

**THAD 255/355/455 MODERN DANCE II/III/IV**  
**Winona State University Course Syllabus Fall 2009**  
**TR 12:30 p.m.-1:50 p.m.- Memorial 300 Dance Studio**

Instructor: Matthew Nelson  
Office : PAC 125

Email: matnelson@winona.edu  
Phone: 507-457-5206

Office Hours: MW 10:00-2:30 until 3/15/10, and then 10-1, TR 11-12:30 and 2:00-3:30  
If you can't find me in PAC 125 I may be next door in PAC 127 or in Memorial 300.  
The best thing is to email me to let me know you're coming.

**UNIVERSITY STUDIES**

This course satisfies the Fine and Performing Arts Core of WSU's University Studies program. It includes requirements and learning activities that promote students' abilities to:

- a. Explore the language skills and materials of an artistic discipline;
- b. Use methods of an arts practitioner to actively engage in creative processes or interpretive performances;
- c. Understand the cultural and gender contexts of artistic expression;
- d. Engage in reflective analysis of their own art work or interpretive performance and respond to the work of others.

\*Course activities and assignments that address these Fine and Performing Arts Requirements will be identified in the syllabus by letter (a), (b), (c), (d).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a mixed level course in contemporary dance technique and theory. It will particularly emphasize connectivity, ease, and efficiency of motion as both a communicative aesthetic and as a personal/experiential pursuit for the individual. In support of the movement vocabularies of modern dance, the class will include elements of somatic disciplines such as Laban Movement Analysis, Experiential Anatomy, Feldenkrais, Yoga, and Contact Improvisation.

Prerequisite: Modern Dance I or permission of instructor.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To continue learning and sharpening concepts of modern dance, including movement and anatomical terminology; to develop stylistically, becoming aware of personal aesthetic choices and broadening the range of interests and preferences. (a), (b), (c), (d)
- 2) To become more fluent in the concepts of body, effort, shape, and space in composition and technique, using these concepts to enhance performance abilities and stage presence (a), (b)
- 3) To develop and perform modern combinations and phrases with the knowledge of compositional elements, awareness of personal aesthetic, and a sense of risk and ingenuity (a), (b),
- 4) To articulate discursive and kinesthetic reflections and responses with others in class; to enhance constructively critical skills when viewing peer work, as well as video and concert performances. (a), (d)
- 5) To consider the cultural and historical roots and influences that affect creative processes in modern dance; to gain exposure to divergent artistic viewpoints and theories including contemporary choreographers and influences of world dance (c)

## COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Material is presented by means of demonstration, individual correction, discussion, and supplemental resources such as video. Classes will be movement centered with progressive stages of embodiment—we will often begin class subtly and finish with more intensive movement. Solo and group creative movement compositions culminate in personal and group performance projects. A movement journal is to be kept by each student to document learning. Video will be used to record student progress and provide feedback on technique and expression as well as for documenting student development.

\*Physical contact with your fellow students is part of this course. If you have reservations or discomforts regarding this, please let me know.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Requirements for class participation:**

- Attendance: Dance is a present centered practice. You need to show up. See attendance policy below.
- Presence: If attendance is the practice of arriving at the studio, presence is the practice of noticing what happens within it. If you stay present you are less likely to kick someone in the face, or find a toe in your own eye. Learning to move is difficult in part because the practice of presence must constantly be renewed.
- Willingness: We are here to learn with and from each other, myself included. Our personal worth is inherent at all times and does not need to be proven. At some point in this class, and perhaps far more often, each of us (myself included) will look, sound, smell, or feel perfectly ridiculous. This is part of the learning process as we live through our creation of new knowledge. It's a good time to laugh, maybe to cry, and then to try again. Move with awareness and you will learn something, guaranteed. Criticizing others without this in mind will affect your grade.
- Response-Ability: You are responsible for your own body in this class. I will do everything I can to bring you the tools for body knowledge, but only you can examine your own bodily experience. Ask questions, and use your 'willingness' to examine movement, not to force it. Please make me aware of injuries or health issues at an appropriate moment. Also, bring water and appropriate clothing for easy movement. Appropriate attire is to be worn to every class. This will be enforced because the proper attire enhances your ability to move freely, as well as help you feel comfortable and confident to do so. Acceptable attire is: leotard, tights (footless), tank tops, T-shirts, sweat pants, other loose pants, leggings, or yoga pants. No shoes, although you may wear modern/lyrical slippers or socks. Hair is to be secured away from your face. No gum chewing. Please turn your cell phones "off" or "silent" (not "vibrate"). If you are not dressed appropriately for class you will be docked participation for the day.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

**ATTENDANCE** and class participation is required, of course. No unnecessary absences, please. Students are responsible to let the instructor know why you were absent, and catch up on class material, consulting with classmates as needed. **\*\*Illness is not an excused absence, even with a doctor's note.**

**\*You are allowed 2 absences without affecting your grade and no need to provide documentation. More than 2 absences will also drop your total class grade ONE LETTER for each class missed.**

For example, with 3 absences the highest total class grade you can achieve is a B.

