

African Dance (THDN 209-01)
Spring 2024 - Tuesday/Thursday 4:15pm-5:45pm
TC 152 (Performance Lab)

Professor: Mellissa Craig
Email: mcraig2@trincoll.edu
mellissa.craig@gmail.com
Office Hours: By appointment
Tuesday 12:45-1:45pm
Thursday 3:00-4:00pm
AAC 317
(860)818-7902

Accompanist: Asaad Jackson
stealthlion860@gmail.com
(475)283-8380

COURSE SYLLABUS (subject to change)

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

-African Proverb

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a dynamic combination of physical awareness and fitness, and rhythmic explorations of dance styles from around the world. Students will explore cultural connections and increase their awareness of geography and ethnography of Africa and the African Diaspora. Coursework will focus on physical stamina, strength, flexibility and give students exposure to African, Latin and Caribbean dance forms.

COURSE ACTIVITIES

In-class activities may involve floor work, standing center work, locomotor movement across the floor, learning movement sequences and/or creating movement material that include jumping and major level changes, working independently, with partners and/or groups, weight sharing and contact between participants. Occasional reading, reflective writing, critical discussion and feedback as well as limited video, audio, or other assignments, including attending live performances will reinforce the primary work done in the studio.

The class as a whole will participate in *Last Night*, an informal end-of-semester showing on Wednesday, May 1st, at 5:30 p.m., in the Performance Lab.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the semester, and through your own rich investigations, you will develop:

- Fluency in basic concepts and vocabulary of motion (increased flexibility, strength and agility)
- Improved sense of rhythm, musicality, spatial awareness and performance dynamics
- Execute movements/short sequences across the floor

- Proficiency in the geography of the African continent
- Understanding and responding to “The Break” and traditional African drums
- Connections between traditional movement styles to more contemporary styles of dance like Hip Hop Afrobeat and Dancehall
- Abilities in storytelling and theatrical aspects to traditional/ritual performances
- Ensemble building skills, ending in 1-2 full performance pieces
- Wider knowledge of cultural connections of movement and everyday life
- Familiarity with dance and movement styles ranging from African and Latin to Caribbean

ASSESSMENT

This is a participation-based class driven by individual and collective inquiry. Your active contribution is essential to your success. Be emboldened by one another’s discoveries. Apply yourself. Try new things. Respect one another. Ask questions.

Excellence in this course is evidenced through your punctuality; demonstrated readiness and willingness to experiment; depth, quality and curiosity in daily physical and verbal participation; growth in defined areas over the course of the term, including productive integration of individual and group notes; and thoughtful completion of any assignments showing genuine consideration of the material at hand.

Grading

Final grades for the course will be determined accordingly:

Participation 70%

Excellence in this class is evidenced by your ready, willing and full participation. This includes excellent attendance and punctuality; consistent openness to experimentation; depth, quality and curiosity in daily physical and verbal participation; demonstrated growth in defined areas, including regular integration of personal and group notes; consistent improvement in course activities and learning goals, noted above; and thoughtful, successful completion of any assignments given, including in-class prompts or outside projects.

Required Assignments 30%

Successful completion of this course involves a variety of required assignments including:

- Readings, and related short written responses
- Beginning goals statement
- Middle and end-of-term self-assessments

Course Materials

Any required readings and other course materials will be provided electronically on Moodle, or otherwise, as needed.

Office Hours

Tuesday 12:45-1:45pm

Thursday 3:00-4:00pm

AAC 317

Also available by appointment for phone or zoom meetings. Please email to schedule.

COURSE POLICIES

COVID-19 Safety protocols:

Consistent with College policy regarding regarding COVID-19 safety precautions, we remain a mask friendly campus. As such, anyone electing to where a mask should feel welcome to do so, though it is not required. This policy is subject to change.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes. Two absences will result in an overall grade reduction (i.e. an A- will be reduced to a B+). Each additional absence will result in further grade reduction. Please note: if you need to sit out to observe because you're feeling unable to dance (and not contagious), you should attend class, practice constructive observation or participate in a modified fashion. You are expected to communicate with me in a timely fashion about any injuries, illnesses or other issues that affect your ability to participate fully in class activities. I will be understanding and flexible, where appropriate, however, students should not assume missed classes or missed work can be made up. Absences for religious observance and official College activities are permitted, though it is your responsibility to communicate these to me, well in advance.

