

Southern Methodist University
Meadows School of the Arts
Division of Dance

SYLLABUS FOR BEGINNING MODERN DANCE (January Term)

Course Number: DANC 1303, January 2017
Instructor: Christopher Dolder
Classroom: TBA
Contact Information: 214-768-1672
E-mail: cdolder@smu.edu
Office Hours: M-W 12-1pm. Available immediately after each class as well.
I am happy to help with technique difficulties, range of motion, strength or alignment concerns, or any other questions.

Course Description

This class assumes no previous dance training but should still challenge those students with some previous dance experience. The first half of the day is spent on body conditioning, basic principles of dance kinesiology and modern dance technique. The second half concentrates on choreography, aesthetics, analysis, and criticism. Students will be guided in generating personal movement language and general discussion on the creativity and aesthetics of modern dance. Students are also supported in establishing critical opinions of shown masterworks as well as the work of their peers.

Objectives

While each student will come to this class with different physical and intellectual capacities and experiences and will learn at a different pace, in general the class will include the following goals:

- Understand and embody concepts of safe and fluid alignment
- Learn the basic movement building blocks of modern dance and corresponding terminology
- Begin to explore personal movement language and style
- Expand movement range and dynamic nuance
- Increase sensitivity to musical accompaniment
- Analyze the basic components of movement (time, space, and force) and how these create personal artistic expression
- Increase strength and coordination.

Topics

Every class will involve technical exercises and movement patterns physically demonstrated and verbally analyzed by the instructor, student questions or discussion

followed by student performance. The following ideas will be explored through dance technique:

- Musicality: counts, tempo, accent, phrasing, meter, rhythm
- Energy release: bound, sharp, sustained, swinging, weighted, light
- Spatial concepts: floor patterns, negative/positive space, relationship to space
- Dance vocabulary and theatrical terminology
- Concentration skills: focus, learning/retaining phrases, listening/viewing skills, kinesthetic awareness.

Required writing

Each student is required to write a two-page critical analysis of his/her personal artistic and physical development within the class. Paper is due on 1/19/17.

Attendance

Continuity and physical practice are critical for progressing in dance, and missed classes will greatly impede this growth, as well as pose a distraction and danger to fellow dancers. Promptness is necessary to ensure proper warm-up. Once a class has begun, a student must obtain instructor consent to join class. If denied, a student may observe class and take notes. Students who are habitually tardy or absent will be asked to drop the class.

Students with injuries should speak with the instructor about ways to modify class exercises, if possible, or be present to watch class and take notes. If an injury forces a student to miss, or sit out, more than 2 classes, they may be asked to drop the course or take an incomplete.

- 1 absence is allowed per January term without affecting the student's grade, however the student is responsible for all materials given in the 8-day course.
- Each additional absence (after 1) will drop a student's grade by two thirds, ie A to B+

Grading

10% Written critical analysis

40% Final movement exam

50% Productivity in class

Preparation and retention of material and corrections

Effort and focus, attention to detail

Positive attitude and personal growth and improvement in physical technique

Musicality, dynamics, and phrasing

Proper alignment

Grading Rubric

An **A** student is consistently in the studio for class, on time, and prepared mentally and physically to dance. The student is focused throughout class, listens and watches for all directions and corrections, applies them quickly and retains new movement patterns, alignment, etc. throughout the semester. The dancer is open to new ways of moving, and works steadily and progressively towards improvement in both the technical and artistic aspects of dance. The student is able to discuss a movement phrase or a dance performance using appropriate vocabulary, and is able to see and describe choreographic details concerning the use of space, time and force. Every class demonstrates the student's investment in the physical learning process. By the semesters end, the **A** student has achieved their own potential in terms of increased strength, coordination of body parts, more fluid and efficient alignment, and growth in artistry.

