
Ballet: A history

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THEA 166, *Ballet: A history presents a critical and historical overview of ballet as a form of ethnic dance. By ethnic dance, I mean to convey the idea that all forms of dance reflect the cultural traditions within which they developed. The course explores the aesthetic, sociological, and technical evolution of ballet from the 16th century to present day.

The course will chart the origins and development of ballet and its 20th century *diaspora* as choreographers, dancers, impresarios, and teachers moved through Europe to the African, Asian, North and South American continents. Contrary to popular belief, ballet in the 20th century did not develop into a monolithic whole. While the embodiment of ballet technique is instantly recognizable, ethnicity and race intersected with other socially and historically constructed categories — such as gender, class, and sexual orientation — to shape unique varieties of *ballet habitus* worldwide.

Student learning objectives include:

1. *Performance Foundations*. Identify and apply movement concepts to ballet technique.
2. *Histories and Theories*. Recognize and analyze ballet works within the general culture and historical period that produced them and discuss the social and political issues.
3. *Critical/Systemic Expression*. Use critical vocabularies in written, visual, performative, and/or oral forms to deconstruct and rearticulate systems in an intersectional manner that crosses genres and disciplines.
4. *Research Proficiency*. Formulate and execute independent research projects that expand your knowledge of performance and interactive arts. Identify relevant works and secondary literature and make convincing, evidence-based arguments about their output.

Outline. The course will be taught in three areas:

- Movement: Each class will begin with basic movement exercises and studies to help us understand and embody the ideas behind the dance, from ritual to social to theatrical forms;
- Discussion: The origins and evolution of ballet will be explored through readings, viewings, and written assignments;
- Lecture: Material that enhances but does not duplicate the course readings will be presented to support the formulation of personal research questions that expand our understanding of ballet as a performing art.

Meeting times. The class meets twice weekly, M/W 9:00am-12:30pm in A104/A105 studios and J101 seminar room at the Theater Arts Center.

Readings. Jennifer Homans' *Apollo's Angels: A history of ballet* is the required text and selected videos will be distributed.

Assignments. Course credit will depend upon attendance and participation (20%), plus satisfactory completion of assignments: self assessment (5%), lead discussion (15%), response paper (20%), and final project completed in three stages: proposal + bibliography (10%), oral presentation (10%), and research paper (20%).

*Syllabus subject to change

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Attendance. Class attendance is required except in the case of an excused absence communicated to the instructor by email, whenever possible in advance of the class meeting. For each unexcused absence after the first, you will be docked five (5) points from your final grade. After three (3) unexcused absences, I reserve the right to assign a failing grade. Total = 10 points

Participation. Students are expected to thoughtfully participate in all class discussions, demonstrating familiarity and critical engagement with readings and videos while offering supportive feedback to and contributing to generative dialogue with peers. Total = 10 points

Attending, not dancing. I have designed this course as a hybrid theory/practice course, whereby we engage critically with course material through analytical writing and discussion as well as creative interventions. *You are not required to have formal training as a performer or performance-maker.* If you are well enough to attend but cannot dance (due to injury or non-infectious illness), please notify me before class. You may receive participation credit by observing and submitting a description. This short observation should address what you discovered by watching the movement session.

Dress. For the movement sessions, wear comfortable clothes in which you can move freely. You may bring water to class in a plastic bottle. You may not chew gum or eat in class. Mute your cell phone.

Self-assessment. You are required to produce one (1) self-assessment of your course expectations. Self assessment (or self-appraisal, self-evaluation) plays a central role in learning. Total = 5 points.

Lead discussion. One time during this term, you will be asked to present the required reading and lead a discussion. Total = 15 points.

The goal is to prepare an overview of the reading, including a **big picture** and context of ballet during that period — such as major figures, cultural influences, important dates and milestones alongside any major socio-political events — as well as a **dancerly point of view** on the evolution of ballet technique, staging and design (lighting, costume) and/or audiences with key individuals and their contributions to choreography or dance technique. You will also prepare **one question** for the class to consider and discuss. We will decide in advance which reading and when you will present and lead the discussion.