Readiness:

We will start class promptly at 4:15pm. It is good practice to arrive at 5-10 minutes prior to class beginning, in order to focus and prepare yourself.

Please note: for your own safety and to preserve continuity once class has started, students arriving more than 15 minutes late will not be allowed to participate, and will be marked tardy. These students should complete and submit a class observation form to earn partial credit for the session.

Working Safely:

Dance is a physical practice that explores a wide variety of movements and coordination with the intention of challenging and expanding our capacities. This need not result in injury, and our aim is always to be working pain-free. Having said that, please work smartly, cherish the idea of working safely in class, and keep me informed of any injuries or chronic pain you may have. Listen to your body and let me know if you are experiencing pain or discomfort, anything can be modified. If there is an emergency please contact campus safety at 860-297-2222. If you are experiencing a non-emergency situation, please go to student health services for treatment.

Attire:

Students are expected to dress appropriately for rigorous physical activity and interaction with others. A traditional lappa is typically worn by female-presenting humans in African dance. This garment will be discussed in class and limited quantities may be available to borrow. Please do not wear loose jewelry, hats, excessively baggy or oversized clothing, and please secure long hair. We will work in bare feet unless otherwise directed. Please, no chewing gum is allowed in the studio, nor any food or beverage, other than water.

Use of Devices:

Please do not use your cell phones or smart watches in class. Please turn them off and tuck them away during class.

Late Work:

Late work will receive a deduction of -10% for each day beyond its due date. Work will not be accepted more than 5 days after its due date.

Student Wellness:

It's not uncommon for students to sometimes experience challenges adapting to collegiate life, including but not limited to academic, domestic, environmental, and/or social challenges, let alone the impact of the ongoing pandemic. Please know the Counseling Center is a resource for you. They offer programs on many topics such as: career exploration, learning styles, sexual assault prevention, relationship problems, anxiety, depression, stress management, substance abuse, diversity, suicide prevention, grief and loss, and eating disorders. <https://www.trincoll.edu/counseling-wellness-center/>

Academic Integrity:

Academic honesty, as described in the Student Integrity contract, should characterize all of your work. My assumption is that each of you will adhere to the highest standard of academic honesty. Be sure you know the difference between collaboration and plagiarism. You must always acknowledge the assistance of others, either as part of your reference section or in your acknowledgement section.

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and, consistent with College Policy. If you are unfamiliar with the policy or unclear about the definition of plagiarism, read the appropriate section of the [Student Handbook](#) and come talk to me about any questions or concerns.

Statement on Inclusion and 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.

**Performance Events Sponsored by the Department of Theater and Dance
Spring 2024**

Rodgers' and Hammerstein's Cinderella – Directed by Michelle Ong-Hendrick

Thursday-Saturday, March 21-23, 7:30pm

Saturday, March 23, 3:30pm

Goodwin Theater, AAC

Senior Thesis Projects - Week I

Tuesday, March 26, 7:30pm – Cassidy Willie-Lawes

Wednesday, March 27, 7:30pm – Caroline Frederick & Lily McMahon

Various Locations

Senior Thesis Projects - Week II

Tuesday, April 2, 7:30pm – Ugne Tumonyte

Wednesday, April 3, 7:30pm – Ren Logan

Thursday, April 4, 7:30pm – Tara Iyer

Various Locations

Student Choreography Concert – Directed by Rebecca Pappas

Thursday & Friday, April 18-19, 7:30pm

Last Night

(Theater and Dance Class Sharing)

Wednesday, May 1, 5:30pm

Performance Lab, Trinity Commons

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For tickets, please call the Austin Arts Center Box Office at (860) 297-2199. The Box Office is open Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m., and prior to events. Closed Sunday.

<https://www.trincoll.edu/austin-arts-center/>

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