Attendance will also affect participation grade.

\*Exceptions will be made for athletic events with appropriate documentation. Be in touch with me BEFOREHAND for appropriate make up.

**Tardiness:** Being late to class 2x is equivalent to 1 absence, if the lateness is less than 10 minutes. If you are more than 10 minutes late to a dance class without having notified the instructor in advance you may not participate in the class and that class will be counted as 1 absence.

\*Be sure to speak with the instructor after class if you come in late so your presence can be recorded, the student is responsible to be marked for attendance once names have been called or the sign in clipboard has been passed around class.

\*If you need to leave class early, it will count as a ½ absence if more than 10 minutes and please alert instructor ahead of time.

**Active Observation Without Participation:** You are responsible for assessing your own state of health in consultation with your doctor. If you are unable to dance, you may actively observe up to **3 classes** without participating. This active observation will include describing and commenting on class content and movement components. Handwritten documentation on movement observations and class content will be handed in to the instructor at the end of the class period.

**Makeup Classes:** **DUE: 1 WEEK AFTER MAKEUP UNTIL END OF CLASSES**

\*Students are allowed **3 makeup classes maximum**.

Makeup class approval **must** be requested from Matt ahead of time to ensure it is an appropriate substitute. Request permission via email from makeup class instructor (if not Matt) and introduce yourself when you arrive for class. Obtain a signature from the makeup class instructor with the date of attendance, and hand that in, along with a 1 paragraph typed written summary of movement aspects you experienced in class and your response.

Appropriate makeup classes: See Memorial 300 studio door for days and times and THAD website for faculty email contact info. Speak with Matt for approval.

Students are encouraged to notify the instructor in advance if class is to be missed and are responsible to contact a classmate for missed notes and material.

**Injury Policy:** Credit for all classes is contingent upon participation. If a student has or incurs an injury in the course of study resulting in **more than a 1 week layoff (2 classes)** from active participation, it is the student's responsibility to consult with the teacher as to creative options for the learning process or withdrawal from the class.

**Evaluation/Grading:**

**Attendance: See Attendance Policy Above**

**40% Participation:** See Attendance, Presence, and Response-ability. Any supplemental assignments will be part of this grade.

**10% Attendance at *Dancescape* and Joe Goode's Presentation.**

\*Any preexisting conflict must be reported to instructor in writing in class by our 3<sup>rd</sup> class

\*Save performance program to hand in with response, stapled to back of paper

**You must see both of the following:**

Winona State University's Theater and Dance Department presents *Dancescape* February 11-13 at 7:30pm on the Performing Arts Center Main Stage. \$6 for students

Winona State University's Lyceum Series presents the Joe Goode Performance Group on Monday Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm on the Performing Arts Center Main Stage. Free. If you have a conflict in the evening it may be possible to watch the dress rehearsal at 2:30pm that same day. (Please speak with me beforehand)

- 15% Mid Term(a)(b)(c):** The purpose of the movement midterm is for you to be able to put together some of the material you have learned in class, and to help identify areas for continued investigation. You will choreograph a 1-2 minute repeatable sequence that will include:
- A/Some movement from class choreography that you feel you have mastered. Mastery is relative, so don't worry if someone else does it "better," just feel that you do it "well."
  - A/Some movement from your everyday life to which you have applied your movement skills. (i.e. a sport, occupational movement, postural support)
  - A/Some movement that is part of your own dance. This movement is not from class or everyday life, it's just yours. Apply your movement skills to perform it fully.
  - A/Some movement from class choreography that you would like to continue working on and feel you haven't yet mastered.

Please have a short (1/2 page approx.) description of what parts of your sequence represent each of the above elements.