Response paper. You will view the documentary film, *Ballerina*, and complete a short response to it (750 words, 3 double-spaced pages). A link to the video will be provided on Canvas. Total = 20 points.

Final project. Your final project asks you to assemble and analyze materials to develop a portrait of a ballet choreographer, ballet company or designer through independent research, resulting in a written analysis of performance works and an original oral presentation. By focusing on the topics and concepts covered in class, you will seek to reveal something important about this creative artist's work and socio-cultural and historical influences. *Collective projects are not an option. This project comprises the final examination.* Total = 40 points (proposal = 10 pts, presentation = 10 pts, paper = 20 pts).

For your *research paper*, choose a ballet choreographer, company or designer that interests you. Feel free to ask me for suggestions. In addition to researching written scholarship on this artist, find two performance works that capture their creative vision. Write a 6-8 page paper (1500-2000 words, double-spaced) that compares and contrasts at least two works in relation to their vision. Your paper should have a clear thesis argument, incorporate at least two outside readings, and include additional original visual or text-based research. Your *oral presentation* will creatively translate the aesthetic insights identified in your paper into a visually compelling form. Your presentation should be around 7-10 minutes.

100-95 = A (*exceptional*); 94-90 = A- (*accomplished*); 89-85 = B+ (*strong*); 84-80 = B (*very good*); 79-75 = B- (*good, above average*); 74-70 = C+ (*average, satisfactory*); 69-65 = C (*uneven, unsatisfactory*); 64-60 = C- (*poor*); 59-55 = D (*barely passing*); below 55 = F

SCHEDULE

Meeting	Topic	Assignments to be completed
Week 1 BCE to 18th Century: Origins and Beginnings		
July 29	Ritual to Renaissance	Concepts: Action, Stillness Read: Syllabus & Assignments View: <i>Pavane</i> (1550); <i>Una Stravaganza dei Medici</i> (1589)
July 31	Ballet de cour to Ballet d'action	Concepts: Traveling, Rotation Read: AA Chapters 1-2 View: <i>Ballet de la Nuit</i> (1653), <i>Atys</i> (1676), <i>Venus & Adonis</i> (1683); <i>Entrée d'Apollon</i> (1700), <i>Folies d'Espagne</i> (1700), <i>Don Juan</i> (1761) *Self Assessment due on Friday, August 2
Week 2 Early 19th Century: Rise of the Ballerina		
August 5	French Revolution to Romantic ballet	Concepts: Direction, Flexion, Extension Read: AA Chapters 3-4 View: <i>La Fille mal Gardée</i> (1789), <i>La Sylphide</i> (1832), <i>Giselle</i> (1841)
August 7	Danish and Italian styles	Concepts: Balance & Falling, Springing Read: AA Chapters 5-6 View: <i>Napoli</i> (1841), <i>Conservatoriet</i> (1849), <i>A Folk Tale</i> (1854), <i>Excelsior</i> (1881)
Week 3 Late 19th to Early 20th Century: Golden Age		
August 12	Russian Classicism	Concepts: Flow, Weight Read: AA Chapters 7 View: <i>Coppélia</i> (1870), <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> (1890), <i>Swan Lake</i> (1895) *Final Project: proposal+bibliography due
August 14	Ballets Russe	Concepts: Time, Space Read: AA Chapters 8 View: <i>Dying Swan</i> (1907), <i>Les Sylphides</i> (1909); <i>Afternoon of a Faun</i> (1912), <i>Rite of Spring</i> (1913), <i>Parade</i> (1917) *Response Paper due on Friday, August 16
Week 4 Mid-20th Century: Global Migrations		
August 19	National ballets	Read: AA Chapters 9-10 View: <i>The Red Poppy</i> (1927), <i>The Green Table</i> (1932), <i>Symphonic Variations</i> (1946), <i>Spartacus</i> (1956), <i>Red Girl's Regiment</i> (1964), <i>Monotones</i> (1965), <i>Don Quixote</i> (1988)
August 21	Neoclassical Ballet in America	Read: AA Chapters 11-12 View: <i>Apollo</i> (1928), <i>Serenade</i> (1935), <i>Four Temperaments</i> (1946), <i>Agon</i> (1957); <i>Jardin aux lilas</i> (1936), <i>Dark Elegies</i> (1937)
Week 5 Late 20th and early 21st Century Ballet		
August 26	Contemporary Ballet	View: TBD
August 28	Presentations	*Final: Oral Presentations due in class *Final: Research Paper due on Friday, August 30

IMPORTANT DATES

Add/drop/swap until August 1, 2024. Instructors do not drop students for non-attendance or non-payment. Students must drop themselves, resulting in full tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund).

