

Five College Dance Course Descriptions Spring 2019 as of 10/31/18

Technique

DAN 222 Ballet III (fall semester) and DAN 223 Ballet IV (spring semester)

Rodger Blum, Smith College

These courses create an environment for a diverse population of students wishing to study ballet technique, from the established ballet dancer needing to add more classes to their schedule to the contemporary/modern dancer desiring ballet technique as an adjunct to their regular studies. Students are expected to have taken two semesters of Level I and two semesters of Level II ballet (offered every semester at Smith College), or have an equivalent experience in intermediate ballet technique. This is a technique course that considers the complete vocabulary, range of motion, and musical expression of classical ballet technique. Focus includes functional turnout, use of space, sensitive and creative musicality, and the joy of learning and self-discovery.

Dance 223 Ballet IV

Bronwen MacArthur, UMass

In this course we will engage in the studio practice of intermediate ballet technique. Grounded in anatomically sound alignment, the class borrows from a number of styles in order to explore various technical challenges. It is designed for dancers of all movement forms who have developed their ballet practice to an intermediate level. Through our practice we will increase the strength, flexibility and range of each student's ballet dancing. We will focus on musicality, phrasing, gesture, focus and other details of the form, and we will develop the individual aesthetic and creative expression of each dancer. We will cultivate the joy of dancing with our whole selves and in community, and we will experience ways the form of ballet is related to other forms of dance with which we are engaged.

DAN 324 Ballet V (fall semester) and DAN 325 Ballet VI (spring semester)

Rodger Blum, Smith College

Advanced placement required

These advanced level ballet technique courses are taught at the professional or "company" level. Classes move very fast and students are expected to possess a mastery of all of the major components of classical ballet technique. Students should attend class with a willingness to experiment and play with that knowledge both musically and physically – and bring a sense of humor vital for healthy creative learning. These classes do not focus on one codified style but consider many ideas about contemporary ballet studies, its place in the academy, purpose on stage and importance to human expression. This class is not suitable for the intermediate student who wishes to be "pushed" in her technique. Those students are advised to register for Ballet III and IV.

DANCE-119 Contact Improvisation

Felice Wolfzahn, Mount Holyoke College

Contact Improvisation is primarily a duet movement form. Two people move together playing in a physical dialogue, communicating through the language of touch, momentum, and weight sharing. In these classes we will explore some simple solo, and duet skills such as rolling, falling, spiraling, playing with balance, counter-balance, jumping, weight sharing and tuning our sensory input. Group explorations will also be used to expand our movement experience. We will work with an emphasis on releasing excess muscular tension in order to allow more vital inner support for the body to move freely. Classes will combine improvisational explorations with skill work in a supportive, fun, and focused environment. No previous dance experience is required. All levels are welcome.

THDA 121H Cntmp Dance: Ballet/Modern II/III

Jenifer Polins, Amherst College

The study and practice of contemporary movement vocabularies, including regional dance forms, contact improvisation and various modern dance techniques. Objectives include the intellectual and physical introduction to this discipline as well as increased body awareness, alignment, flexibility, coordination, strength, musical phrasing and the expressive potential of movement. The course material is presented at the beginning/intermediate level. A half course. Because the specific genres and techniques will vary from semester to semester, the course may be repeated for credit.

THDA 117H Cntmp Dance: Modern III/IV

Lucille Jun, Amherst College

This intermediate-level movement practice class is designed for students with previous movement experience who wish to deepen their work as dance artists through the continued development of physical and performance-related skills. Infusing somatic inquiry and improvisational exploration alongside building specific alignment/coordination connections in movement organization, this class is an ongoing experiment with a vast terrain of practices that energize and attune ourselves, both individually and together, to the interconnected wholeness of our moving form and being. We transcribe this physical research into the embodiment of increasingly complex and dynamic movement phrases, eventually dancing this material within expansive performance propositions and scores. Our intention is to practice moving with clarity, freedom, adaptability, and artistry, excavating a personal presence and unique movement expression in the moment of performance.

