Overview
This course is about the idea that human movement can be art. What we call "modern dance" is not one particular style, but a perpetual evolution (revolution) by individual artists exploring the potential for the human body to be "beautiful." In this tradition, each artist or teacher must define the theory, philosophy and look of their art work, and the technical means to do it. For me, dancing is both aesthetic and athletic. It is not only a visual thing to show others, it is also an experience I love--a rich way of being and living that is intellectual, sensual, emotional, and spiritual. I believe that dancing is not only an art, for studios and stages, but the principles of dancing are also life skills, practical and applicable to daily living. And I also believe that dancing should not only be beautiful and exciting, but also healthy, sustainable, and should develop a deeper understanding of the body and the Self as a whole. As the title suggests, this course will study and practice dancing from both theoretical and technical perspectives, cultivating the mind and body integrally as a holistic means to beautiful dancing.

The aim of this course has five primary objectives:
1. Learn and practice advanced techniques for proper coordination of movement.
2. Develop conscious skills of "presence" to actualize our intentions.
3. Explore core principles in our individual personal ways of moving.
4. Apply skills to challenging movement that strengthens the body in a way that reinforces our best coordination.
5. Strive to develop our expression and art as a whole--body, mind, awareness, skill, heart and spirit.

Course Philosophy
There is a popular notion of control expressed in the saying "mind over matter." To my thinking we would better understand the nature of physical control, as well as a better means, if we could just apply a little more mind in the matter.

"Dance," like sport, is often viewed and described in our culture as primarily a "body" or "physical" skill, usually implying that it is in some way not an activity of our intellect. With closer study we discover movement is a mode of thought. Movement skill does not automatically become good by mere repetition. In order to approach ideal movement, a person must apply their intelligence as movement. Like mathematics and good writing, moving well is an intentionally
cultivated neural skill. And because the mind is inseparably integrated in the body, conscious movement can become a mode of intelligent thought, and a means to understand fundamental aspects of our embodied human condition. What is technique? This is a question that has no specific answer because it must be continually redefined by the dancing we want to do. Every style had to invent the particular technique that trained dancers the skills to do it. And yet there is a most basic, deeper level of skill that is general, adaptable. It is the fundamental skills we use to learn new, specific ones. We will investigate technique on both these levels. We will re-visit our fundamentals, basics we acquired in early childhood, fill in missing gaps and advance them on an adult level. Then we will apply these skills to dancing techniques, styles, particular ways of moving.

Technical skill alone is not enough to say a dancer is good. How many perfect technicians have you seen who still left you bored and uninterested? But when it works, it seems to transcend the surface technique. There is a common expression of this ineffible quality we call "presence." What is presence? How we think and speak about presence has as much to do with how we approach the goal. When we say, "She has such presence" we imply that presence is a thing, like a possession one "has." Or we just speak mystically of the matter as if presence were a divine personality trait special people are gifted with, but most are not.

I propose that presence isn't a rare exceptional quality some people have, it is something we do naturally, like breathing. But to control or command it, like all skills, requires a more mindful practice of attention and intention as action. What we call presence is a quality of experiencing; it is a state of authentic curiosity for sensations such as "space," "time" and motion, and for our perpetually present relationship to the world around us. Presence need not be so mysterious or illusive, it just needs a proper frame of attention, and a way to practice.

In this course we will give these "mental" aspects of physical skill equal attention in our practice, not separate from action, but integrally applied as action.

**Practice: The Dance Collaboratory**
While your technical skill is already quite good, you are also now at a place, both as a dancer and as a person from which you can re-examine your current understanding and deepen the meaning of technique, skill, performance, and expression that distinguish the artist from the technician. In this studio, each of us is a “movement researcher.” I ask that you not only expect to be shown and told what to do and how to do it, but to explore, question, and apply basics of knowledge and technique to your own way of moving.
During this lab-time, we will employ a variety of means to facilitate this investigation. Some class time will be used to individually explore a way of working, a technical skill, or a mental skill through improvisational means. Some class time will be used to practice technical form, strengthening, anatomical alignment and mechanics. And some class time will be used to dialogue verbally, to share and compare notes from our research. As a practice, we collectively gather ideas, insights and discoveries to feed our understanding from the variety of perspectives we each bring.

**Lab Research: investigative strategies**

- **Personal Preparation Ritual** during the semester each student will create a personal way of preparing, mentally and physically, to move.
- **Group Warm-up game** a parameter or instruction to foster collective awareness, cooperation, communication through movement.
- **“The Evolution”** Daily development and practice of the set warm-up of “Quadruped,” a dance technique based on principles of the Alexander Technique and Dart Procedures, to develop clear, coordinated strength.
- **Note-keeping** brief, in-class time for recording thoughts, experiences, etc. in lab notebook.
- **Tracings** observation of instructor practicing a skill, followed by time for personal investigation of the issue demonstrated.
- **Mental “State”** a selective perceptual lens that alters the quality of your attention and awareness to improve an aspect or aspects of your technical skill.
- **Investigations** each student will identify ideas or skills they wish to learn more about or improve, and devise strategies for investigating them.
- **Performance practice phrase work**, across the floor, at center, and long choreographic sections, much the same as would occur on stage.