These sequences will be performed in a seminar style circle and will receive immediate feedback. We will work with the material together and learn as a group through each other's challenges. Private feedback will be available afterward during office hours. **See Date Table for due dates.**

- 15% Group Final(a)(b)(c):** The purpose of the final project is to integrate the creative, analytic, aesthetic, technical, and social skills that we develop over the semester. In groups of 2-4 people you will create a 2-4 minute dance that investigates the theme of sustainability. We will discuss this theme in class, and you will be expected to write a short proposal describing your idea at the start of the project. Work will be evaluated for choreographic clarity, relation to theme, technical ability of the dancers to perform the intended movement, and qualitative investment in the performance. **See Date Table for due dates.**

**20% Movement Journal(a)(b)(c)(d):**

Kinesthetic learning is distinctly different from the cognitive learning that is most common in the academic environment, and the intention of the journal is to provide a container within which students can document their own learning and integrate it into their lives. Weekly journal entries are required at approximately 1 pg./wk, and can include other media such as drawings, doodlings, informal notes, pictures, songs, or even collected media in addition to the written word. Movement video is also a suggested medium. I personally use the video camera on my computer to journal my movement ideas far more often than I use text.

The journal will be turned in three times over the semester, and the final journal should be a typed 2-3 page final reflection paper that addresses what you learned in this class over the semester. The paper should reference class themes and ideas, include a section about the movement final, and evaluate personal areas of interest, learning, and future work. Past journal entries will likely be useful in the writing of this paper. Papers will be graded for form, content, grammar, and clarity. (double spaced, 12 pt., Arial, Cambria or Times New Roman, 1 inch margins)

**See Date Table for due dates.**

**EXTRA CREDIT:****DUE: 1 WEEK AFTER EVENT UNTIL END OF CLASSES**

Students may earn extra credit by attending an additional events handing in a typewritten summary response, 1 full page minimum, discussing dance/movement related aspects and proof of attendance.

**\*Each student may do 2 EC assignments worth 1/3 letter grade each, for a max. of 2/3 grade added to your final class grade.**

See course calendar and “Area Dance Performance Calendar Spring 2010” on D2L, WSU Update, class announcements or consult instructor if find alternative event. Also\_THAD Theater Events.

**DATE table:**

Friday, Jan 29th	Extra Credit	Frozen River Film Festival Fringe Fest Improvisatory Dance at Lyon’s Gallery, Time TBA	Participate/ Summary
Thurs Feb 4 <sup>th</sup>	Required	Journals Due	Journal
Thurs. Feb 11- Sat Feb 13th	Required	Dancescape PAC Main Stage, WSU, 7:30pm	TBA
Mon. Feb 15th	Required	Joe Goode, PAC Main Stage, WSU, 7:30pm	TBA
Tues Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>	Class	Joe Goode Group Teaches	Participate
Thurs Feb 18 <sup>th</sup>	Class	Joe Goode Group Teaches	Participate
Thurs. Feb 18th	Extra Credit	Joe Goode Improv. Jam, Memorial 300, WSU, 7:30pm	Participate/ Summary
Tues Mar 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Class	Midterm	Participate/ Summary
Thurs Mar 4 <sup>th</sup>	Class	Midterm	Participate/ Summary
Tues Mar 9 <sup>th</sup>	No Class	Spring Break	N/A
Thur Mar 11 <sup>th</sup>	No Class	Spring Break	N/A
Thurs Mar 18 <sup>th</sup>	No Class	ACDF	N/A
Thurs. Mar. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Class	Journals Due	Journal
Fri. Mar. 26-Sat Mar. 27th	Extra Credit	Hip Hop Master Classes with Kasper from Chicago Contact Becca Dvorak of WSU Dance Society	Participate/ Summary
Tues April 20 <sup>th</sup>	Class	Final Project	Participate
Thurs. April 22nd	Extra Credit	Improv. Jam facilitated by Matt Nelson, Memorial 300, WSU, 7:30pm	Participate/ Summary
Thurs April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Class	Final Project	Participate
Thurs April 29 <sup>th</sup>	Class	Final Journal/ Summary Due	Journal

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** All work produced by a student must represent that student’s personal effort, unless the instructor specifically permits or requires that it be done by a group. Papers and other work which a student prepares for class will contain only the student’s own words or, if the material originated with someone else, will enclose the quoted words in quotation marks and supply the complete bibliographical information in a footnote or endnote. Summaries or paraphrases of the words and ideas of other people must also be documents in this fashion. Work that does not exhibit these characteristics is a form of academic dishonesty known as plagiarism. This will result in strict sanctions including an automatic F for the course.

**WRITING CENTER INFO:** Call 457-5505 or email [wcenter@winona.edu](mailto:wcenter@winona.edu) for appointments and information and visit the Writing Center website for writing resources and the “Online Tutor” service.

**DISABILITY ACCOMODATION:** If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.