HACU 216 Modern/Contemporary Dance Technique 4

Lailye Weidman, Hampshire College

Modern/Contemporary 4 is designed for intermediate/advanced level dancers, as we continue to build on students' previous study of modern dance technique. The studio will be our laboratory for a semester-long exploration of contemporary dance concepts with a focus on deepening sensation, clarifying points of initiation in the body, expansive use of space, and increasingly complex phrase-work. In motion, we will find dynamic relationships between periphery and center, time and weight, gravity and support—giving continued attention to alignment, spatial clarity, breath, range of motion, and the development of strength and stamina. Partnering and hands-on exercises will also expand options for moving through space. Through writing prompts and conversation, you will be asked to reflect on the histories and knowledge you bring into class, articulate learning ambitions, and track new developments. The goal of this course is to support a sustainable and deeply engaged movement practice—one that may inform the development of a lifetime of embodied creative process

Dance 297E Intermediate Contemporary

Bronwen MacArthur, UMass

Seeking to maximize each student's movement possibilities, class begins by establishing alignment and connection through the body, into the floor and out into space. We will practice moving our weight in and out of the floor and boldly through space. We will build trust in our ability to leave our center and return. With a focus on musicality and physicality, larger movement sequences utilize elements of momentum, gravity, sequencing through joints, speed, weight, rhythm and more to develop power, range and efficiency of movement. We will cultivate the joy of dancing with our whole selves and in community. Students will try new things, take risks and challenge their own expectations and experience with dancing.

DANCE-318 Advanced Modern

Barbie Diewald, Mount Holyoke College

Advanced placement required

In studying modern dance at the advanced level, students are expected to define their own priorities, thresholds, and modes of working. This course is an opportunity for you to develop your own practice, rather than simply reiterating or emulating that of the instructor. Central to our practice will be a growing capacity for physical endurance and active presence as well as a deepening awareness of your body's potential. Throughout the semester we will focus on sensation, initiation, resilience, and agility and clarity in our movement (as well as our thinking). In addition to learning repertory combinations, we will also spend time practicing improvised and somatic forms. In order to contextualize and articulate your dance practice, academic coursework and performance attendance is required.

DANCE 397E Advanced Contemporary

Bronwen MacArthur, UMass

Advanced placement required

Utilizing technical principles and approaches from multiple contemporary dance forms, this course seeks to broaden each student's movement palette and potential. Class will take a variety of forms, from standing work to floor work, from set choreography to improvised scores. Constant throughout will be a focus on finding and leaving a clear alignment, musicality, physicality and individualized expression. Movement sequences will explore elements of momentum, gravity, multiplicity of focus and initiation, clarity, speed, weight, rhythm and more to develop power, range and nuanced performance. The class creates a space for advanced dancers to take risks with subtle questions of timing and attention and to hone their own interests and voice within the work. We will cultivate the joy of dancing with our whole selves and in community.

THDA 142H Cntmp Dance: West African

Marilyn Sylla, Amherst College

The study and practice of contemporary movement vocabularies, including regional dance forms, contact improvisation and various modern dance techniques. Because the specific genres and techniques will vary from semester to semester, the course may be repeated for credit. Objectives include the intellectual and physical introduction to this discipline as well as increased body awareness, alignment, flexibility, coordination, strength, musical phrasing and the expressive potential of movement. The course material is presented at the beginning/intermediate level.

History, Criticism, Aesthetics and Research

THDA 114 Contemporary Performance: Case Studies

Yagil Eliraz, Amherst College

This course will focus on case studies of selected works and artists of contemporary performance over the last century as a means of placing the creation and practice of theater and dance in context. We will closely consider these case studies as reflective of important aesthetic traditions and experiments in contemporary performance. In addition, we will seek connections between the different case study examples and the social, cultural and political environments that fostered them. We will reflect on issues of race, gender, identity, political activism, individual expression and differing collaborative structures in our encounters with these case studies. We will also look to historical precedents and sources that inform our understanding of artistic innovations and processes. This foundation course in the history/theory of performance is open to all students. Limited to 30 students.