INJURIES AND HEALTH ISSUES

You must inform me of any recent injury or health issues that may affect the studio component of your class work. I am happy to work with you to brainstorm ways to safely and creatively accommodate injuries or other physical limitations in this course. If you will miss two or more classes due to injury or illness, you must provide a written statement that details your plan for returning (or not) to full class participation.

LIBRARY STATEMENT

UCSC requires active input to build its library collections. The Library adds books to its stacks on the basis of purchase recommendations that can come from any member of the campus community including students. To make requests for the purchase of library materials, please visit the Library site [here](#).

REQUIRED TEXT

Homans, J. (2010). *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*. New York: Random House.

READINGS

Aalten, A. (1997). Performing the Body, Creating Culture. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 4, 197-215.

Alderson, E. (1987). Ballet as Ideology: "Giselle", Act II. *Dance Chronicle*, 10(3), 290-304.

Daly, A. (1987). The Balanchine woman. *The Drama Review: TDR*, 31(1), 8-21.

Gottschild, B. D. (1996). Stripping the Emperor: The Africanist Presence in American Concert Dance. In *Digging the Africanist presence in American performance: Dance and other contexts* (pp. 59-79). Greenwood Publishing Group.

Grau, A. (2005). When the landscape becomes flesh: An investigation into body boundaries with special reference to Tiwi dance and Western Classical Ballet, *Body & Society*, 11(4), 141-163.

Homans, J. (2013). The crisis in contemporary ballet: How emotion left dance. *The New Republic*.

Hsiao, L-L (2010). Dancing the Red Lantern: Zhang Yimou's fusion of Western Ballet and Peking Opera. *Southeast Review of Asian Studies*, 32, 129-136.

Kealiinohomoku, J. (1970). An anthropologist looks at ballet as a form of ethnic dance. *Impulse*, 20, 24-33.

Mallarmé, S.(1897/1993). Ballets. *Performing Arts Journal*, 5(1), 106-110. Translated by Evelyn Gould.

Ness, S. (1997). Originality in the Postcolony: Choreographing the Neoethnic Body of Philippine Ballet. *Cultural Anthropology*, 12(1), 64-108.

Tome, L. (2007). Giselle in a Cuban accent. In M. Kant (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet* (pp. 263-271). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Yangwen, Z. (2007). From Swan Lake to Red Girl's Regiment: Ballet's sinicisation. In M. Kant (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Ballet* (pp. 256-262). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

POLICIES OF PERFORMANCE, PLAY & DESIGN DEPARTMENT

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All members of the UCSC community benefit from an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. You are expected to present your own work and acknowledge the work of others in order to preserve the integrity of scholarship.

Academic integrity includes:

- Following exam rules
- Using only permitted materials during an exam
- Viewing exam materials only when permitted by your instructor
- Keeping what you know about an exam to yourself
- Incorporating proper citation of all sources of information
- Submitting your own original work

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Disclosing exam content during or after you have taken an exam
- Accessing exam materials without permission
- Copying/purchasing any material from another student, or from another source, that is submitted for grading as your own
- Plagiarism, including use of Internet material without proper citation
- Using cell phones or other electronics to obtain outside information during an exam without explicit permission from the instructor
- Submitting your own work in one class that was completed for another class (self-plagiarism) without prior permission from the instructor.
- Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student's transcript. For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students and instructors should refer to the [Academic Misconduct page](#) at the [Division of Undergraduate Education](#).

ACCESSIBILITY

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please affiliate with the DRC. I encourage all students to benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu. For students already affiliated, make sure that you have requested Academic Access Letters, where you intend to use accommodations. You can also request to meet privately with me during my office hours or by appointment, as soon as possible. I would like us to discuss how we can implement your accommodations in this course to ensure your access and full engagement in this course.

