DANCE 241: Modern Dance I
M/W/F 10-11:50AM | ENS 200/ENS 380 | Spring 2015
Instructor: Jess Humphrey (jess@jesshumphrey.com)
Office hours: by appointment
Required: a Vimeo account

“The dancing does the teaching, the teacher points to that.” —Steve Paxton

Course Objectives:

1. Take responsibility for shifting your focus to your training at 10AM without a cue from me. Help your peers by changing the conversation, bringing them out into the space for some bodywork, and/or simply leaving an exchange to drop in to your own practice.
   Can you connect your love for dancing to your daily training in a way that inspires internal motivation?

2. Embody questions.
   What if we dwell in questions more than we search for answers?

3. Practice contemporary modern dance with a curious and open mind. Use this practice (including physical and cognitive engagement, observation, and discussion) to keep the definition of contemporary modern dance alive in our body-minds.
   How can we practice of contemporary modern dance in ways that contribute to the evolution of the form?

4. Engage in both somatic (inside-out) and more traditional (outside-in) approaches to dance training.
   What is your first-person experience of technique class? How can you get glimpses of other perspectives?

5. Learn to access strength through increased biomechanical efficiency.
   How can learning some basics about the science of movement allow us to work "smarter not harder" when we choose to?

6. Expand and refine our definitions of what it means to be “in shape”.
   Are you “in shape” now? Why or why not?

7. Become more comfortable and facile while inverted and/or off balance.
   What does the world look/feel like when you’re upside down? Are you willing to fall?

8. Flow into, across, and out of the floor with ease.
   What happens to dancing when a dancer fully trusts the floor?

9. Move three dimensionally within our bodies and through space.
   Do you know the difference between what’s happening within you and what’s happening around/through/to you?
10. Learn to notice our body-minds as they change each day, track those changes, and allow observations to influence our dancing and ways of being in the world. How can reflection support your development?

11. Experience gravity, momentum, inertia, and other laws of physics, kinesthetically. What does your weight and trajectory feel like?

12. Co-negotiate the aforementioned physical laws with others. What can the other body-minds in the room reveal about your own body-mind? Can your body-mind offer information to others about theirs? Are you open?

13. Notice how touch influences our experience, and how our touch influences others. What can you perceive if you listen while touching and being touched? To yourself? To the person you’re touching? The person who is touching you?

14. Practice communicating verbally, orally, and in writing about our experience of dancing as well as what we see as witnesses in class and as audience in performance settings. What happens when we talk and write about dance?

15. Recognize that we are learning as a community and consider how dancing in relationship affects our own process. Who are you dancing with?

16. Allow class experiences to influence our lives outside the dance studio. What if that which increases your capacity as a dance artist also increases your capacity as a human being?

17. Try slower and/or smaller versions of whatever we are doing in class on a regular basis. What is revealed when we take our time and/or do less?

18. Experience stillness and its potency. What can we learn about moving from being still?

19. Allow our investment in every lesson in class to reveal our love of dancing. What if this is what we’re training for?

20. Engage our smart phones, consciously and purposefully, to provide additional perspectives to inform our movement experiences. How does your experience compare to what you see when you watch yourself on video?

21. Disconnect from the internet, our phones, and other technology so we can focus on our physical experience in the present moment. What will we discover if we unplug from technology and plug in to our experience?

22. Make magic...or at least stay out of its way. What approach to technical training allows us to experience magic as its happening? How do we make/make space for magic in every class?

23. (We will create this one as a class during the first week.)
Course Description:
This movement course is a context for you to continue your practice of contemporary modern dance. Classes will consist of movement combinations and somatic explorations designed to give you a more embodied knowledge of your anatomy and what it/you can do. A kinesthetic understanding of efficient movement patterns can support you in expressing yourself fully and safely. We will learn basic biomechanics, use imagery, develop our senses, and build our neuromuscular coordination, but we will also take time to let go of it all and enjoy dancing. Writing will be approached as a somatic process designed to help you deepen your understanding of class material and to use what you learn to further develop the lens through which you view and experience the performing arts.

Evaluation Criteria:
1. Proficiency (40%):
Evaluation will be of students' improvement in the areas described in the Course Objectives, and students' stated goals (see Self-Reflection assignment below). These points will be awarded based on the students' practice and performance of class material throughout the semester, as well as during midterm and final movement exams. I will assess you live in class and on video. If you do not have a vimeo account, I will not be able to properly assess your progress and this portion of your grade will reflect that.

2. Participation (25%):
IMPORTANT: Please see Attendance Policy, below.
This grade will reflect students':
- level of discipline
  - starting training at the beginning of class without a prompt from instructor
  - placing mobile phone where the mirror meets the floor before class
  - moment to moment rededication to course material
  - self-care (sleep, food, water, etc.) that supports full psychophysical commitment to training
- willingness to engage, physically and verbally
- attitude toward moments of perceived failure
- level of respect toward other students' processes and progress
- willingness to safely "try on" certain concepts physically before fully understanding them mentally
- remaining curious and interested in physical explorations
- attentiveness to others when they speak
- willingness to attempt to articulate their physical experience before it is totally understood
- ability to articulate how experience in class affects or relates to their life outside of class
- willingness to ask questions
3. Concert attendance (10%):
Attend two professional modern or contemporary dance concerts. Turn in the ticket stub for each of them with your name on it on the last day of classes, May 6th, and not before!
   a. Concert #1 (5%):  
      Fit/Misfit by Lux Boreal on April 19th at 7:30pm.
   b. Concert #2 (5%): A concert of your choice. Please check to see the performance of your choosing is appropriate for this course. I will announce shows that I know of as they come up throughout the semester, but it is ultimately your responsibility to find one to attend BEFORE the end of the semester!