THDA 235 Critical Moves: Performance, Politics and Activist Bodies

Dasha Chapman, Amherst College

Athletes taking a knee, bodies marching in the street, dance movements that go viral... How can Dance Studies and Performance Studies help us understand the urgency of movement in our current moment? At the same time, how does dance challenge normative conceptualizations of history and politics? Exploring embodied politics in global perspective, this course works from the framework of "Critical Moves" proposed by late dance theorist Randy Martin: "Critical moves. Steps we must take. Movement that informs critical consciousness." The interrelationship between theory and practice are emphasized through reading, writing, movement exercises and creative workshops. Students will be expected to regularly read, write, create and move; view and discuss performances; pursue a final research project through embodied, visual, and text-based methods; and work on a collective performance intervention that will take place on campus toward the end of the semester. No dance or performance experience necessary; students should bring an openness to engage with embodied practice and a bodily perspective.

HACU-0294 Examining and Reimagining Contemporary U.S. Arts Ecologies

Deborah Goffe, Hampshire College

This course invites students of dance/performance/art-making to consider the ways arts infrastructures have historically functioned, and how those dynamics are relevant to students' present and future arts engagement. An ecological framework will be employed to make visible the ever-evolving and interrelated component parts of local/regional/national arts infrastructures (artists, administrators, presenters/curators, venues, charitable organizations, support organizations, educational institutions, governmental agencies, the public). We will consider histories of funding, organizational structures, and function of the arts in the U.S., as well as case studies of more recent artist-centered projects/initiatives that might inspire new possibilities for your own practice. Each student will then research the arts ecologies of places they care deeply for, and apply these knowledges to their own proposals for place-based arts interventions. While final projects might resemble grant proposals, the goal will be to cultivate tools of observation/information-gathering/communication/creative problem-solving that sustainably support ones' arts engagement in ways that are responsive to shifting systems, communities, and sense of place.

DANCE-171 Studies in Dance History

Charles Flachs and Lucy Birmingham, Mount Holyoke College

Dance is a reflection of culture and a microcosm of current politics. Studies in Dance History shows this connection as it traces the history of concert dance through Ballet and Modern, Jazz and current trends. Co-taught by Professor Charles Flachs and Lucy Birmingham, Studies in Dance History is a hybrid course, which combines the in-class experience with an online discussion component. Along with classroom lectures, presentations and video showing, the online discussion component allows the student time to process information learned in the classroom first. The articles and questions posted further provide the student with a forum for discussion, which is asynchronous. This last aspect gives the student a degree of autonomy to encourage thoughtful, unhurried conversation in a respectful environment.

DAN 272 Dance and Culture

Lester Tomé, Smith College

What social functions do dance serve? How does the body signify culture? How does movement articulate identities? What are connections between dancing and other social practices? How do theories of performance and embodiment help understand the relationships between self, body, culture and society? This course aims to answer these questions from the perspective of dance anthropology. It analyzes documentaries and texts that illustrate the diverse manners in which ethnographers approach the study of dance as a sociocultural practice. It also discusses the nature of fieldwork and ethnographic research in dance, critically examining how contemporary ethnographers negotiate the historical relationship between anthropology and coloniality. The course highlights ethnographies of dance forms from the Americas, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe.

DAN 377 Advanced Studies in History and Aesthetics

Dancing Today: Aesthetics of Contemporary Dance

Lester Tomé, Smith College

This seminar examines current trends in the field of contemporary dance. It functions as a tool for students to expand, deepen, and refine their engagement with contemporary dance--as choreographers, performers, spectators, critics, or scholars. Among the trends analyzed in the course are intercultural choreography, queer performance, dance and eco-sustainability, political performance, embodied critiques of neoliberalism, stagings of hip hop, de-skilled choreographies and untrained bodies, dancefilm and multimedia, digital performance, dance dramaturgy, economically precarious dances, the body as archive, performance as research, interdisciplinary dance, conceptual dance, collaborative creative processes, audience participation, dance in the museum, and dances of occupation in urban spaces. Students will analyze videos illustrative of these trends and discuss recent scholarship that theorizes the topics. The course is open to all students interested in dance and contemporary art.

