

Syllabus: DCE 111-E, Spring 2009

DCE 111E –Beginning Contemporary Dance

Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45 in HHP 322

INSTRUCTOR: Justin (Justy) Tornow

OFFICE: 220G

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

PHONE: 336-334-4064 (TA Office phone, no voicemail.)

EMAIL: jctornow@uncg.edu

Quick tips on being successful in this class...

* Wear the appropriate attire:

No jeans, skirts, hats, chunky jewelry, extra-baggy clothing, or skimpy outfits.

It is wise to wear shin length pants and form-fitting top layers-- a long-sleeved shirt is especially helpful to have on hand. You are expected to dance barefoot. Please pull back hair from your face and off of your neck.

* Always do your best:

Participate fully at all times. Take responsibility for your own learning—YOU are the main source of your growth and success in the studio. In order to achieve the goals of this course, you must be fully engaged in the classroom activities and dedicated to your own improvement as a dancer.

* Follow proper studio etiquette:

Be on time, ready to dance. Turn off your cell phone. Do not bring gum or food into the studio. It is a good idea to bring a water bottle, but plastic only-- no glass containers of any kind!

* Show respect to the learning environment:

Be an active part of the classroom. Respect the needs and safety of yourself and your peers by being aware of the space you're occupying at all times. Follow the agreed-upon class etiquette and conduct policies determined on first day of class. Recognize that you learn from listening, watching and asking as well as from doing, so be attentive to the teacher and to your fellow classmates. And be curious, ask questions!

Evaluation Methods and Guidelines for Progress

The fundamental and ongoing expectations for this class are:

1. Keep a positive, focused attitude towards your work in class.
2. Fully attend to the movement material presented, as well as to the explanations and analyses of its specific components;
3. Listen carefully to and apply all corrections and recommendations for improvement that provided in class;
4. Learn the movement material as quickly as you can through observation and practice;
5. Perform the movement material as accurately as possible each time you are called upon to do so, working towards both technical and qualitative success of the material;
6. Reflect in writing (as assigned) on your progress toward your achievement of the learning goals;

I will assess your progress and achievement through:

1. Daily oral feedback to you and/or others on work done in class;
2. Written mid-term and final evaluations of your achievement using the Dance Technique Feedback sheet;
3. Oral and/or written feedback on written self-assessments assigned to you in the semester.

Grading

What factors determine your grade?

- Your achievement of the learning goals to the degree appropriate for this course, and as documented on the dance technique feedback sheet (given at midterm and end of semester.)
- Your daily work in class, including your commitment to growth and improvement.
- Your attendance record (see attendance policy below.)

The final grade will reflect your level of mastery of the learning goals, attendance, and your overall performance in the course as per the below grading scale:

93-100 A	83-86 B	73-76 C	63-66 D
90-92 A-	80-82 B-	70-72 C-	60-62 D-
87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	60-0 F

Attendance Policy

1. You are allowed TWO absences (excused or unexcused), after which your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example an A becomes an A- etc.) Each additional absence will lower your grade by another 1/3.
2. The dance department requires an **80% participation rate** in technique classes meeting twice per week in order to receive credit. When injured or ill, but not contagious, you may sit, watch a class, and record observations to hand in at the end of the class period and still be counted present. **ONLY TWO OBSERVATION DAYS ARE ALLOWED.** Speak with the instructor first for guidance in your observation and note taking. *You are required to DANCE in 23 out of 28 class meetings in order to receive credit for the course. Observation days don't count as dancing.*
3. Students are expected to be on time, dressed and ready for class, and to actively participate for the duration of the class. *Two late arrivals or early departures will equal one absence.* Entering the studio five minutes after class has begun constitutes a late arrival. Students who arrive 10 minutes or more after class has begun should sit out and watch. (You are responsible for telling the instructor after class to change attendance from absent to tardy if you are 5 minutes late and join class.)
4. Serious illnesses and injuries will be handled on an individual basis. In such cases, it is the *student's* responsibility to contact the instructor in order to make appropriate arrangements.

****If you exceed the absence limit, you may make up ONE by either attending another 111 section (be sure to receive permission from the instructor before attending.) Any make-up class needs to be completed BEFORE the last week of classes.**

Important Dates

Dates and times for midterm conferences will be announced in class.

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 12: 3:30–6:30 P.M.

