Stephen F. Austin State University  
School of Theatre and Dance  
DANC 1107 ● Dance Improvisation ● Fall 2023

Instructor: Jessica Thomas  
Course Time/Location: MW, 10-10:50, GFNA325  
Office: 305  
Office Hours: T, 2-4 pm/TR, 2-5 pm  
Office Phone: 936-468-1885  
Department Phone: 936-468-3503  
Credits: 2  
Email: jessica.thomas@sfasu.edu

Corequisite(s): Ballet, Modern, or Jazz (any level)

I. Course Description & Justification

Description: Dance Improvisation is a physical and intellectual course in which students investigate spontaneous problem-solving as a means of generating movement for dance composition and to create choreography. This course is a beginning improvisation and choreography course for dance majors and minors. Dance majors and minors must take a ballet, modern, or jazz dance class as a corequisite for enrollment in any of the following courses.

Justification: Dance Improvisation (2 credits) meets for 75 minutes per week for 15 weeks. Course assessments are movement combinations to be practiced, improvised, and performed during summative assessment periods. Students are expected to practice between class sessions. This equates to 2 hours per week outside of class per credit hour. Readings, critical analysis papers, and peer reviews also require additional study of the required material.

All of my class announcements and reminders are promptly communicated through our D2L email. Please be sure to check your messages here regularly, so I can feel assured that you are clear and on the same page with the class as a whole.

For additional feedback outside of class, please visit me during my office hours (see above). It is my passion to see you grow and thrive in your unique voice as a dance artist and/or educator.

Students should expect a response to emails and phone calls within 24-48 hours from their contact efforts. This is only available Monday through Friday.

II. Intended Learning Outcomes

These goals support and reflect the Dance Program in that they equip those candidates seeking “to achieve professional excellence” with the knowledge, skills, and disposition that “prepare competent, successful, caring, and enthusiastic professionals dedicated to responsible service, leadership, and continued professional and intellectual development”. This course supports the Dance Program Mission Statement related to achieving a high level of creative potential.
Program Learning Outcomes

1. Dance Technique: The student will be able to execute improvisational skills that enhance beginner to advanced level ballet, modern dance, and jazz dance techniques. (Active)

2. Dance Production: The student will be able to identify and apply production values necessary for concert dance, including lighting, sound, costuming, and publicity. (Active)

3. Choreography: The student will be able to identify, distinguish and apply the variety of choreographic devices, structures, and forms used in contemporary concert dance. (Active)

4. Dance Kinesiology: The student will be able to apply concepts of dance kinesiology to performance and analysis of dance movement. (Active)

5. Rhythmic Analysis: The student will be able to identify variations in rhythmic patterns and elements of music such as accents, beats, and phrasing as applied to dance movement. (Active)

6. Dance History: The student will Identify and discuss seminal works in the development of Western theatrical dance. (Active)

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate skill in movement improvisation and its applications as a performance form as well as a tool in the creation of choreography (PLO 3)

2. Understand basic elements of composition and demonstrate the ability to apply them in an improvisational setting (PLO 3, 5)

3. Demonstrate an increased awareness and responsiveness to their internal and external environments (PLO 4)

4. Develop creative agency to research movement patterns and expand their personal movement vocabulary (PLO 3)

5. Demonstrate a physical understanding of the basic principles of Contact Improvisation: weight-sharing, rolling point of contact, counter-balance, head-tail connection, safety, and awareness (PLO 3, 4, 5)

6. Develop a clear sense of personal artistic aesthetics (PLO 3)

7. Demonstrate the ability to actively engage in class discussions of course material (PLO 6)

8. Display increased confidence in participating in improvisational structures (PLO 3)

For additional information on meaningful and measurable learning outcomes, see the assessment resource page http://www.sfasu.edu/assessment/index.asp.

III. Course Content

This course encourages movement experimentation and creative risk that empower each student’s unique artistic voice and further refines their technical skill in all dance genres. Students will become more in tune with how their body moves, allowing for fuller, richer movement expression. Students will engage as individuals, with partners, and in groups. Each class session will begin with a warm-up, intended to facilitate ease of movement,
expand physical parameters and avoid injury. Class will then continue with movement exploration designed to address a particular focus. The course will culminate in solo and group improvisations developed from discovery exercises conducted during class sessions that are shown to class members during class sessions.

**Injury/Accident Statement:**

This course contains physical activity which may consist of but not limited to running, jumping, lifting, throwing, leaping, striking, etc. Participation in these activities comes with inherent risks of injury. Possible injuries include, but are not limited to heat stroke, strains, sprains, scrapes, bruises, and fractures. By registering sand participating I this course, students are aware of the possible injuries that may occur and acknowledge that they participate at their own risk. The university is not responsible for any medical costs associated with any injury students may sustain; therefore, students are strongly recommended to procure personal health and accident insurance to cover any medical costs. Students are encouraged to notify the instructor of any relevant prior medical history regarding injuries, surgeries, medications, or other considerations which may affect or impair participation in this course. If necessary, students will provide, upon request, a physician's statement clearing them to participate in this course.