During the semester we will use the above methods to investigate and develop the following skills involved in dancing:

**Body: Practical Skill**
- balance
- tone
- strength
- coordination/use
- facility
- adaptability

**Mind: Presence**
- sensation
- attention
- perception
- intention

**Creativity: Investigative Discovery**
- Imagination
- Curiosity
• playfulness
• Expression: Performance
• poise
• design
• relating to others

The above outline is a list of skills involved in dancing. Some aspects are
technical, physical, anatomical, while others are more mental, philosophical, and
still others are concerned with artistry, spirit, and personal expression. This way
of working will develop and refine mental skills that precede our physical abilities.

What To Bring, What to Wear in Class
No Shoes or Socks Contemporary dance, unlike other styles, is traditionally
practiced bare foot. This gives us an ideal sensitivity of our relationship to the
ground, and also better traction and control.
Clothing should be appropriate for movement, allowing a full range of motion.
Please no Jeans or pants with metal rivets that can damage the floor. No shorts;
pants will provide you adequate protection of your skin for floor work. These
could be many variations on sweat and athletic, or yoga pants. I also highly
recommend long sleeved shirts to protect skin from scrapes.
Knee Pads are required. We will place a group order for knee pads to facilitate
the kind of movement we will be doing in this course.
Water Bottle with close-able cap is helpful to keep hydrated.
Notebooks will be used to make notes.

Attendance Policy
3 Absences
For a three unit course, our standard policy is to allow you 3 absences (excused
or otherwise) without consequence to your grade. After the third, you grade will
drop one grade per absence, (e.g. A becomes A-). It is your responsibility to
keep track of your absences and make arrangements for make-up, if needed.
(See "How to Make Up a Class" below)

Observing Class
If you feel you are not able to dance, but are able to attend class, you are also
allowed to observe class. Sitting out and observing will only count as 1/3 of a
normal absence. If you choose to observe class, you are required to write your
observations in your journal.
Be On Time
We will start moving at quarter past the hour, and end at a quarter till. This time is provided to you at both ends for changing clothes, warming up and warming down. At 12:15, I will take attendance. If you come in late you will be marked as if 1/3 absence.

Make Up Classes
If you need to miss a class, or your absences become too many, it is possible to make up a class with another instructor. This is not to be used as a "substitution" for regular class, making up a class is an option we allow as a courtesy to prevent your grade from suffering irrevocable harm.
On the positive side, visiting another class allows you an opportunity to try out another class that you may find interesting.

How to Make up a class
choose a class of an appropriate level, meeting at a time you can attend.
contact the Instructor and ask permission to visit to make up a class
when you go to the class, make a simple note on plain paper that you attended a make up class and ask the instructor to sign the note
bring the note to next class

Legend to the Attendance Record
When you look up your attendance, you will see five categories:
P = Present
A = Absent
L = Late
E = Excused Absence-- When you Make Up an absence, I will change the "A" to "E"
U = "Un-participating" -- sitting out and observing class (sorry--their categories are not changeable so I am making do :)

Grading Policy

**Attendance & In-Class Work: 60%**
This includes my evaluation of your effort and commitment to both your physical/movement work, and also participation in discussion. This is a very subjective assessment. However, I am not grading your skill level, in a relative or absolute way. I am looking for your open willingness to engage with the ideas and activities of the class with a professional work ethic, both for your own personal work, as well as participation in a group learning environment.
That said, I see learning as a natural result of willingness to be playful and open to investigating questions. Your grade is not based on what you do/don't know. it is based on your engagement with these questions. If at any time during the semester you have concerns or questions about my evaluation of your work, do not hesitate to ask.

**Dance Concert Responsive Paper: 15%**
This paper is evaluated on completion of the assignment as specified in "Assignments". papers submitted late will be reduced in grade by a half letter grade per day late.

**Journal/Journal Paper: 15%**
While I am not reading your journal, evidence that it is being kept regularly will be assessed by the quality of the Journal Paper. This paper is evaluated on completion of the assignment as specified in "Assignments." papers submitted late will be reduced in grade by a half letter grade per day late.

**Lab Reports: 10%**

Lab Reports posted in discussion forums is not graded as if there are "right" answers, but rather based on your demonstration of thoughtful engagement with the idea or activity explored. Posts must be by due date or they will not count.