

# CONTEMPORARY DANCE PRACTICE 1

## Movement as Research: Intro to Postmodern Dance

Spring 2025 | MW | 10:40a-12:15p | Studio G6



**with:** Xan Burley (pronouns: she/her/hers)  
**email:** [xburley@arts.ufl.edu](mailto:xburley@arts.ufl.edu)  
**office hours:** Mondays 1-2pm / Thursdays 3-4pm  
**office:** room 232 / Nadine McGuire Theatre and Dance Pavilion  
**lab fees:** <http://aa.ufl.edu/policies/material-and-supply-fees/>



### → course introduction + description

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this class, I will offer physical practice, movement exploration, and critical thinking assignments that will broaden your experience of/in contemporary concert dance. In this class, I uplift the fact that **movement is research** and you are a **movement researcher**. I place our work in this class in the context of the postmodern era, especially Judson Dance Theatre and other collectives of artists working in the 1960s and beyond.

A typical class starts with a few minutes to check-in with each other. This time, though we are not “dancing” yet, is an important part of our work together. **As a valued member of our community, I ask that you please be on time to class to participate in this moment.** After two tardies, each addition tardy will result in a partial absence. **PLEASE SEE THE [STUDIO CULTURE SECTION FOR MORE INFORMATION!!!](#)**

Once we begin moving, we will activate our creative and thoughtful bodies through improvisation, warm-up, grounding precision exercises, choreographed phrase work, and repertory. In my class, I emphasize awareness of weight, employing momentum as a tool for both precision and abandon. Through articulation and extension of the lower and upper body we will refine our capacity for efficient full-bodied movement. Phrase-work will focus on musical and rhythmic diversity, qualitative specificity, and performance skill-building. We will enrich our understanding of dance practice through collaboration, deep listening, and rigor. **I maintain the belief that simple is not the same as easy and it is your responsibility as a learner to meet class material with curiosity and self-motivation.**

I will lead a movement practice and course of study influenced and informed by the following:

- My background working in modern/postmodern/contemporary dance, including artists, choreographers, and teachers that have impacted my dancing.
- My creative research as a choreographer in collaboration with my partner Alex Springer.
- My training in other forms of dance including improvisation, contact improvisation/partnering, and ballet, as well as other forms.
- My expertise and my growing body of knowledge.
- **YOU! What you bring to our practice is essential and I will respond to your needs and interests to the best of my ability.**

Please silence all devices and leave wearable devices in your bags. Come into the space to stretch and warm-up before class. Please wear comfortable clothing to dance in. Wear long pants and bring layers for varying studio temperatures. I also recommend knee pads for some of our work. **NO SOCKS!!! PLEASE SEE [STUDIO CULTURE SECTION FOR MORE INFORMATION!!!](#)**

#### COMMUNICATION

We will use Canvas (<http://elearning.ufl.edu>) as our home-base for communicating, compiling assignments, and collaborating. In addition, please only use your **UFL.EDU** for any email correspondence. Please be sure to **communicate** with me as the semester progresses. **Knowing how you're doing in this class helps me support you!!!** Also, in an effort to protect my time with my family, know that **I will not respond to emails after 4pm during the week or on the weekend.** You can expect a response from me within 48 hours otherwise. If something is urgent, I will attend to it as quickly as possible.

**MEETINGS + OFFICE HOURS** – I will schedule one individual meeting mid-semester with each of you to discuss your progress in class. In addition, my office hours are **TO BE ANNOUNCED and by appointment.** Please take advantage of those times!

## → course objectives

### In this course, we will:

- Learn about postmodern/contemporary dance and experience it personally.
- Develop our attention and curiosity.
- Utilize anatomical and kinesthetic awareness to execute movement efficiently and safely.
- Access **healthful** alignment, strength, flexibility, range of motion, balance, and use of space.
- Practice learning material quickly and thoroughly.
- Explore the expressive and qualitative range of movement.
- Become more analytical with regard to movement apprehension and performance.
- Collaborate with each other.