**Procedures to be Followed for Injury or Accident of an SFA Student:**

1. Administer appropriate first aid.

2. For a major medical emergency, a phone call should be placed to the University Police Department (UPD) (911). UPD will report to the scene of a medical emergency, assist with first aid, and contact an ambulance service.

3. Students may choose to report directly to the Student Health Services for minor first aid needs or routine medical services.

4. If assistance is needed in transporting the injured student, call the UPD nonemergency phone number at 936-468-2608.

5. The instructor should complete an accident report which can be obtained from the department office

**IV. Evaluation and Assessments (Grading):**

**Participation:** Active and committed participation throughout each class is expected. Students are expected to practice material between class sessions. This equates to 2 hours per week outside of class per credit hour. Each student’s active participation, including both effort and improvement, will be assessed based on their individual levels. Dancers with less experience will not be compared with those who have more experience. Dance is an art form that must be practiced daily for mastery. Students are expected to fully participate in each class. It is recommended that any student who is ill should attempt to attend class unless they are contagious or confined to a bed. Any student who opts to observe and not participate will receive partial credit for that class. Class observation gives students a good learning opportunity to listen to explanations and corrections the instructor has given out. Lack of participation for any sustained period of time due to illness, injury, or University sponsored events may result in needing to drop the course entirely. Daily participation means committing to the class and is worth a considerable amount of the student’s final grade. The student will not receive participation points if they are not in attendance.
**Grading Percentages:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills Tests</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Grading Scale:**

- 100-90 = A
- 89-80 = B
- 79-70 = C
- 69-60 = D
- 59 or lower = F

**Daily Participation Grading:**

For each class, the student has the opportunity to earn a total of 10 points by being on time, wearing the proper attire, showing a positive attitude, and giving 100% effort. **Students will lose points for being late, leaving early, not wearing proper dance attire, slacking off, having a bad attitude, or being rude or disrespectful.** As stated before, a student who observes class will only earn partial points. Points cannot be earned if the student is not in attendance.

**Skills Tests**

Periodically throughout the semester, the student is required to perform skills tests. These tests consist of improvisational skills that the class has learned during the semester. Skills tests will be recorded, and the students will perform in small groups. The students will be graded on factors which include creative risk, commitment to the present moment, creative risk, stability, mobility, musicality, memory, coordination, and individualistic style. If a skills test is missed, the student CANNOT make it up, unless the absence was previously excused.

**Midterm and Final Exam**

The midterm and final will be conducted in a way that resembles a skills test. The midterm exam will consist of improvisational skills that the student has learned up to the mid-semester point. The final exam will be composed of all elements that have been learned during the semester and will be performed at the end of the semester (tentative) in an Informal Concert, 11/29 from 4-6:30 pm for a final grade. Please make arrangements with employers and instructors. These two exams will be electronically recorded and assessed. If the midterm or final is missed, the student CANNOT make it up!

**Skills Tests/Exams will be done in ALL BLACK. NO EXCEPTIONS.** If you come to class in something other than the required attire, you will not be allowed to take the skills test/exam.

**NO make-up tests will be given unless previously excused.** Students will participate in self-evaluations following each Skills Test/Exam. Students will view the video of each specific Skills Test/Exam and reflect on their performance through written observation of the improvisational concepts explored.

**Extra Credit:** Attend an approved dance concert and write a 400-word critique. Critiques are due one week after you see the performance. Be sure to include a picture of the program and/or ticket stub upon submission. A rubric will be provided as needed. **Critiques will be submitted in hardcopy format ONLY.** Applicable concerts for attendance include **Danceworks Concert, 11/9-11/11, 2023 (if not performing), or any PROFESSIONAL dance concert (must be approved by Jessica) held off-campus**
Make-Up Policy:

Written assignments will be accepted late, however, 1 letter grade will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. If the student is in good standing with the course, the instructor may allow absences to be made up by other assignments, or attending another technique class of the same level or higher that the student is NOT currently enrolled in with the instructor's permission. Proof of the make-up class will be submitted within 2 days of taking the approved class.

Attendance:

Each absence, after 2, will drop the student’s final grade by 1 full letter grade, assuming each student begins the semester with an A. For example: 3 absences = B, 4 absences = C, 5 absences = D. Any student who has 6 absences or more will result in an automatic failing grade and will not pass the class. An absence will be excused if the student notifies the instructor via email immediately, and presents a doctor’s note the very next class period that he/she is approved to return to class. Doctor’s notes will not be accepted at the end of the week, month, or semester if the student has already returned to class and forgot to bring the doctor’s note. The same consideration will be given for funerals and University sponsored events. Points will be deducted for students who leave class prior to dismissal. If the student is tardy (more than 10 minutes late), they will be counted absent! For every 3 tardies, the student will receive 1 absence! Attendance will be strictly enforced. It is the responsibility of the student to keep track of their number of absences.