4. Self-Reflection (20%):
   Journal: Through contemplation, weekly, in-class free writes, and other forms of self-reflection, my hope is that this journal will serve as a way to frame your experience, track your progress, steer your energies, and "see" yourself with additional perspective. Some prompts will require that you watch video of yourself dancing in class. This journal will also give me an additional lens through which to evaluate you in the Proficiency category, listed under Evaluation Criteria.
   The Buddy Project: This is a continuation of the project you began last semester. You can find a document with more details as to what is accepted for this portion of your grade on Blackboard. Documentation of The Buddy Project must be in your journal.

5. Signed syllabus (5%): Please read this syllabus and ask me any clarifying questions. Sign the last page and turn it in no later than Wednesday, January 28th to receive credit.

Attendance Policy
Absences: You are allowed 3 absences. Each absence beyond the 3, no matter what the excuse, will result in lowering of final grade 1/3 of step, i.e., A to A-. Situations such as serious illness, long-term injury, or family emergencies may be dealt with immediately on an individual basis. Family emergencies require documentation, i.e. death certificate or documentation of hospitalization. In some cases, students will be given an Incomplete to be made up within the next semester. In other cases, I may recommend withdrawal from the course. If you stop attending the course without following procedure you will receive a "U" which calculates as an "F". Lastly, you are expected to be present in both mind and body. If you are physically present, but your attention is elsewhere in a way that affects the class, I may mark you absent.
Tardies: Please be on time to class. 3 tardies equals 1 absence! If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will have missed too much of the warmup to safely participate and must observe and take notes. If you are tardy, you must ensure at the end of class that I did not mark you absent!
Observation Protocol: If you are ill or injured, you may observe class two times with instructor’s consent. See me prior to class if possible. Detailed notes (typed) about the class and your observations must be submitted at the next class or you will be marked absent!
Important considerations for those observing:

- Notes should go beyond listing class activities. Pay attention to what the students are doing in relation to the instructor’s directions. Make correlations between what you see, what you hear, and what you personally experience when you are physically participating in the class. How does observing class further enrich your kinesthetic and cognitive understanding of dance?
- Please be aware that your presence as a witness greatly influences the class. How can you observe in a way that contributes rather than detracts from what’s happening in the room? Observe from different locations in the room, paying attention with respect and generosity. It’s a great opportunity to practice these qualities of mind. How does this kind of attention influence what you notice?
- Participate in class discussions. What is your experience?
- **Important:** If you check your phone or open your computer or tablet, you will be asked to leave and you will be marked absent. In rare occasions, I may ask you to take a photo or video and upload it. These are the only exceptions to this rule!

Grading

Definition of Grades for Undergraduate Students at SDSU:

- Grade of A (outstanding achievement; available only for the highest accomplishment),
- B (praiseworthy performance; definitely above average),
- C (average; awarded for satisfactory performance; the most common undergraduate grade),
- D (minimally passing; less than the typical undergraduate achievement), 1 point;
- F (failing),

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University Policies

Please check the Class Schedule for add and drop deadlines! This class may be taken for Pass/No Pass. Check with your counselor first; then fill out the proper form. To Pass, a student must earn at least 70% of the points possible in the class.

If you have a hidden or visible disability, which may require classroom or test accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during a scheduled office hour. This must happen at the beginning of the semester! If you have not already done so, please visit Student Disability Services, [http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/sds/](http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/sds/)
Expectations
This list is meant to give you a better idea of what I expect from each of you.
● Get the amount of rest, eat the kind of foods, wear the type of clothes and fix your hair in ways that will allow you to fully participate in class.
● Begin preparing for class by 9:55 AM, or as soon as you enter the room, by physically reviewing what you learned in Body Modalities.
● Check the syllabus before you email me! If the answer is in the syllabus, I won’t respond to your email.
● Keep an electronic copy of everything you turn in.
● If you are absent, learn the material you missed from your fellow students before the next class! If you fail to do so, your grade will reflect it!
● If I give you something to work on in class, keep practicing, even if you feel you have it down. There is always more to find in any given movement! You also have the option of offering support to other students who might need help.
● Take responsibility for your own education. Be curious, look things up on your own time, and ask questions.

Open Door Policy:
Please do not hesitate to contact me or set up a time during my office hours to discuss any questions or concerns you have about the class or the material covered in class.

Please sign/date below and bring this page to the next class meeting.

I, ____________________, have read the syllabus for DANCE 241 and understand the course requirements.

print name

Date Signature