

THDN-150

MODERN DANCE TECHNIQUE I/II

MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS: 11:30AM-12:45PM

TRINITY COMMONS, PERFORMANCE LAB

TC - 152

PROFESSOR DEBORAH GOFFE
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OFFICE HOURS: MW 2:00PM-3:30PM
(by appointment)

Dance as an art, as it is reconceived by each of us in our daily creative work, can claim to be radical in its flexibility, responsiveness, and transparency. Dance, I think, is a radical, lonely road. It cannot be truthful in today's world and not be confrontational. To confront may be to bore, to defy expectation, or to counter. Dance should defy and be flexible in the sense that it would celebrate our oneness in a world bent on separation of each from each; or when the world celebrates conformity and the power of the group, dance would celebrate the nonconformist, individual aloneness, and difference of each. When the world only recognizes success, dance should celebrate failure. When the artistic currency is neurosis and a general sickness, dance should celebrate goodness. Not to please would be a good motto; but rather to investigate and know and show the truth even if one finds oneself dancing on an empty plane for only the stars; this would guarantee the continuation and relevance of dance.

From "re-locating technique" by Wendell Beavers,
The Body Eclectic: Evolving Practices in Dance Training,
ed. Melanie Bales and Rebecca Netti-Fiol

In class he stressed performing techniques, phrasing, and musicality. I have seen him stop people in class and ask them, "Who are you? If you're you, don't try to dance like him or her. Dance like yourself." He told us, "Your own personal individuality is your most priceless asset. When I want seventeen dancers on stage, I want seventeen personalities." Lester didn't want to make little Lester Hortons out of us.

Jimmy Truitte on Lester Horton

COURSE OVERVIEW

Modern Dance Technique I/II is a course for beginning and intermediate dancers in which we will establish and build on students' foundational technical and aesthetic experience with the art of modern dance. By practicing in-class exercises and phrase-studies, students will refine bodily awareness and articulation, hone spatial and rhythmic clarity, develop facility in perceiving and interpreting movement, and practice moving with our dance musicians' scores. The hope is that this consistent engagement in movement practice over the course of the semester will form the basis of a sustainable and deeply engaged movement practice—one that may inform a lifetime of embodied creative process.

Throughout the semester, the following questions may provide useful points of departure as both our bodies and our intellects are brought to bear on this study of modern dance technique:

- What possibilities might the legacies of modern (and contemporary) dance invite?
- What is dance technique and what is its role?
- In what ways can the technique class function as a research practice?
- How do I reconcile my personal trajectory with those prescribed by the instructor?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To establish a foundation for embodied practice and study that can support well-being and lifelong engagement with the power of one's own body, and its capacities for expression, felt experience, and collective experience
- To progressively build bodily strength, stamina, range of motion, coordination, and connectivity throughout the semester
- To explore the relationship between one's personal goals, priorities, and trajectories and those offered by the instructor. *How can we honor both with openness, a spirit of experimentation, and discernment?*
- To assess one's progress and develop language that supports increasingly clear articulation of one's needs, emerging insights, as well as one's evolving capacities and limitations
- To play seriously and with care for self and the collective experience

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Active engagement in studio practice will comprise 70% of your grade.

For our purposes, full class participation is defined by demonstrated physical and intellectual effort, curiosity, risk taking, and a commitment to the ongoing deepening of ideas.

As dance is inherently experiential, full class participation, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are integral. In class we will give our attention primarily to movement exploration and discussion in support of the embodied experience. As a result, one's success in this course will be adversely affected by absences and tardiness. Plan to arrive early and begin preparing your mind/body for the work ahead. Late arrival disrupts the continuity of the class session and can lead to injury if one is not able to ease into the movement demands appropriately. As a result, students arriving to class more than 10 minutes late, may be asked to observe and take notes.

If you are ill, please inform me via email. If you are not well enough to engage physically (i.e. injury) but are able to responsibly attend class, much learning is still possible by observing.

Active engagement in a guided self-assessment process will comprise 24% of your grade.

While you will be guided in your exploration of new exercises, movement sequences, and concepts throughout the semester, the following self-assessment activities will help you claim your role as the most important agent of your growth and development. The self-assessment process will include the following components:

- Goal setting at the start of the semester (4%) – due Wednesday, Sept. 14
- Midterm Self-Assessment Statement and Revision of Goals (8%) – due Monday, Oct. 17
- Final Self-Assessment, Reflection and Culminating Portfolio (12%) – due Monday, Dec. 12

More details about each aspect of this process will be discussed in class throughout the semester and found on our course Moodle page as we progress over the coming weeks.

Proactive engagement in three additional learning activities will comprise 6% of your grade.

You will round out your participation in the course by completing at least three supplemental activities of your choosing. From time to time, I will inform you of movement-based performances, open rehearsals or workshops in the community that you can attend, and on which you compose short reflections in response. You may also choose to submit a reflection on written materials or videos I may offer for review outside class time. Reflections can take many forms, but should be roughly equivalent to 300-500 words if written. Feel free to reach out with any questions about creative strategies you can employ fulfilling this requirement.