Repertory

DAN 305 Advanced Repertory: Contemporary

Xan Burley and Alex Springer, Smith College

In this class, student artists will work in collaboration with choreographers Xan and Alex to create an original dance performance piece to be presented on the Smith College Senior Concert program. The work will focus equally on developing rich physicality, sincere theatricality, partnering, and abstract storied-ness (if such a thing exists, we will find out together). Movement material will be generated by Xan and Alex and by the artists in the room through invention tasks, improvisation, and conceptual impetuses. Xan and Alex will build variations and transformations of this material and eventually shape the performance piece, with crucial input and contributions from the artists present. As inherently collaborative creative and life partners, Xan and Alex strive to create choreographic work with the collective in mind, honoring and embracing each person's strengths, nuances, and exceptionalities. This piece will be made with, for, and by all who gather to create it.

Creative Studies: Composition/Improvisation

THDA 111 Composition I: Language of Movement

Dante Brown, Amherst College

An introduction to movement as a language and to dance and performance composition. In studio sessions students will explore and expand their individual movement vocabularies by working improvisationally with weight, posture, gesture, patterns, rhythm, space, and relationship of body parts. We will ask what these vocabularies might communicate about emotion, thought, physical structures, cultural/social traditions, and aesthetic preferences. In addition, we will observe movement practices in everyday situations and in formal performance events and use these observations as inspiration for individual and group compositions. Two two-hour class/studio meetings and a two-hour production workshop per week. Selected readings and viewing of video and live performance. Limited to 20 students. Six spots reserved for first-year students.

HACU 151 Making Dances 1: Choreographic Laboratory

Lailye Weidman, Hampshire College

This course invites students to dive into choreographic thinking, movement generation, experimentation, and dance-making research. The word choreography originally meant fixing movement onto the page through notation. Today, choreography refers to a wide variety of activities including improvisation, articulating ideas through movement, instigating public interventions, creating problems to be solved in motion, and exploring stillness. Through weekly dance-making assignments—both solo and collaborative—students will produce choreographic studies that address specific concepts, lenses, and methods for crafting dance. We will reflect together on one another's work and practice giving generative and generous feedback. Final projects will evolve over the latter portion of the semester and be performed in an informal showing. Other requirements include viewing live performances and dance on video, readings, and reflective writing prompts. No previous experience in dance is required. Concurrent study of dance technique is encouraged.

THDA 266/267 Composition II: Ensemble Dancing in Community

Dante Brown, Amherst College

This advanced studio course is designed for students who want to develop their skills as dance/theater artists by participating in the creation of a student dance company that is viable and sustainable in a liberal arts environment. Students enrolled in this course will be part of an ensemble and perform regularly in different sites in the Five College Community. In addition to the ongoing practice of technique, class times will focus on learning and creating different repertory with the instructor of the course, guest artists and the students who are enrolled in the course. In addition, we will examine different professional dance company models as inspiration in the formation of the ensemble as well as research diverse examples for community engagement and the arts. Questions that will inform the work include: What does it mean to be part of a performing ensemble in a liberal arts setting? How do performance art making and community intersect? What are potential structures for organizing an ensemble performance company to insure flexibility as well as sustainability? What are some of the challenges in keeping a collaborative body together and viable? Three two-hour meetings per week plus lab TBA. Requisite: Previous performance experience in dance/theater. Limited to 10 students. Admission with consent of the instructor after audition.

DANCE-252 Intermediate Dance Composition

Barbie Diewald and Peter Jones, Mount Holyoke College

Pre-requisite course: Composition I or Beginning Composition

This course is a meeting point for practice-led research and research-led practice. Each class, students will be offered compositional tools and strategies that will aid them in generating movement material, scores, and collaborative processes. We will work iteratively, creating several drafts of each assignment, and will also compile a digital archive of our class community's individual and collective research. This is a movement-based class, though there will be outside readings that relate to dance dramaturgy, integrating the personal and formal, queerness in dancemaking, and writing about your practice. This course culminates in the Mount Holyoke College Student Concert on April 26 and 27, 2019.