- Examine the role of dance in our current world and develop an informed view of the interaction of art and society in the 20/21st Century
- Give voice to your person/dancer/thinker/artist self!

### As the facilitator of this course, I will:

- Share my expertise with you.
- Listen to your needs as an individual.
- Create opportunities for you to grow, improve, and be challenged.
- **Ask you to be open to new and different ways of moving, thinking, and creating.**
- Respect your values, expertise, and boundaries.
- Expand your knowledge of Contemporary Dance.

### A typical class will include:

- ⇒ **IMPROV JAMS @ 10:30am** (Wednesdays) – on every Wednesday, I will start playing music at 10:30am and invite you to improvise alone and/or with your peers
- ⇒ **CHECK-IN** – a moment to connect as a class
- ⇒ **IMPROVISATION** – developing comfort and dynamic range; sourcing the self and the community; tuning to the body.
- ⇒ **WARM-UP / EXERCISES / EXPLORATIONS** – ongoing and follow-along warm-up sequences; exercises that prepare us for phrase material and repertory by building on elements of momentum, grounding, strength, balance, efficiency, expansion, and specificity.
- ⇒ **COLLABORATION / DISCUSSION** – opportunities to collaborate in small groups; time for reflection and discussion as a community
- ⇒ **PHRASEWORK / REPERTORY** – learning movement phrases from my creative research/repertory, as well as Varone repertory.

## → guiding principles + definitions

I believe that dance that is **contemporary**—of the “now” and the “new”—is a practice that builds on historical contexts to undergird current, relevant, and innovative methods of expressive embodiment. Contemporary dance is an evolving, fluid, and ever-shifting field and form. Contemporary Dance Practice is an invitation to explore the unknown and an opportunity to expand the field. **I will focus our attention on Postmodern Dance as a way to situate our work in historical and cultural contexts.**

**Practice**, for me, is an ongoing state of being in which tremendous growth is possible. In service of fostering your and my own growth, I wish to emphasize that our *practice* is about *cultivation* rather than mastery. To that end, we will work with the rigor, creativity, playfulness, and attention to detail upon which meaningful development depends.

## → respectful learning environment + community guidelines

In order for everyone in the class to learn, we must collectively create a sense of belonging for each other. I ask that you bring a **radical empathy** and hospitality to class—listening, supporting, and being compassionate is essential. Please *always* come to me with any questions, concerns, or needs that arise for you. So that we all can have a transformative, energetic, and generous experience, we will collectively participate in creating a respectful environment. A respectful learning environment is sustained by making **community guidelines**, which we will do on the first week of class.

## → studio culture guidelines

So that you are practicing the full scope of what it means to be a movement artist, I expect you to do the following:

- Come into the studio, set your things down on the side, and come into the space. DO NOT congregate on the side of the studio.
  - *Silence all devices and remove any wearable technology.\**
- Stretch, warm-up, and chat quietly with a friend if you feel ready for that OR join the improv jam if it's a Wednesday.

- Be in our circle, **barefoot** and standing, no later than **10:40am**. 10:41am is LATE.
  - *We will often check-in here, which is an important part of our time.*
- During breaks for water and the bathroom, do not go to your bag and check your device. This is disruptive to your practice. Instead, stretch or rest.
  - *Try not to leave the studio for breaks before I offer them, unless it is absolutely necessary.*
- SPEAK UP! When I ask questions or for your feedback, please use your voice to communicate with me and the class.
  - *DO NOT carry on side conversations that may be distracting to me or others.*
- Bring a ready attitude to class.
- Be kind to yourself and your peers. Always.
- Do not leave class early unless approved by Xan before the start of class time.

**NOTE ABOUT WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY:** Wearable technology, like fit-bits and apple watches, create unnecessary distraction and draw from the focused and intentional practice I expect in this class. *Please leave these items in your bag.* Should you need to be reached during our class time for any reason, you may wear these items on a case-by-case basis and should clear it with me first. If you are using these items for a health-related reason and need to keep it on, I ask that you turn off notifications and refrain from looking at it during class.