A NOTE ABOUT JOURNALING

While this is not a requirement of the course, you may find that the aforementioned self-assessment process is even more effective alongside a regular journaling practice. A brief reflection can be documented in a notebook obtained specifically for this class following each class or once each week. These reflections can take any form (or combination of forms) that serves your process—documentation of exercises, feedback you've received, concepts introduced or discussed, personal discoveries, and/or drawings. These journals will not be collected, but tracking your evolution week-to-week in this way may provide useful points of reference at each self-assessment interval, or beyond this semester.

A NOTE ABOUT OPENING RITUALS

It is essential that you set your intention at the start of each class. To facilitate that intention setting, we will begin with an opening ritual designed to support our collective transition to each day's embodied investigative process. As you become more and more familiar with the sequence throughout the semester, the challenge will be to engage with increasing depth and to embody the movement more expansively. In the moment prior to the start of class, be sure to mindfully begin your own transition process. Avoid congregating in the seating area. Instead move into the play space as quickly as possible. Once there, begin reviewing material from previous classes, assess your body's status for the day, engage in gentle movement, or simply find a comfortable place to settle. Do not wait to be called to the days' work.

A NOTE ABOUT MY POSITION

As a cis-gender, queer, black woman, 1st generation american, artist and educator, I am committed to defining and activating inclusive environments of care in my teaching, scholarship, and artistic practices. The world of dance is not untouched by systems of power and privilege, and yet embodied practice *can* provide a platform for enacting our imaginations where capacities for change are seeded. Perhaps acknowledgement of individual and systemic relationships to power and privilege is one step in a process to dismantle patterns that undermine the art forms' inherent capacity to catalyze change. If we can begin to embody change in this context, might we build the vision, stamina, and choreographies necessary to ensure change in other realms?

OTHER INFORMATION & CONSIDERATIONS

NO CLASSES: Monday, October 10 12 & 14 (Trinity Days); Wednesday, November 23 (Thanksgiving)

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES: Wednesday, October 12 (Workshop with [Anton Ovchinnikov](#));
Wednesday, November 2 (Guest Artist Workshop TBD)

ATTIRE & HYGIENE: Comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement without concealing the body's form is essential. Knit fabrics are ideal. Jeans often are not. You may prefer to wear layers that can be removed as your body warms on cold days. It is also important that we are each mindful of the physical space we will share with others and are conscientious about the role personal hygiene plays in nurturing the shared experience.

CARING FOR OUR SPACE: Dance studios are sacred work spaces. They are specialized resources for dance/movement classes, rehearsals and performances. So please help maintain them. No shoes, food, drink (except water in closed containers) are allowed in these spaces. Use the dry mop regularly.

COMMUNICATION: Pertinent course information, assignments, updates and reminders will be posted to our class Moodle page, and sent to you via email from time to time. Be sure to check both Moodle and your email accounts regularly to be sure you have not missed any essential correspondence.

AUSTIN ARTS CENTER INSTAGRAM: Be sure to take full advantage of the rich resources shared by the [AAC Instagram](#). It is a good source of information about events taking place in the Departments of Theater and Dance, and Music, as well as in AAC programming more broadly.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Like many things, the need for disability accommodations and the process for arranging them may be altered by the COVID-19 changes we are experiencing and the safety protocols currently in place. Students with disabilities who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are urged to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access.

If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me by the end of week two of classes. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days' notice is required. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing SARC@trincoll.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND INTELLECTUAL (DIS)HONESTY: As stated in Trinity College's [Student Integrity Contract](#),

Our academic community can only thrive if each of us maintains the highest standards of academic integrity. Intellectual honesty is doing our own work and fully crediting the work of others if we use their ideas in our own work. Each student is responsible for knowing what constitutes intellectual honesty in every examination, quiz, paper, lab report, or academic exercise submitted for evaluation at Trinity College. Specific examples of academic dishonesty are listed in the Student Handbook. (p. 13.)

Name

MODERN DANCE TECHNIQUE I/II | TRINITY COLLEGE
F22 SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS: SETTING AND TRACKING OBJECTIVES

The following will provide a framework for your self-assessment over the course of the semester. What do you hope to gain/explore as a result of your study of modern dance this semester? What are you particularly curious about? What strengths would you like to build on/claim, and what challenges would you like to confront/address?

I. INITIAL GOALS: Due no later than Wednesday, September 14th

Initial Objectives
1.
2.
3.

II. MIDTERM ASSESSMENT: Due Monday, October 17th

The October 5th class session will be videotaped. After viewing the resulting footage, and completing the self-assessment worksheet, take a moment to revise, clarify or reaffirm any of the goals you set at the start of the semester.

Revised Goals
1.
2.
3.

III. FINAL ASSESSMENT: Preparing for the Concluding Self-Evaluation – Due Monday, December 12th

After reviewing your earlier goals, video documentation of classes, and any journal reflections, craft a statement that speaks to your growth/experience/discoveries with dance practice over the course of this past semester.

Concluding Statement