THDA 255 Composition II/III: Sound, Movement and Text

Wendy Woodson and Jake Meginsky, Amherst College

(Offered as THDA 255, ENGL 223, and MUSI 255) This studio course is designed as an interactive laboratory for dancers, composers, actors, writers/poets, vocalists, and sound artists to work together to create meaningful interactions between sound, movement, and text. Working individually and in collaborative groups, students will create original material in the various media and experiment with multiple ways to craft interesting exchanges and dialogues between word, sound, and movement or to create hybrid forms. The emphasis in the course will be to work with exercises and structures that engender deep listening, looking, and imagining. Some of the questions that inform the course include: How do music, voices, electronic, digital, and natural sounds create a sonic world for live performance and vice versa? How can movement inform the writing of text and vice versa? How can we successfully communicate and collaborate across and between the different languages of sounds, words, and movement? We will have a series of informal studio performances, events, and installations throughout the semester with a culminating final showing/listening at the end of the semester. Requisite: Previous experience in composition in one or more of the central media, or consent of the instructors. Limited to 16 students.

THDA 355 Composition III: Solo Performance

Wendy Woodson, Amherst College

In this studio course, we will explore different skills and approaches towards creating solo performance. We will examine examples of historical and contemporary live solo performances in theater, dance, music, street, stand up and in political/social arenas to inform and ask what makes these effective (or not). We will use what we learn from these examples to inspire our own solo material. We will also develop additional techniques (through improvisational trial and error) that enliven and engage our different voices, stories, imaginations and emotions. An emphasis will be placed on exploring and crafting a dynamic relationship between body and voice, between movement and text and between literal and abstract expression in order to create confident and compelling solo presentations on and off stage. We will consider the solo as both a personal vehicle of expression and as a means of giving voice to experiences of others. In the process of making compositional choices, we will consider the personal and social implications of these choices. The semester will culminate in a public performance of final solos. Course is open to juniors and seniors. Instructor permission is required, and interested students with previous experience in performance, whether in the arts, public presentations in other disciplines/contexts, should contact Prof. Woodson. Limited to 10 students.

DANCE 394CI Advanced Dance Composition: Integrative Experience

Leslie Frye Maietta, UMass

The Integrative Experience (IE) requirement at UMass addresses the challenges associated with educational fragmentation. Positioned in the upper-division, IE provides students with a structured opportunity to look back on their early college learning experiences, reflect upon and make connections between those earlier experiences and the more advanced work in their major, and use their integrated learning to prepare for the demands of the world beyond the university. Through our work together, students will reflect and integrate their learning and experience from both the broad exposure in their General Education courses and their focus in the dance major. Students in IE are encouraged to consider the various courses they've taken over the last few years that have influenced their choices and points of view. How have these choices influenced my path? How do they connect to my current creative research? Students are encouraged to think critically and ask challenging questions regarding self and self in relation to the world around them. "Who am I and what is my point of view inside of the knowledge I've received thus far.?" Yes. Yes to dance. Yes to collaboration. Yes to change. Yes to expansive thinking. Yes to unknowing. Yes to becoming. For this semester together in Integrative Experience we will aim to embody the yes energy. Not to overwhelm, exhaust or neutralize but to cultivate a sense of openness, community, collective learning, critical and expansive thinking and possibility. Riding parallel to your creative research is your junior choreography project. This project/idea/performance will take the full semester to develop and will challenge your thinking, performance, or way of making dance and perhaps bridge different aspects of your college education. Collectively as a class you will dream and execute your vision of the performance, with the guidance of the facilitator.

Scientific Aspects of Dance

DANCE 241 Scientific Foundations of Dance: Anatomy in Motion

Bronwen MacArthur, UMass

This course provides students with an applicable knowledge of their anatomy in motion and a historical context for ways it relates to their dance practice. It traces connections between advances in human anatomy, kinesiology and somatics, and dance forms from the early 1900s to the present. While we are acquiring experiential knowledge of bones, muscles and joints in action, we will sample seminal texts and practical exercises that drove the research of pioneering figures including F.M. Alexander, Mabel Elsworth Todd, Irmgard Bartenieff and Moshe Feldenkrais. We will follow the evolution and application of their ideas in contemporary movement practices today. We will utilize text, hands-on work, discussion and movement studies. This class is designed for students who have little background studying anatomy.