**ABSENCES (quick guide):** You are allowed 2 unexcused absences at no penalty. Your 3<sup>rd</sup> and any others after lower your grade by 5% with each absence. Make up work is possible for up to 2 absences.

**TARDIES:** You are allowed 1 tardy at no penalty. After that, 3 tardies will equal 1 unexcused absence.

## → course expectations

### (1) GROWTH + DEVELOPMENT (35% or 35 points; 10 points each)

I will evaluate you in each of these areas twice, once at the midpoint and once at the end.

#### ⇒ ARTISTRY (10)

- Musicality and Rhythm: student demonstrates clear timing in movement and movement phrasing, demonstrates clarity of rhythmic patterning, demonstrates precise and appropriate response to musical stimulus
- Performance Quality: student performs movement with confidence, demonstrate the ability to explore dynamic range with distinct clarity.

#### ⇒ EMBODIMENT (10)

- Kinesthetic Awareness: students are able to integrate a basic level of anatomical/kinesiological approaches to the body and movement practice, including the use of proprioception, spatial awareness, healthful alignment, and range of motion. In addition, students are able to use a basic vocabulary in musculoskeletal description of self and other bodies.
- Movement Execution: Students are able to safely and accurately execute movement of basic complexity, paying attention to weight transfer and detail.
- Energy and Conditioning: Students are able to utilize and develop a basic level of strength, flexibility, endurance, and muscular stabilization and support, as well as energetic modulation and groundedness.

#### ⇒ COMMUNICATION (5)

- Student demonstrates an ability to articulate ideas with clarity and express critical thought.
- Student demonstrates an ability to listen to themselves and others, with respect for differing opinions.

#### ⇒ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (10 / 5 in class, 5 outside of class)

- **IN CLASS CRITERIA:**
  - Student takes care of the space as outlined in handbook/syllabus;
  - Students demonstrate commitment to a collaborative learning environment by expanding one's willingness to work with all classmates versus a select few as the course progresses;
  - Student shows active engagement physically, including volunteering to show/demonstrate/lead;
  - Student commits to individual and shared responsibility for class/group based work.
  - **Student follows studio culture and community guidelines.**
- **OUTSIDE OF CLASS** (Earned by doing any 5 of the following (inspired by Onye Ozuzu by way of Michelle Ellsworth)):
  - Attending and participating fully in 10:30am Improvisation Jams on Wednesday mornings.
  - Submitting a written or video recorded reflection on a performance you saw.
  - Visiting a rehearsal or class that you are not already involved in (with permission) and submitting a written or recorded reflection on it.
  - Taking or teaching a class outside of the curriculum (DIAS Day of Dance, the Gainesville community, etc.)

- Going to an additional, not required, performance (of any kind)
- Watching an excerpt from a recent Movement Research at Judson Church and submitting a reflection
- Doing a "slow walk" somewhere on campus and submitting video of you doing it (even better if it's a group of you)
  - *A slow walk is exactly what it sounds like. You walk VERY, VERY slowly somewhere in public for an extended period of time (at least 5 minutes).*
- Creating a collaborative art piece (not dance) in response to your work in class with your peers.
- Hanging out with your classmates outside of SoTD (submit a photo or video of you together)
- Something you propose!

### (2) EMBODIED PROJECTS (25 % or 25 points)

All information necessary to complete the assignments listed below will be provided in detail on Canvas.

- ⇒ Varone Repertory Project (5 pts)
- ⇒ Midterm: Postmodern Repertory Project (7 pts)
- ⇒ Judsonified Project (5 pts)
- ⇒ Final: Movement as Research Synthesis Solo (10 pts)

### (3) VLOGS + GROUP DISCUSSIONS + FINAL PAPER (40% or 40 points)

All information necessary to complete the assignments listed below will be provided in detail on Canvas.