A **B** student is in the studio for the majority of class sessions, prepared and ready to work. The student is generally focused throughout class, listens and applies corrections, but may not retain these consistently throughout the semester and may need reminders to work on technical challenges. The dancer has an open mind to new ways of moving, but may need encouragement to look and listen for details or to enhance his/her energy. In describing a dance or portion thereof, the student is able to use relevant vocabulary and some details on elements of time, space and force, but is not completely successful in evoking a movement image in words. The student is usually self-motivated and understands the physical, intellectual, and artistic elements necessary for growth as a dancer, and achieves a moderate improvement based on personal potential.

A **C** student is in the studio for the minimum number of required classes and may be inconsistent in mental or physical preparation for class. The dancers focus may occasionally lapse, and while he/she listens to corrections that are made directly to him/her, may not consistently apply corrections or details given to the class as a whole. The student may not always notice or apply stylistic, spatial, or musical nuances given, and technical execution may be comprised by following others rather than intellectually and physically learning a movement phrase. In speaking or writing about a dance, the student is not successful in evoking the movement and images or using relevant vocabulary. The student achieves a minimum of their potential growth in physical and artistic skills by semesters end.

Attire

Loose fitting clothing that allows for a full-range of movement.

Primary instructor - Christopher Dolder biography

Christopher Dolder received an undergraduate degree in Dramatic Art and Dance from the University of California, Berkeley and a Master of Fine Arts in Choreography from Mills College with an emphasis in dance kinesiology. A former soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company, he has spent the last twenty years on a multi-disciplinary journey that has taken him to projects in Theater, Dance, Music, Videography, Kinesiology, “Green” Architecture, and Agrarian Land Rehabilitation. Mr. Dolder is an associate professor of dance at the Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University where he is currently designing a 3D interactive software application for teaching dance kinesiology as well as developing a new form of physical data capture. Christopher also conducts research in contemporary dance cultures. He is currently in the final editing stage of his documentary *The Ecstatic Dance of Burning Man: Permission to Transcend*, a six-year research project filmed in Nevada’s Black Rock Desert, chronicling the emergence and evolution of dance sub-cultures throughout the history of the Burning Man Festival.

Guest instructor - Anne Westwick biography

Anne Westwick has been a dancer, choreographer, and teacher for over 30 years, performing for modern choreographers Martha Graham, David Wood, Yuriko Kikuchi, Donlin Foreman, and Janice Garrett; ballet companies including the San Antonio Ballet and Berkeley Ballet Theater; and musical theater productions including national and international Actor's Equity tours of **The King And I**. Anne and partner/husband Christopher Dolder have been creating, performing, and touring dance works for the last 15 years as Westwick/Dolder Dance Theater. Ms. Westwick has received grants from the Hawaii State and Maui Dance Councils, the Nevada State Dance Council, Dance Magazine, and the University of California Institute for Research in the Arts. She has B.A. in Dramatic Art/Dance from U.C. Berkeley and an M.F.A. in Choreography and Performance from Mills College. Anne has taught and choreographed at studios in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, Hawaii and Nevada. She was a tenure-track assistant professor at Mills College for five years and has held faculty positions at U.C. Berkeley, Maui Community College, Solano Community College, and the Maui Academy of Performing Arts. Anne currently is a senior lecturer at the Meadows School Division of Dance teaching ballet, modern dance, composition, and yoga. Anne is a certified yoga instructor and has been teaching body conditioning and yoga for the past ten years.

Benefits from taking this course:

1. Increased awareness of the physical body.
2. Knowledge of key kinesiological principles that will improve posture, gait, and alignment.

3. A working knowledge of the basic principles of modern dance technique.
4. Knowledge of choreographic forms and styles with the ability to analyze and critique numerous dance modalities.
5. Improved body conditioning and agility.
6. The ability to create personal movement phrases that reflect the inner artist that resides within each of us.
7. The ability to interact and partner with other dancers.
8. The experience of a comprehensive dance intensive that supports physical growth, artistic awareness, and intellectual discourse on the moving arts.

Beginning Modern Dance DANC 1303 satisfies the Creativity and Aesthetics I pillar of the UC Curriculum.

* Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) at 214-768-1470 or www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp <<http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp>> to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4; an attachment describes the DASS procedures and relocated office.)

* Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

* Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)