory.
 - a. Introduction of various styles and techniques of different modern dance innovators from various periods (classic, post-modern, contemporary)
 - i. Understand the marginalized communities that developed the form
 1. Explore European, African, Latin, and Indigenous elements, and aesthetics and their role in the genre
 - ii. Choreographers and dancers of color

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1. inclusions and exclusions of artists in professional settings as well as in the canon (understood as a reflection of broader systems of race-based oppression in the U.S.)
 - iii. White women, women's rights
 1. Appropriation and building a career
 - iv. Queer choreographers, themes, LGBTQ+ rights
 1. same-sex partnering
 2. non-gendered movements and costumes
 - v. Choreographer and his/her aesthetic and where he or she fits into the overall history of modern dance
 - b. What is modernism?
 - i. Philosophy of modern dance—training and *raison d'être*
 - ii. The “art” of modern dance
 - c. Historical information facilitated through:
 - i. Instructor's own technique/background
 - ii. Videotape viewing and discussion
 - iii. Live performance
 - iv. Discussion of style represented and the choreographer's possible intent in a particular dance
 - v. Response of students regarding the aesthetics of dance(s) viewed
 4. Establishing personal health and wellness goals
 - a. Physical fitness and development
 - i. Understanding safe techniques for stretching, strengthening, and conditioning
 - b. Healthy approaches to rest and nutrition
 - c. Physical, social and psychological demands and issues
 - d. Personal responsibility
 - i. Assessment and evaluation of health and wellness goals
 - ii. Analysis of personal growth toward achieving one's goals
 - iii. Developing and modifying personal plan to achieve one's goals

Methods of Instruction

Method

Critique

Integration

Video presentations followed by group discussion to develop critical thinking about modernism and modern dance within the racial, social, and political history of the United States. Instructors will center marginalized choreographers, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ artists, and will hold the tension between the artists and causes that were embraced in modern dance and those that were excluded. It will be noted that people of racialized communities were excluded while white marginalized people were embraced (white women, white LGBTQIA+). The underlying access to privilege in the genre being a white body.

Method

Directed Study

Integration

Small group problem solving and practice in groups to strengthen individual and group performance of techniques such as collapses, swings, falls, and turns.

Method

Discussion

Integration

Discussion/analysis of style and technique to increase student's understanding of the historical/cultural lineage in modern dance, including the exclusions that occurred in the development of this form that mirrored the racial realities of the United States.

Method

Experiments

Integration

Listening to recorded music before performing technique and combinations, and experimenting with meter changes as well as movement dynamic changes within a given dance phrase to develop student's rhythmicity and musicality.

Method

Lecture

Integration

Lecture on the various schools of modern dance to introduce students to the genre as a form with identifiable characteristics that reflect its complex history and diverse cultural influences. An appreciation of the marginalized communities that developed the form, some of whom were embraced in the profession and others who were excluded, will be discussed as a reflection of broader systems of race-based oppression in the U.S.

Method

Live Performance Viewing

Integration

Viewing of live dance performance for purposes of writing response paper/critique to facilitate student's understanding of modern dance as a living, evolving performing art form and to demonstrate critical thinking.

Method

Observation and Demonstration

Integration

Lecture/demonstration on techniques and theories by instructor and observation by students followed by practice/drill/performance of techniques and theories followed by verbal/tactile/written/demonstrated feedback of instructor and more practice.

Methods of Evaluation**Method**

Capstone Project

Integration

Students will be evaluated based on their knowledge of movement, timing, and skills and expressive qualities in a final performance of a dance choreographed by the student as part of a final project.

Method

Class Participation

Integration

Students will be assessed based on their expressive and technical growth in modern dance techniques through the performance of movement material taught and performed in weekly classes.

Method

Exams/Tests

Integration

Student mastery of modern dance vocabulary will be evaluated through oral and practical assessments that evaluate understanding of terms and how they are integrated into movement practice.

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 students are then evaluated for their understanding regarding the function and application of these exercises.

Method

Papers

Integration

Students will watch a live or recorded dance concert and write an analysis of that concert, discussing the choreography (intent, movement utilized), performance, and social contexts that contributed to the work. Students should identify the various cultural elements (Africanist, Europeanist, etc) that were utilized in the movement and will analyze how race, gender, and sexual orientation were understood and represented in the work. Papers will be evaluated for content (including demonstration of critical thought) and form with respect to syntax, grammar and mechanics.

Method

Self-Evaluation

Integration

Students will be evaluated based on a written self-evaluation at the end of term chronicling their experience and how he/she has grown over the course of the semester in respect to skill and integration of theories, critiquing his/her participation, understanding of terminology and technique(s) introduced as well as the historical/social contexts of each style of modern dance presented in class. Students will be evaluated on both content and form with respect to syntax, grammar and mechanics.

Assignments**Assignment Type**

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Write a 2-page response paper/analysis of a dance concert discussing the dances you viewed within the historical and social contexts that contributed to the work. Reflect on the identities that were supported in the work and how they may have been excluded in the past. Also critique the theatrical presentation, noting elements of the space, design (scenic, costuming, lighting), choreography (intent, movement utilized, craft), and performance techniques. Papers will be evaluated on both content and form with respect to content, grammar and mechanics.



Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Learn, rehearse, and perform a modern dance movement combination taught by the instructor. Analyze the movement for musicality, shape, movement quality, phrasing and technique. Your performance should demonstrate an understanding of all elements of the combination and reflect the intention of the movement.

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Read and analyze the article, "Stretching for Dance," to understand proper, functional stretching techniques and how they support healthy participation in a physical activity and contribute to a dancer's longevity.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Learn and perform warm-up techniques taught by the instructor during class. Follow all of the instructor's "on the side" guided feedback to strengthen your dynamic alignment and core support throughout the warm-up. Your ability to maintain dynamic alignment while shifting center of balance will demonstrate your growing understanding of this foundational element.

Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative



Assignment

Write a three-page self-evaluation chronicling your experience in class and how you have grown over the course of the semester in respect to skill and integration of course theories. Analyze your participation as well as the historical/social contexts of each style of modern dance you practiced in class. Is there a particular style that you felt supported your personal identity? Detail your goals for the semester, the obstacles you faced, and your overall growth as a student of modern dance.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Perform locomotor movements across the floor, demonstrating your ability to cover space efficiently with proper alignment and technique. Your performance should also include attention to your available flexibility, strength, endurance, and expressivity.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

After watching Alvin Ailey's, "Revelations," on video, analyze and discuss this suite of dances as an example of how modern dance can provide a platform for social statement and an opportunity to reflect on the African American experience in the United States in the 20th century. While so many choreographers of color were excluded from the field, be sure to include an analysis of how Ailey was able to break through these barriers. It will be important to note the heavy use of ballet technique in Ailey's work, reflecting European aesthetics, as a means of creating proximity to whiteness as a possible factor in his success.

Course Materials**Textbooks**

Clarke, Melane (2020). The Essential Guide to Contemporary Dance Techniques. the Crowood Press/ 978-1785006999

Foulkes, Julia A. (2014). Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism from Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey (Cultural Studies of the United States). ISBN: 978-0807826980

Legg, Joshua (2011). Introduction to Modern Dance Techniques Princeton Book Company. ISBN: 13: 978-0871273253

Class Size Information**Class Size**

32

Class Size Category

G - Large lab 32

Diversity and Inclusion

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

Modern dance is an American art form and, as such, has many cultural influences. Historically, Eurocentric techniques and ideologies, along with white artists, have been privileged. This has served to marginalize contributions from African American, Native American, and Latinx communities and has systemically erased from the cannon significant POC choreographers, even while white choreographers appropriated movement, cultural elements, costumes, and traditions. On the other hand, the field of modern dance was quick to support the LGBTQIA+ community, welcoming artists as well as queer themes into performances and the cannon. There has been a move in the field in recent years to combat the racial exclusions, and instructors will work to acknowledge the erasures, while also centering choreographers of color and their work. The contributions of queer artists and themes in choreographies will also be centered. The aesthetics, elements, and influences of marginalized communities will be brought to the forefront through lecture, video viewing, discussion, and most importantly, in the teaching of the skills, rhythms, movements, and techniques of a fully inclusive modern dance. Additionally, as students study a dance form, they embody their own racial, sexual, gender, and other identities, all of which are welcomed and respected in each dance course. Mindfulness of the systemic barriers and social oppression that impact some students based on race, gender identity, disability, etc. will be considered with an eye toward reducing harm and creating equitable experiences and outcomes.

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

This course is taught utilizing lecture, readings, visual demonstration, verbal description, hands on feedback, movement, music, rhythms, embodied practice, and immediate assessment to deliver the content. These diverse learning modalities provide multiple points of access to the material, allowing students to excel given their individual learning styles, proclivities, and strengths. Student growth is facilitated through class practices and instruction that rely on multiple senses, including the often undervalued kinesthetic and embodied learning modalities. Courses in the performing arts inherently engage multiple intelligences and learning styles and provide a unique educational platform for all, including those students who may not excel in traditional learning environments. Students who are differently abled can also excel in this course.

Interactions

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

Students work together during class exercises and assist one another in working out the details of new modern dance combinations, and work on remembering movement material. Additionally, students create group dances based on beginning modern dance technique and vocabulary for the midterm and final projects, sharing choreographic ideas regarding theme and movement as well as shaping the project utilizing choreographic elements and modern dance movements, aesthetics, musicality, and artistic themes.

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

The instructor delivers course content visually, through movement demonstrations, and verbally through lecture and description, highlighting body proper alignment, arm placement, modern dance techniques, and musicality. Verbal, visual, and hands on feedback is also given throughout the class to individual students to improve alignment and techniques specific to modern dance. Students ask questions of the instructor for clarity and detail in rhythm, musicality, shape, and quality in movement combinations. Interaction is constant throughout the class.

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

Interaction with course content occurs mostly in interactions with the instructor as the instructor teaches the techniques, skills, and artistry of modern dance. Students hone their skills in class, but also practice at home to deepen their knowledge of the movement learned in class. Content is also accessed through video viewing and occasional readings.

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

Students reflect on their growth and progress on a daily basis. The study of dance requires an ongoing self-reflection measured visually and in comparison to visual demonstrations and verbal feedback. Students continually compare their reflection of the movement with their own image and the demonstrations of the instructor. Written self-reflections on progress will sometimes be utilized.