Student Learning Goals *as listed on Dance Technique Feedback Sheet

To the degree appropriate for the beginning level of modern dance training, students in this course will learn to:

1. Move contra-laterally during locomotion (left/right halves in opposition).
2. Grasp and retain sequences of simple exercises and combinations.
3. Breathe appropriately and as needed while moving.
4. Anticipate the beat when required.
5. Maintain energy/endurance throughout each combination and the full class.
6. Demonstrate commitment/responsibility as appropriate in and out of class.
7. Demonstrate dynamic alignment—as appropriate to exercises/combinations in the class (see below alignment statement) and involving awareness of center. Avoiding fixed/rigid habitual holding in any part.
8. Move on the beat when required.
9. Show appropriate use of the arms and legs as called for in an exercise/combination.
10. Show appropriate use of the feet, hands, and head as called for in an exercise/combination.
11. Show command of skills involving initiation of movement.
12. Show command of skills involving weight shift.
13. Show command of skills involving awareness of center.
14. Avoid extraneous tension in performing simple movements such as walks, skips, etc.
15. Fulfill the time/counts given for each part of the movement
16. Demonstrate attributes of qualities in movement as specified.
17. Demonstrate clarity of body line in simple movement combinations.
18. Demonstrate clarity of spatial direction in simple movement combinations.
19. Perform set movement with confidence/full engagement.
20. Respond spontaneously and imaginatively to improvisational prompts, with confidence/full engagement, and some degree of invention—and/or demonstrate creative spontaneity within a given technique.

Learning goals mark distinct areas of skill in dance technique. Excellence in dance artistry is a matter of developing a high degree of skill in each area and integrating these skills during the performance of movement.

Learning goal 6, 19 and 20 describe efforts/attitudes necessary for progress toward excellence in dance and indicate specific behaviors that demonstrate them.

Teaching Strategies

To enable student achievement of the learning goals, I will:

1. Demonstrate, explain, analyze, and lead explorations of movement exercises and combinations designed specifically to develop the skills required for achievement of learning goals;

2. Observe your daily work in class and make recommendations for improvement in achieving learning goals through group and individual corrections in class;
3. Provide a written assessment on the Dance Technique Feedback sheet of your achievement at mid-term and again near the end of the semester;
4. Be available for individual appointments in which we may discuss your learning efforts and progress in class;
5. Provide opportunities for you to assess your own and others progress in the class (i.e. group work, video days, etc;)

*not every student will receive individual feedback during each class, but all students will receive feedback regularly throughout the course of the semester.

Alignment

Alignment is not a static concept. In fact, alignment is in constant flux. It is not a “correct” way of lining up body parts but a way of embodying how we live in our bodies. Additionally, effective alignment does not look alike on all bodies. Different techniques, styles, and dance forms often require different bodily alignments.

Often, alignment is fluid and changes overtime. There are many influences on one’s alignment including culture, society, previous dance training, prior physical and emotional experiences, as well as structure.

Nevertheless, there are some guidelines that can be used to identify effective alignment in western modern dance; these guidelines may not apply to other movement forms. For example, a plumb line may be dropped directly through the center of the three body weights (head, thorax, and pelvis) to establish effective working alignment. The plumb line should be center in each of the body weights. Additionally, a straight plumb line may be dropped through the following bodily landmarks: outer malleolus (outer ankle), outside of knee, greater trochanter (at outside of femur), glenoid fossa (shoulder joint) and inner ear. These guidelines for alignment allow the bones to carry much of the weight of the body, resulting in safe and effective movement and body mechanics. **When the weight is not carried through the bones, the muscles are forced to hold the body in place, thereby creating excessive stress and work.** The main job of the muscles is to help the bones move, not to carry the weight of the body. When an imbalance exists, some muscles are required to work overtime to hold the body up while others become underutilized, thereby opening the dancer to bodily injury and insult. The purpose of alignment work in dance is not to create a straight and “held” posture of the spine; the curves of the spine are necessary for shock absorption during movement. However, the alignment landmarks may be used to keep the weight moving through the bones in a safe and effective manner. It helps to think of alignment as kinetic, whereby small adjustments continually provide a more moving and changing balance.

Common areas of excessive or frozen tension and problems on the body include:

- Spine, pelvis, and chest/rib, including inability to release the lower back causing excessive habitual retraction of the pelvis, sticking out or held movement in the chest, and collapse in the chest.
- Habitual distortions in the line of the body landmarks (listed above).
- Problems of the hip joints, extremities and knees, including pronation of the feet or inward movement of the knees or upper thighs.
- Protrusions of the chin.