- **DRC online:** <https://drc.ucsc.edu>
- **DRC Frequently Asked Questions for prospective and current DRC Students, faculty and Staff, and parents:** <https://drc.ucsc.edu/resources-and-forms/faqs.html>
- **Frequently Asked Questions regarding Service and Support animals:** <https://drc.ucsc.edu/services-and-accommodations/sa-overview/other-accommodations/service-animals-faqs.html>
- **UC Santa Cruz Service/Support Animal Policy:** <https://policy.ucsc.edu/policies/student-affairs/dss-0003.html>

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

UC Santa Cruz welcomes diversity of religious beliefs and practices, recognizing the contributions differing experiences and viewpoints can bring to the community. There may be times when an academic requirement conflicts with religious observances and practices. If that happens, students may request reasonable accommodation for religious practices. The instructor will review the situation in an effort to

provide a reasonable accommodation without penalty. You should first discuss the conflict and your requested accommodation with your instructor early in the term. You or your instructor may also seek assistance from the [Dean of Students office](#).

ALL-GENDER RESTROOMS

UC Santa Cruz is committed to the well-being of all students and cares about all students feeling safe and welcome, regardless of their gender identity, expression, and/or embodiment. The [Lionel Cantú Queer Center](#) has worked with students and campus staff to create more safe and accessible restrooms for transgender and genderqueer students, staff, faculty, alumni, and UCSC visitors. A [complete list of all-gender restrooms](#) on campus was compiled and is maintained by the Cantú Queer Center.

TITLE IX/CARE ADVISORY

UC Santa Cruz is committed to providing a safe learning environment that is free of all forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which are explicitly prohibited under Title IX. If you have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, know that you are not alone. The Title IX Office, the Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE) office, and Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) are resources for support.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. This reporting responsibility also applies to course TAs and tutors (as well to all UCSC employees who are not designated as “confidential” employees, which is a special designation granted to counselors and CARE advocates). Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.

Confidential resources are available through [CARE](#). Confidentiality means CARE advocates will not share any information with Title IX, the police, parents, or anyone else without explicit permission. CARE advocates are trained to support you in understanding your rights and options, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. You can contact CARE at (831) 502-2273 or care@ucsc.edu.

In addition to CARE, these resources are available to you:

- If you need help figuring out what resources you or someone else might need, visit the [Sexual Violence Prevention & Response \(SAFE\) website](#), which provides information and resources for different situations.
- [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) can provide confidential counseling support. Call them at (831) 459-2628.
- You can also report gender discrimination and sexual harassment and violence directly to the University's [Title IX Office](#), by calling (831) 459-2462 or by using their [online reporting tool](#).
- Reports to law enforcement can be made to the UC Police Department, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.
- For emergencies, call 911.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

In our in-class and online discussions and dialogues, we will have the opportunity to explore challenging, high-stakes issues and increase our understanding of different perspectives. Our conversations may not always be easy. We sometimes will make mistakes in our speaking and our listening. Sometimes we will need patience or courage or imagination or any number of qualities in combination to engage our texts, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. We will always need respect for others. Thus, an important aim of our classroom interactions will be for us to increase our facility with difficult conversations that arise inside issues of social justice, politics, economics, morality, religion, and other issues where reasonable people often hold diverse perspectives. This effort will ultimately deepen our understanding

and allow us to make the most of being in a community with people of many backgrounds, experiences, and positions.

REPORT AN INCIDENT OF HATE OR BIAS

The University of California, Santa Cruz is committed to maintaining an objective, civil, diverse and supportive community, free of coercion, bias, hate, intimidation, dehumanization or exploitation. The Hate/Bias Response Team is a group of administrators who support and guide students seeking assistance in determining how to handle a bias incident involving another student, a staff member, or a faculty member. To report an incident of hate or bias, please use the form: [Hate/Bias Report Form](#).

GENERAL CONDUCT

In this class we abide by the **UCSC Principles of Community**, so please familiarize yourself with these: <https://www.ucsc.edu/about/principles-community.html>.

