

While I am as interested in producing dancers as I am in producing dance, I am most interested in producing thinking, empathetic, and generous human beings. When I design syllabi and curricula, I do so to address specific questions. What is the function of this class (or dance department) in this institution? Do the dancers intend to have professional careers and if so how can I best prepare them for what they want to do using the skills and resources I have access to? How can I in one program find a way to support all students who walk in the door knowing they have different goals and needs for being present? How do I create a space that invites rigor, health and wellbeing, diversity, equity, inclusion, and knowledge pursuit whether it be somatic or cross-disciplinary? In my classes, I strive to create safe environments for young adults to grow during some of their most formative years, build solid technical foundations to support diverse body-centered creative practices, and challenge students to make connections across their studies through improvisation and composition as research.

As a modern dance teacher, I draw on my diverse dance legacy including Laban/Bartenieff, Limón, Graham, Horton, and Simonson techniques. I usually begin on the floor with developmental movement patterns to organize the body, occasionally leading active relaxation meditations, yoga, walking “scrambles,” or Gaga-inspired warm-up improvisations to address student needs and account for changing energy levels over a semester. In introductory classes, I try to cover a wide range of movements through short phrases that incorporate historical vocabulary (e.g. a Graham “sparkle”) so students can recognize them in future encounters. I emphasize musicality by choreographing non-traditional and mixed-meter phrases, particularly when I have opportunities to work with live accompanists.

My ballet pedagogy is influenced by Maggie Black’s efficient and geometric movement philosophy, having studied extensively with Zvi Gotheiner for five years as a company apprentice in New York. I am also influenced by Eric Franklin’s book *Dance Imagery for Technique and Performance* as a way to engage the body’s kinesthetic intelligence and artistry. In my introductory level ballet classes, I focus on teaching basic principles, share stories from my own adventures in ballet, and introduce students to the iconic ballets and dancers with care to include artists of color and female choreographers.

As a jazz teacher, I keep the class moving continuously through a set warm up that incorporates cardio, strengthening and stretching, teach ballet-based technical and historical movements, and create phrases to contemporary music that encourage students to have fun and let loose.

As a composition teacher, I facilitate improvisation, assign prompts for short solo and group studies, have students practice giving and receiving feedback using Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process, and help students develop their studies for final performance showcases. University composition classes, for me, provide a unique opportunity in which students can process information they receive from their other studies as well as come in contact with information from disciplines to which they might otherwise not be exposed during their time on campus.

In all my courses, students complete readings on dance history and criticism, attend live dance concerts and practice writing on dance through reflection papers, and work together create their own dances as final projects. The practice of dance reaches beyond the studio and it is a value of mine that students see that. I provide technical information that builds progressively both within the class as well as over the course of a semester. For example, I might introduce a new movement by showing how it is a combination of two movements they already know or explain how a new movement can be made easier by using a principle from the warm up.

I communicate information visually by demonstrating new movement, proprioceptively by using hands on corrections or asking students to work in pairs to practice giving each other feedback, and audibly by describing movement with historical terminology if available (e.g. lower down from relevé), simple descriptive words (e.g. stand on the ball of the foot and lower the heel to stand flat by folding the front of the ankle), and images (e.g. imagine you're compressing a foam ball with your heel as you lower down) interwoven with stories from my own training and dance history studies.

In grading, I ask that students are present and on time, commit to being engaged throughout the class, proofread their papers, and turn in all assignments complete and on time. I encourage students to speak with me privately should they have special needs with regard to visible and invisible disabilities and work hard to adapt as a teacher so they feel welcome and supported in dance spaces. I ask students to write a short introductory paper at the beginning of the semester that lets me know a bit about who they are, why they are taking the class, and whether they have any injuries or special needs of which I should be aware. At the end of the semester they write a short paper as part of their final projects in which they can reflect upon their experiences and what they got out of the course.

The dance studio is a space where students have permission to be vulnerable, to not only fail but to fall flat on their faces and to be celebrated for it. To create an environment of equity and inclusion, I conscientiously provide diverse examples of what dance is and what dancers look like, give everyone equal attention in corrections and accolades, and empower students to take ownership of and pride in their bodies. It is my hope that they come away with a greater appreciation for the art form and desire to continue both as movers, makers, collaborators, and articulate spectators.