- ⇒ VLOGS (20 pts): a continuation of Professor Johnnie's assignment. You will do a vlog every Wednesday that class is in session. Some vlogs will have specific prompts, while others will be open-ended. Your vlogs are an opportunity to share what's emerging for you in our classwork, ask questions, and process your journey in this class.
  - Synthesis Improvisations: as part of 3 of your vlogs, you will improvise for 2 minutes with a specific score in mind, see below:
    - Varone Aesthetic
    - Postmodern Aesthetic
    - Judson Aesthetic
- ⇒ GROUP DISCUSSIONS (12 pts): You will respond to 6 different readings in discussion threads by posting two times each. You must include a quote from the reading in at least one of your comments. If you comment more than twice, you can receive extra credit. The readings you will respond to are:
  - Virtuosity by Simon Dove and Bebe Miller
  - "Barefoot and Hot, Sneakered and Cool: African Subtexts in Modern and Postmodern Dance" by Brenda Dixon Gottschild
  - Two excerpts from Parallels
- ⇒ FINAL PAPER (8 pts): Writing as Research Synthesis Statement

## ATTENDANCE

It is imperative that you attend every class meeting for this course. Being present and supportive of your peers, and being engaged in our work together regularly is integral. For classes that meet three times a week, **two (2) unexcused / undocumented absences are allowed**. Beyond those absences, documentation is required to be considered excused. Each unexcused absence lowers your grade 5%. For example, if you your overall grade is an A- (90-92%), you would potentially drop to a B+ or B.

Upon your 3<sup>rd</sup> absence (excused or unexcused), I will schedule a meeting with you to discuss your needs. At that point, we will determine how to best support your ability to attend class and maintain a rigorous course of study. Once we have connected and made a plan, I will expect you to stay on course and communicate with me when you are not able to. In other words, I will not follow up if you continue to have unexcused absences and they will lower your grade as outlined above. After 5 absences (excused or unexcused) we will meet to discuss whether you are able to pass the class.

What all that said, I recognize and respect that each person navigates self-care differently. If you feel sick at all, overwhelmed, or simply need to rest, you should stay home and take an absence. **Being absent is not wrong**. Excused absences are there to support your overall well-being. **When you listen to and respect your body's needs, you are acting with maturity and intelligence.**

**COMMUNICATION IS KEY!!!**

## ABSENCE MAKE-UP WORK

If your attendance begins to slip dramatically, you can make up to **two (2)** unexcused absences by doing the following *for each unexcused absence*:

1. Watch an evening-length performance from The Chocolate Factory Theater's Vimeo page. Approved performances will be available on Canvas.
2. Write a 300-500 word essay describing the performance and how the work is contemporary.
3. Video record yourself improvising for 1-2 minutes in response to the performance you watched.

OR

- Take another movement practice class, with permission from the instructor, that you are not already enrolled in.

OR

1. Go to see a live performance (one you are not already required to attend).
2. Write a 300-500 word essay describing the performance and how the work is contemporary.
3. Video record yourself improvising for 1-2 minutes in response to the performance you watched.

## → course + events calendar

You will be able to access an up-to-date course calendar on our Canvas Page, as well as Spring 2025 events.

### REQUIRED EVENTS:

- Dance Area Welcome Meeting; Mon Jan 13 @ 6:30pm, G6
- Cirque Kalabante; Tue Jan 21 @ 7:30pm, The Phillips Center
- UnShowing; Mon Jan 27 @ 6:30pm, G6
- BFA Concert, Feb 19-23 @ various times, G6
- The Harn Museum of Dance; Apr 5 @ 1pm, Harn Museum
- SoTD's *Spring Into Dance*; Apr 10-13 @ various times, Black Box at SoTD
- Limon Dance Company; Apr 19 @ 7:30pm, Phillips Center

### CHOOSE **ONE** OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Riverdance, Feb 11-13 @ 7:30pm, Phillips Center
- Niyaz's *The Fourth Light Project*; Feb 21 @ 7:30pm, Phillips Center
- The Peking Acrobats; Mar 11 @ 7:30pm, Phillips Center
- Santa Fe College's *Elements of Style* Concert; Apr 4 + 5 @ various times, Santa Fe Fine Arts Hall