STUDENT SERVICES

Counseling and Psychological Services. Many students at UCSC face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Student Success and Engagement Hub

The Division of Student Success provides campus-wide coordination and leadership for student success programs and activities across departments, divisions, the colleges, and administrative units.

Tutoring and Learning Support

At Learning Support Services (LSS), undergraduate students build a strong foundation for success and cultivate a sense of belonging in our Community of Learners. LSS partners with faculty and staff to advance educational equity by designing inclusive learning environments in Modified Supplemental Instruction, Small Group Tutoring, and Writing Support. When students fully engage in our programs, they gain transformative experiences that empower them at the university and beyond.

Slug Support Program

College can be a challenging time for students and during times of stress it is not always easy to find the help you need. Slug Support can give help with everything from basic needs (housing, food, or financial insecurity) to getting the technology you need during remote instruction.

To get started with SLUG Support, please contact the Dean of Students Office at 831-459-4446 or you may send us an email at deanofstudents@ucsc.edu.

Slug Help/Technology

The ITS Support Center is your single point of contact for all issues, problems or questions related to technology services and computing at UC Santa Cruz. To get technological help, simply email help@ucsc.edu.

On-Campus Emergency Contacts

For all other help and support, including the health center and emergency services, Click here to go to UCSC's Emergency Services page. Always dial 9-1-1 in the case of an emergency.

MATURE COURSE CONTENT

In university courses you may be assigned images, films or other material that could contain difficult ideas, uncomfortable language, or graphic depictions of sex or violence. You will be asked to treat these

portrayals critically, to consider what is being expressed by the maker, or to examine the potential social impact, and to evaluate the works in a given context. Instructors are always happy to speak with you about the course content and/or your work, and might direct you to CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) at 831-459-2628 or the Disability Resource Center (drc@ucsc.edu, 831-459-2089) should you need additional support in order to participate and do your best.

GRADE DISPUTES

If you have questions about the grading of your work, please make arrangements to meet with your teaching assistant (TA) if the course has one. If the course does not have a TA, or if your questions are not resolved, please see the course instructor during office hours. If the matter still remains unresolved, you will be advised on options.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty. Acts of academic misconduct during the course, including plagiarism, can and usually do result in failure of the course, at the sole discretion of the instructor of record. Your case will be reported to the College Provost as per the Academic Integrity guidelines found on the web at: https://www.ue.ucsc.edu/academic_misconduct

STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING SURVEYS (SETs) (FORMERLY ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS/OCEs)

The Theater Arts Department collects feedback from students at the end of each course in the form of Student Experience of Teaching Surveys (SETs). You will receive an email when the evaluation/survey is available. The email will provide information about the evaluation as well as a link to it online. When you receive the email, please click the link, log in, and complete the evaluation. Student submissions are anonymous and confidential. Instructors cannot identify which submissions belong to which students and will only be able to review the data collected after all grades have been submitted. Please give serious thought to your comments. This survey will become part of the instructor's personnel file to be reviewed by colleagues and administration when considering the instructor's future teaching assignments and promotions. Your comments will be available by the instructor only after grading your work and may be used to improve future offerings of the course.

LAPTOP COMPUTERS AND MOBILE DEVICES:

Laptops can be a useful tool in the service of teaching and learning when used productively and respectfully. A few common sense rules:

1. Always set up your laptop before the beginning of class. Setting up the computer and booting it up can take a few minutes depending on what applications are set to open at startup. Turn off all other mobile devices before lecture begins.
2. Disable sound.
3. During lecture and classroom discussion, you should not be connected to network resources. Being online invites many distractions - web surfing, email, chats, etc. Chatting or emailing during class is no more acceptable than talking on a cell phone during class time. Additionally, your networked screens are distracting to those sitting near and behind you.

If you are found to be doing anything other than note-taking (or sanctioned network activity) you will be asked to leave the class immediately and will be marked as absent for that day. Your instructor reserves the right to further limit laptop use in their classes. For example, you may be asked to close the computer during screenings or be asked to sit in a certain area of the room if you are actively using your laptop.