V. Tentative Course Calendar:

Week 1
8/28 Introductions; Syllabus review
8/30 Bodyscan; Body parts exploration

Week 2
9/4 Fundamentals: breath, presence, body parts, locomotion
9/6 Fundamentals: breath, presence, body parts, locomotion

Week 3
9/11 Fundamentals: breath, presence, body parts, locomotion
9/13 Review for Skills Test #1

Week 4
9/18 Skills Test #1
9/20 Self Evaluation

Week 5
9/25 Relationships: mirroring, unison, active and passive, weight sharing
9/27 Relationships: mirroring, unison, active and passive, weight sharing

Week 6
10/2 Relationships: mirroring, unison, active and passive, weight sharing
10/4 Review for Midterm
10/6-10/8 Guest Artist Elias Kababa
Week 7
10/9 Midterm
10/11 Self Evaluation

Week 8
10/16 Space/Time: floor patterns, levels, groupings, shape/trace, pulse, accent, rhythm, duration, speed
10/18 Space/Time: floor patterns, levels, groupings, shape/trace, pulse, accent, rhythm, duration, speed

Week 9
10/23 Space/Time: floor patterns, levels, groupings, shape/trace, pulse, accent, rhythm, duration, speed
10/25 Review for Skills Test #2
10/27-10/29 Guest Artist Lacreacia Sanders

Week 10
10/30 Skills Test #2
11/1 Self Evaluation

Week 11
11/6 Movement Invention: images, levels of abstraction, mood/character, props
11/8 Movement Invention: images, levels of abstraction, mood/character, props
11/6-11/11 DANCEWORKS CONCERT WEEK

Week 12
11/13 Movement Invention: images, levels of abstraction, mood/character, props
11/15 NO CLASS; DANCE WORKSHOP in HPE Big Gym 11/15 & 11/16

Week 13
11/17-11/26 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14
11/27 Bodyscan 1; Review Informal Exploration
11/29 Bodyscan 2; Review Informal Exploration
11/27-11/30 Dance Technique Juries
11/29 Informal Concert 4-6:30 PM: included as Final
11/30 Auditions for Spring Danceworks 4-7 PM

Week 15
12/4-12/8 DEAD WEEK

Week 16
12/11-12/15 FINALS WEEK

Week 17
12/16 COMMENCEMENT!!!

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE CAN BE FOUND AT:
https://www.sfasu.edu/registrar/finalexams-grades/final-exam-schedule
Classroom Etiquette

1. **BE ON TIME to class.** It is considered disrespectful to walk into a dance class late. If the student is tardy, he/she should first ask the instructor for permission to join class. If the warm-up is missed, the student may stay and observe the rest of the class.
2. NO TEXTING & silence cell phones.
3. Always come prepared to work both mentally and physically.
4. Do not give corrections to other students unless they ask for your help or if you are asked to provide observations by the instructor.
5. Do not speak while instruction or correction by the instructor is occurring.
6. **Be respectful of others. This is a place of learning and experimentation.** Once you step into the studio, you are all on the same level. Be positive with yourself and with others. This should be a safe place for you to grow as a dancer and to feel comfortable with yourself.

Dance Studio Rules

1. No street shoes. All street shoes must be removed before walking on the dance floor.
2. No gum chewing, eating, or drinking. Water with a secured lid is permitted. Please pick up after yourself and throw away any trash you might bring into the dance space.
3. No wet umbrellas, etc. Please shake off & store any wet items before entering the studio.
4. All cell phones must be silenced in the dance studio.
5. Apple watches will not be allowed to be worn during technique class.

VI. Recommended Reading:


Required Attire:

- **Barefoot**
- **Leotard/form-fitting tank or t-shirt**
- **Leggings/sweatpants (with dance belt or athletic support as needed)**

*No super baggy clothing! Lines need to be seen, form-fitting clothing is necessary!*  
*Please do not wear dangling jewelry*

Hair should be pulled up and away from the face.  
*This is best for the dancer’s safety and it also helps in the mastery of exercises.*

VII. Course Evaluations:

Near the conclusion of each semester, students will electronically evaluate courses taken within the MECFA, through MySFA. Evaluation data is used for a variety of important purposes including: 1. Course and program improvement, planning, and accreditation; 2. Instruction evaluation purposes’ and 3. Making decisions on faculty tenure, promotion, pay, and retention. As you evaluate this course, please be thoughtful, thorough, and accurate in completing the evaluation. Please know that the MECFA faculty is committed to excellence in teaching and continued improvement. Therefore, your response is critical!
VIII. Student Ethics and Other Policy Information:

