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Teaching and Mentorship Philosophy

Dance education is vital as it bridges the institutional disconnect between the abstract, theoretical content of academia and the felt wisdom of embodied knowledge. I believe this type of learning occurs in an environment that: affirms students for who they are and what they already have while encouraging self-awareness and growth; offers accessible challenges with clear expectations and appropriate feedback; provides multiple modalities for engaging with material.

I prioritize student engagement, offering practices that cultivate self-awareness and encourage a practice of challenging preconceived notions while holding space for individual lived experiences. To honor the nuance of class material I share multiple perspectives, methods, and modes of analysis, welcoming debate and encouraging students to synthesize information in a way that connects course content to their lives outside of the classroom. For instance, in my Dance and Pop Culture course students are introduced to both the televised/competitive and social/cultural contexts of salsa dance. This acknowledges how commercialization has broadened salsa's reach and recognition, but also critiques how that process has extracted and distorted salsa from its original framing as a rich and complex embodiment of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Black American rhythms. Allowing for multiple perspectives gives students the chance to disagree with me and each other while remaining grounded in a sense of curiosity rather than judgment.

As a teacher and mentor I prioritize the humanity in both students and myself. I communicate transparently with students and make clear that I am learning and re-learning along with them. In this way I hold myself accountable to what and how I am teaching, creating a space in which students are invited to do the same – to show up with a sense of both self-respect and self-accountability. I am honest about what I don't know and where there are gaps between my lived experiences and the content being taught. Guest instructors are often utilized to provide students with broader perspectives. Creative, scholarly, and testimonial research from individuals with varied lived experiences are highlighted to honor the lineages and complexities of class material.

I believe that fostering intentional relationships with students leads to a more honest and interactive learning experience. To do this I make it a point to meet with students individually as the first assignment in the semester, listening to their needs, experiences, goals, and anything else they feel pertinent to their success. In this way, students are affirmed as individuals beyond their role as students and simultaneously have a chance to interact with me outside of the formality of the classroom. Honoring the histories that students come into the classroom with creates a foundation from which we can practice vulnerability and humbly learn from each other throughout the entirety of the course.

I believe that students are most successful when offered accessible challenges with clear expectations and ample feedback. Syllabi are prepared with great attention to detail, informing students of all due dates and expectations at the start of the year. Assignments are given intentionally, scaffolding work requirements that connect to one another and prepare students for in-class learning as well as final projects and papers. Whether formally through reflection assignments and submitted drafts, or informally through open check-ins during class time, students have multiple opportunities to assess their own growth and engagement. For example, in my Contemporary course the culminating assessment is to present original choreography (the specifics of this assessment vary in accordance with class level). Throughout the semester students have smaller creative assignments that build their compositional and performance skills and offer opportunities for peer and instructor feedback. In this way we both, students and facilitator, work together to create a container that emphasizes consistent and reciprocal communication and ensures student success.

While providing clear expectations I also value giving students the flexibility to approach class with agency and choice. Course material is offered through various modalities including articles, podcasts, books, and documentaries. I provide structure and form yet emphasize student exploration and curiosity within it, encouraging students to reflect on how they can be both fully themselves and fully present to the material.

In both lecture and movement courses, embodiment of course content is a primary teaching strategy. While class material is communicated through spoken and written word, embodiment of concepts is crucial as it allows for deeper integration of information. Movement classes are often based in a durational practice of moving, during which students are given prompts and questions to both think about and enact simultaneously. In lecture courses movement days are built into the course schedule so students have the opportunity to feel and embody the concepts that have been lectured on previously.

My teaching and mentorship philosophy honors both individual and collective well-being. I use dance as a tool for greater self-awareness, using both critical thinking and embodied research as avenues for self-discovery and relationship building. Equal opportunities are offered for students to individually reflect on course material and engage in conversation and collaboration with peers. A dual awareness and use of internal and external processing is both encouraged and provided through in-class group activities, small group check-ins, and opportunities for open dialogue.

I believe that dance is for everybody and every body; that it is a medium through which we experience and interpret concepts, experiences, and relationships. My goal is to provide a space where students feel challenged but capable; challenged to think in new ways that counter preconceived notions, but capable in their own abilities to be successful. It is important to me that students be responsible for their own learning without being coerced or guilted into it. I

value teaching as a space to engage in both radical compassion *and* accountability, supporting students by providing strategies for success and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. I work intentionally to disrupt a classroom culture of shame by valuing each individual and what they offer, while simultaneously encouraging a practice of awareness as to how they exist in relationship to each other and the community past, present, and future.