

DCE 111-01–Beginning Contemporary Dance Technique

Catalog Description: Development of technical skills in contemporary dance, including rhythmic perception and spatial awareness, with emphasis on aesthetic and expressive qualities that lead to performance.

Fall 2009

CREDITS: 1

PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES: none

TIME: Monday and Wednesday, 2-3:15 HHP 322

INSTRUCTOR: Amanda Diorio

OFFICE: 220G

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment

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Student Learning Goals

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 a full class.
6. Demonstrate commitment/responsibility as appropriate in and out of class.
7. Demonstrate awareness and attention to studio/classroom procedures.
8. Demonstrate dynamic alignment—as appropriate to exercises/combinations in the class (see attached alignment statement) and involving awareness of center.
9. Move on the beat when required.
10. Show appropriate use of the legs as called for in an exercise/combination.
11. Show appropriate use of the feet as called for in an exercise/combination.
12. Show command of skills involving initiation of movement.
13. Show command of skills involving weight shift.
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 1-20 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, 7, 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 (a) orally assess your achievement of learning goals, and (b) make recommendations for improvement in achieving learning goals;
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. Provide opportunities for individual appointments in which we may discuss your learning efforts;
5. Provide opportunities for you to assess your own and others progress toward the actual achievement of the learning goals;

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

Topical Outline

Warm-up exercises and combinations will remain fairly consistent over the course of the semester and increase in difficulty as the class improves. Other exercises and combinations will develop over the course of the semester in length, speed, and in rhythmic and qualitative complexity so as to practice the integration of skills inherent to the achievement of learning goals.

Evaluation Methods and Guidelines for Assignments

The fundamental and ongoing assignments in this class are to:

1. Attend to movement material presented, as well as to explanations and analyses of its specific components;
2. Listen carefully to and apply all corrections and recommendations for improvement that I provide in class;
3. Learn the movement material as quickly as you can through observation and practice
4. Perform the movement material as accurately as possible each time you are called upon to do so;
5. Reflect in writing as assigned on your progress toward and actual achievement of the learning goals;
6. Observe other dancers and assess their performance as assigned.

I will assess your progress toward and your actual achievement of the learning goals 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 of the accuracies and inaccuracies I perceive in your written self-assessments.

Grading

Your achievement in mastering the learning goals to the degree appropriate for this course, and as documented on the dance technique feedback sheet, will provide the primary basis for calculating your final letter grade. Your attendance record will be an additional factor in calculating your final letter grade.

The Dance Technique Feedback sheet (DTFS) can be accessed at <http://www.uncg.edu/dce/syllabi.html>

In calculating the achievement component of the final grade, your mastery of the learning goals will be assessed to produce a final score that is aligned with grades as follows:

97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
below 60	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. Each observation over the permissible two will equal an absence.** 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 do not count as dancing.
3. Students are expected to be on time, dressed and ready for class, and to stay for the duration of the class. Three 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 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.
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.

****You may make up ONE absence by either attending another 111 section (be sure to receive permission from the instructor before attending) or by attending one UNCG dance concert and writing a thoughtful 2-3 page paper relating what you saw to what we are working on in class. For a complete schedule of concerts, please see www.uncg.edu/dce. If you chose to make up a class (using one of the above options), this needs to be completed BEFORE the last week of classes.**

Additional Requirements

You will need to be prepared for class, each and every day. This means:

Appropriate attire: No jeans, skirts, hats, chunky or dangly jewelry or extra-baggy clothing. You are expected to dance barefoot (toe pads are allowed, socks are NOT). Please pull back long hair. If possible secure eye-glasses or wear contacts.

Kneepads are highly recommended for this class. They can be ordered from Contact Quarterly at <http://www.contactquarterly.com/kp/kp.html>

Appropriate 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.

Appropriate behavior: Be aware of your peers during class; respect the needs and safety of all by maintaining your spacing when dancing within groups, and by staying out of the way when you are not dancing. When it is not your turn to dance, respect the others by remaining QUIETLY attentive. Ask questions when you have them. You learn from listening, watching and asking as well as from doing, so be attentive to the teacher and your fellow classmates. Ask questions at appropriate times and listen to the questions of others and subsequent answers. Feedback to others may also be useful to you even if not directed at you.

Important Dates

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

Final Exam: Monday, December 14th 12-3 pm to be used for final conferences

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.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

by Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson

From the Wingspread Journal-- special edition

SUMMARY Following is a brief summary of the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education as compiled in a study supported by the American Association of Higher education, the Education Commission of States, and The Johnson Foundation.

1. GOOD PRACTICE ENCOURAGES STUDENT FACULTY CONTACT

frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.

2. GOOD PRACTICE ENCOURAGES COOPERATION AMONG STUDENTS

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to other's reactions improves thinking and deepens understanding.

3. GOOD PRACTICE ENCOURAGES ACTIVE LEARNING

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.

4. GOOD PRACTICE GIVES PROMPT FEEDBACK

knowing what you know and don't know focuses learning. Students need appropriate feedback on performance to benefit from courses. In getting started, students need help in assessing existing knowledge and competence. In classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive suggestions for improvement. At various points during college, and at the end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how to assess themselves.

5. GOOD PRACTICE EMPHASIZES TIME ON TASK

Time plus energy equals learning. There is no substitute for time on task. Learning to use one's time well is critical for student and professional alike. Students need help in learning effective time management. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. How an institution defines time expectations for students, faculty and administrators, and other professional staff can establish the basis for high performance for all.

6. GOOD PRACTICE COMMUNICATES HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone -- for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when teachers and institutions hold high expectations of themselves and make extra efforts.

7. GOOD PRACTICE RESPECTS DIVERSE TALENTS AND WAYS OF LEARNING

There are many roads to learning. People bring different talents and styles of learning to college. Brilliant students in the seminar room may be all thumbs in the lab or art studio. Students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well in theory. Students need the opportunity to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learning in new ways that do not come so easily.