Class Attendance and Excused Absence: Policy 6.7
Regular, punctual attendance, documented participation, and, if indicated in the syllabus, submission of completed assignments are expected at all classes, laboratories, and other activities for which the student is registered. Based on university policy, failure of students to adhere to these requirements shall influence the course grade, financial assistance, and/or enrollment status. The instructor shall maintain an accurate record of each student's attendance and participation as well as note this information in required reports (including the first 12-day attendance report) and in determining final grades. Students may be excused from attendance for reasons such as health, family emergencies, or student participation in approved university-sponsored events. However, students are responsible for notifying their instructors in advance, when possible, for excusable absences. Whether absences are excused or unexcused, a student is still responsible for all course content and assignments. Students with accepted excuses may be permitted to make up work for up to three weeks of absences during a semester or one week of a summer term, depending on the nature of the missed work. Make-up work must be completed as soon as possible after returning from an absence.

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Policy 6.1 and 6.6
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

Student Academic Dishonesty: Policy 4.1
Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism, as well as the appeal process.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:
- using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or exam;
- falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or;
- helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were one's own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
- submitting an assignment as one's own work when it is at least partly the work of another person;
- submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and/or,
- incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty
Penalties may include, but are not limited to reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, re-submission of the work, make-up exam, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university

Student Appeals
A student who wishes to appeal decisions related to academic dishonesty should follow procedures outlined in Academic Appeals by Students (6.3).
**Withheld Grades: Policy 5.5**
At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work by the deadline set by the instructor of record, not to exceed one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Military Service Activation (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

If a student has been found guilty of academic dishonesty, a grade of “WP” or “WH” may be changed to “WF” at the discretion of the faculty member. In the case of a grade change to “WF”, the course will not count towards the six-course drop limit since the student is incurring an academic penalty.

**Student Code of Conduct: Policy 10.4**
www.sfasu.edu/policies

**On-campus Resources:**

SFASU Counseling Services
www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices
3rd Floor Rusk Building
936-468-2401

SFASU Human Services Counseling Clinic
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
Human Services Room 202
936-468-1041

Crisis Resources:
Burke 24-hour crisis line 1(800) 392-8343
Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1(800) 273-TALK (8255)
Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

**Additional Information:**

**Code of Ethics for the Texas Educator:**
The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty and good moral character. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community. This chapter shall apply to educators and candidates for certification.

Please go to TAC 247.2 – Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators. This can be found at https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tab_view=4&ti=19&pt=7&ch=247&r l=Y
To complete Certification/Licensing Requirements in Texas related to public education and other professional settings, you will be required to:

1. Candidates must undergo a criminal history background check prior to clinical teaching and prior to employment as an educator. The public school campuses are responsible for completing the criminal background check. A person who is enrolled or planning to enroll in a State Board for Educator Certification-approved educator preparation program or planning to take a certification examination may request a preliminary criminal history evaluation letter regarding the person's potential ineligibility for certification due to a conviction or deferred adjudication for a felony or misdemeanor offense.

A Preliminary Criminal History Evaluation is a non-mandatory, non-binding evaluation of an individual’s self-reported criminal history. In addition, the agency obtains your name-based Texas criminal history information. The service is provided to the requestor for a non-refundable fee. The requestor will receive an evaluation letter by email from agency staff advising of potential ineligibility for educator certification. You are eligible to request a Preliminary Criminal History Evaluation if:

• You enrolled or planning to enroll in an educator preparation program or
• You are planning to take a certification exam for initial educator certification, and
• You have reason to believe that you may be ineligible for educator certification due to a conviction or deferred adjudication for a felony or misdemeanor offense.

You are not eligible for a preliminary evaluation of your criminal history if you do not have a conviction or deferred adjudication for a felony or misdemeanor offense.

In addition, you must complete the fingerprinting process when you apply for certification. Participation in the evaluation does not preclude you from submitting to a national criminal history review at the time you apply for your educator certification. Your criminal history will be reviewed and you may be subject to an investigation based on that criminal history, including any information you failed to submit for evaluation. Additional information can be found at https://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Investigations/Preliminary_Criminal_History_Evaluation-FAQs/.

2. Provide one of the following primary ID documents: passport, driver’s license, state or providence ID cards, a national ID card, or military ID card to take the TExES exams (additional information available at http://www.tx.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_Test.html. YOU must provide legal documentation to be allowed to take these mandated examinations that are related to certification/licensing requirements in Texas. If you do not have legal documentation, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.

3. Successfully complete state mandated a fingerprint background check. If you have a history of criminal activity, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.

For further information, contact the Office of Assessment and Accountability at 936-468- 1282 or edprep@sfasu.edu.