**Failure to attend required events will result in a 2% reduction of your grade.**

## → grading procedures

### PERCENTAGES

Growth and Development	35 points
Embodied Projects	25 points
Vlogs	20 points
Discussion Groups + Final Paper	20 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100 points</b>

### LETTER GRADES

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	86-89
B	83-85
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
E	59 and below

[Link to the university grades and grading policies](#)

**A note about deadlines:** let's face it, deadlines are both a burden and a necessity. The best learning you can do is ongoing, it's a process that has no outcome or due date. That said, I assign deadlines so that I have enough time to provide feedback on each assignment. I space out deadlines so that you can spend time putting meaningful thought into the assignments. But...LIFE HAPPENS and you may be delayed in completing work. If you email me before a deadline to communicate an assignment's lateness, you will be granted an automatic **48-hour extension**. Further extensions will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

## → statements

### **THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THIS CLASS**

The assignments in this course are designed to help you develop writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. As a course requirement, it is expected that you will perform work for this class without the assistance of any artificial intelligence (AI) technology such as ChatGPT. Therefore, if you submit assignments that have utilized an AI generator (in whole or part) you will be treated as having engaged in academic dishonesty.

In an effort to be abundantly clear, while AI technology is new and constantly evolving, please know that using ChatGPT or any other AI text generator to assist in writing your papers, or completing other written assignments, is construed as plagiarism and will be treated as such. Those found to have engaged in such academic misconduct may be subject to any additional sanctions listed in the student code.

### **ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT**

*This statement is not my own, but is verbatim from a sample syllabus from a professor at Smith College, with relevant adaptations made for my class. The author is unknown, but their words spoke directly to my beliefs.*

My take on accessibility starts with a simple statement. I trust you. You are a University of Florida student who has worked hard to be here. You are in this particular classroom because you have an interest in postmodern/contemporary dance, repertory, improvisation, and movement exploration. My goal is to create a classroom environment that communicates my trust and that allows each of us, myself included, to learn as much as possible and produce the best work we can by semester's end. To that end, I want to make my classroom, my office visits, our email exchanges and your experience of this course as accessible as possible. As I see it, communication between you and me is the key to achieving that goal. I also realize that my insight into what accessibility means is limited and therefore any statement I make will likely remain a work-in-progress for the duration of the semester.

### **CONTENT WARNING**

In this course, we may cover content and materials that some might find difficult. It is important that in an artistic discipline course we do not shy away from engaging with materials that may be controversial or challenging. I encourage you to reach out to me if you are struggling with the course materials. In class, if you need to step away for a period of time as we are covering particular content, you may do so without penalty, but I ask that you remember that you are responsible for any information covered in your absence.

## → student resources

### **HEALTH AND WELLNESS:**

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department:* [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services:* For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

### **ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:**

- UF has an Equal Access Mental Health Clinic that has a Free Therapy Night every Monday night that UF is considered open. Here is the FB page through which one can book appointments as well: <https://www.facebook.com/equalaccessclinic/>
- The UF School of Medicine Equal Access Clinic website is here and has the above mental health services as well as specialized Women's and LGBT medicine: <https://equalaccess.med.ufl.edu/specialty-clinics-classes/>
- Alachua County Crisis Center web site (Offers Crisis Counseling as well as a Mobile Response Unit that attends to severe mental health crises): <https://alachuacounty.us/depts/css/crisiscenter/pages/services.aspx>

## **ACADEMIC RESOURCES:**

- *E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- *Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.](#)
- *On-Line Students Complaints:* [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)

## **→ uf policies**

## **COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner.](#) Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

## **UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code.](#) Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## **IN-CLASS RECORDING:**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **\*THIS SYLLABUS AND COURSE CONTENT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE\***

You will be notified in advance of important changes that could affect grading, assignments, etc.

**Syllabi are posted here:** <http://arts.ufl.edu/syllabi/>