

I believe that postsecondary dance education should allow for multiple career and learning outcomes within a collective educational experience; that dance should be studied in a way that highlights its comprehensive existence; that students should learn to critically think, reflect on experiences, and enhance other life skills through creatively engaging with dance; and that a complete dance education is one in which students develop abilities for successfully entering and changing the larger field of dance. Therefore, exploration and contextualization, with a prioritization on promoting equity, inclusion, and diversity, form the basis of my dance teaching. As a dance educator, I value the importance of individual experiences, cultural and contextual relevance, collaboration, embodiment, reflection, and critical thinking as means to create meaningful and empowering learning experiences. My teaching integrates the physical with the intellectual and brings students' attention to cultural diversity and social justice in each class I teach.

I create communal learning activities that recognize students as individuals. I design classroom experiences where students situate their personal perspectives in relationship to larger topics. These experiences act as springboards for developing personal yet integrated comprehension of new material. For example, in my First Year Creative Practices course students discover their individual preferences as movers and citizens while examining where these tendencies come from and how they are interrelated. Although students are dancing together, they develop a distinct awareness of improvisation that is connected to their specific experiences as dancers as well as to their individual communities. Connecting individual experiences to a broader understanding provides a method for creative empowerment.

All dance forms reflect the culture and communities in which they developed and are practiced. Isolating the study of dance from larger society provides an incomplete picture. In my classes, I connect the academic study of dance to the larger field and society. In my How Dance Matters class, students consider the cultural construction of dance forms in relationship to their historical development, along with assumptions about race, class, and gender while advancing their technique and artistry. I strive to provide students with a holistic understanding of dance in each course.

Collaboration provides rich opportunities for creativity and in-depth understanding. As an educator, I aim to create an environment that is open and trusting so that students are comfortable questioning each other, themselves, and me. I am most effective as a teacher when I help students cultivate abilities to take responsibility for their own learning. Small discussions or collaborations help link new material with ideas and movements already acquired. Working with partners to assist in the learning of new movement concepts allows students to articulate what is physically happening to someone else thereby promoting a cognitive understanding. Collaboration in the classroom provides a more comprehensive involvement with material and empowers students as learners.

The intelligence of the moving body is central to dance, which is why my teaching stems from a somatic perspective. I view the incorporation of somatic practices as a method of critical inquiry into the moving self. In technique classes I utilize somatic pedagogical practices, primarily drawn from Ideokinesis, to encourage students to embody intellectual and intuitive knowledge of movement, to promote ownership of their dancing, and to provide a framework for comprehending embodiment. Somatic practices provide inroads to embodiment and are therefore essential to dance education.

The abilities to engage in reflective practice and to think critically are central to dance learning. Reflection requires a person to consider what has worked or could be improved, how he or she learns, and how things interface within a given experience as a jumping off point for new questions and areas for exploration. Critical thinking requires a person to contextualize a given situation, evaluate possible outcomes, and then articulate informed viewpoints. Developing critical and reflective thinking skills are invaluable in educating a generation of articulate dancer-citizens as well as the creative, intellectual, and physical growth of students. For this reason, critical pedagogy, reflection, and creativity are central components of all of my classes, including my Graduate Teaching Praxis course. Instead of focusing on how to “correctly” teach established movement vocabularies, I encourage emerging dance educators to create learning situations where students can develop critical thinking skills and the ability to reflect through creatively engaging with dance. The importance of critical and reflective thinking within all areas of dance cannot be understated.

Teaching dance is a journey of constant discovery. By continuously exploring and contextualizing new topics and frameworks, I am consistently reengaging in my own and my students’ growth as dancers. As a dance educator in academia, I am aware of the privilege and responsibilities of my position. I look at each teaching opportunity as a chance to learn more about society, dance, my students, and myself. Although I am an accomplished educator, I look towards each new experience as an opportunity to broaden my understanding of effective dance teaching.