INTRODUCTION TO PILATES MAT

INSTRUCTOR: SUSAN VOLKAN
svolkan@wustl.edu  cell 314.703.4264
TTH 6pm – 7:15 pm

Course #U31 Dance 208, 2 units

DESCRIPTION:
This course offers an introduction to the Pilates Method mat repertoire, part of the method
developed by movement pioneer Joseph Pilates. The mat repertoire focuses on core
strengthening, spinal articulation and stabilization. The exercises increase strength and flexibility
and work towards correcting asymmetries and chronic weaknesses to bring the body into a
balanced, neutral alignment. Students will gain body awareness and an understanding of the
principles of Pilates including: control, breath, flowing movement, precision, centering, stability,
range of motion, and opposition. Readings will be assigned that address topics in Pilates as well
as related topics in exercise science and functional anatomy.

COURSE MATERIALS:
Mat, Optional Inner Thigh Prop
Please purchase a Pilates mat or yoga mat. Most of our exercises are performed on the floor so a
thicker Pilates mat or a doubled yoga mats will be more comfortable. Optionally, you may like to
bring an inner thigh prop such as a Pilates Magic Circle, a Pilates mini ball or an inflatable small
beach ball.

ATTIRE:
Footless dancewear or fitted athletic-wear is preferred; please avoid baggy styles that obscure
body alignment. Our exercises will be performed in bare feet (socks or studio socks with rubber
grips on the soles are acceptable but are not required).

COURSEWORK AND ASSIGNMENTS:
Class will begin with warm-up exercises designed to prepare the body for the mat repertoire.
These preparatory exercises focus on postural alignment in neutral spine, breathing technique,
and the fundamental movements that create the foundation for all Pilates exercises.

Students will then be guided through the beginning mat repertoire, including modifications that
address specific issues relating to posture, range of motion, weakness, or injury. Intermediate
and advanced exercises will be added as the class progresses.

Selections from various Pilates, movement and anatomy texts are posted under “course
documents” on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to insure that you have access to Blackboard
and your WU email inbox for Blackboard announcements.

At the beginning and end of the semester you will write a brief entrance essay addressing your
previous movement experience and your goals and expectations for the class. At the end of the
semester you will write a paragraph re-visiting those goals and expectations and exploring your
experience of the class, what you have learned, how you have applied this to your life outside of
class, and any other relevant impressions.

There will be 2 short written exams addressing terminology and concepts covered verbally in
class and in reading assignments.

There will be a practical exam at the end of the semester.
MIDTERM EVALUATION AND FINAL GRADE:
Throughout the semester, performance of exercises will be evaluated as follows:
Alignment, proper initiation/sequencing within individual exercises, fluidity, control, breathing, precision, stability, articulation, body awareness (most importantly, this includes an awareness of your own abilities and limitations, when to modify, when to move on to a more advanced variation).
Excellent effort and excellent form at individual’s appropriate level – A
Good effort and good form – B
Good effort but needing improvement – C
Sloppy, poor effort – D
Deliberate lack of effort, apparent disinterest – F

This class is available for the PASS/FAIL grade option; there is a deadline to register for this option so please take care of this as soon as possible through Webstac. Somatics Certificate students must take this class for a letter grade.

At the end of the term students will be evaluated as follows:
Individual progress and classroom participation * 20 points
Quizzes 20 points
Week 1 paragraph & exit paragraph 10 points
Practical Exam 50 points

*Potential Negative Factors – see attendance and classroom protocol policies.

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND CLASSROOM PROTOCOL:
You are allowed 2 free absences throughout the semester; I suggest you reserve them for real illness or emergency. Each absence beyond the initial two will reduce your grade by 5 points. A total of 6 absences (4 beyond your 2 free absences) will result in failure of the course. You may make up for a maximum of 3 absences by attending my Mind Body Movement class (W 5:30 – 7:30pm, Lopata House MP Room) or another U College Somatics Studies class. Keep track of absences. If you have a serious illness or injury or an unexpected major life event I will work with you to make up for absences.

Please be on your mat and ready to practice at the appointed start time. University College classes begin promptly at the scheduled time; there is no 10-minute passing period as there is for day classes. Eating is not allowed in class, water is fine. Deactivate cell phones and other devices before class. Late entrances, disruptive behaviors, texting or using devices in class will negatively affect the classroom participation portion of your grade.

INSTRUCTOR OFFICE HOURS
The instructor is available by appointment before or after class.

INSTRUCTOR’S NOTE
Certain exercises may not be appropriate for individuals with chronic physical conditions or injuries – please alert the instructor if you have such a condition or if you become injured.