

UF School of Theater and Dance

DAA 2341-114U/1143 Contemporary African & African Diasporic Dance Practices 1

I. COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: DAA 2331 WEST AFRICAN DANCE

Semester & Year: Spring 2024

Meeting Days and Times: MW 3:00p to 4:55p

Building and Room: G-6 Studio

II. INSTRUCTOR:

Name: Christa J. Sylla

Email: syllac@ufl.edu

Phone: 904-422-8754 (text preferable)

Office Hours: N/A

III. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is an immersion into performance as a way of knowing, understanding, and experiencing culture, emphasizing cultural traditions, community outreach and diversity. The class works through artistic process, practice, performance, and related activities, using dance, theatre, and music work rooted in West African tradition and contemporary West African aesthetics. The focus of the class will be the traditional dance and music. Prerequisites are audition and consent of the instructor. Class may be repeated with a change of content up to a maximum of 6 credits.

IV. OBJECTIVES

- To cross the boundaries of music, dance, theatre, and culture in the creation of theatrical work exploring cultural traditions.
- To broaden your understanding of the social significance of performance in today's society through involvement in community outreach.
- To strive for an ever-growing proficiency in the repertory presented, emphasizing professionalism and performance.
- To search for an internal discipline, motivating you to challenge your limits, both physical and psychological, and to motivate others to do the same.
- To open yourself to creating a community of artists and audience members dedicated to cultural sharing.

V. REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

Hot Feet and Social Change: African Dance and Diaspora Communities (Available on Amazon)

VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES: Expectations:

Student will

- Attend classes regularly, be on time and ready to work for the entire class period.
- Maintain a professional working attitude.
- Participate in all in class activities, engaging fully both mentally and physically.
- Strive to improve individual progress by demonstrating increased strength, flexibility and an increased awareness of body alignment, timing and spatial pathways.
- Observe dance class etiquette (cell phone use, dress code, lateness policy etc...)
- Strive to apply given corrections and concepts to movement.

Assignments:

Writing Assignments:

There are four response papers throughout the semester based on the assigned reading. Response papers should be a minimum of one page long, single spaced. In the first paragraph, the student will introduce and summarize the main points of the assigned reading. In the second paragraph, the student will identify key elements which stood out to them. The third paragraph is reflective: students will describe how parts of the reading relates to their personal life through observation and/or experience.

Dance Concert Attendance Assignment:

Attend at least two dance concerts this semester. You may choose two out of the following: BFA Showcase, Agbedidi, Faculty Concert or any dance performance presented at the University Performing Arts Center. Attentive Observation: as you watch the performance, pay close attention to approaches, cultural contexts and artistic choices brought about in the work and compare it to your experience in class. The objective is to understand the intricacies and complexities in art making. Avoid making judgment. (Please see SOTD Calendar of Events.) **Submit a response paper for ONE of the concerts as the final assignment. Submit photo proof (ticket stub, program, of yourself on location) of the second concert.**

Performance Assignments: N/A

Exams: N/A

Presentations: N/A

Attendance:

For Studio Courses

For classes that meet two times a week:

- students can take 2 absences with no documentation with no penalty.
- If the third absence is unexcused, it will result in 5% deduction from the final grade.
- Excused or unexcused, on the third absence, a meeting is required with the instructor and/or area faculty to assess the student's continued participation in the course.
- If the fourth absence and all subsequent absences are unexcused, each will result in an additional 5% deduction from the final grade.
- Requirements / opportunities to make up missed material for unexcused absences is up to the instructor's discretion
- Due to the participatory nature of the course that includes in-class collaboration along with partner and ensemble work, 2 unexcused absences may result in automatic failure of the course.

Tardy Policy: You are late after roll has been taken/class has begun.

- Points will be deducted for being late or leaving early for any reason.
- There will be a 5 minute grace period.
- 3 tardies for regular class meetings equal 1 unexcused absence.

Make-up Policy

- Excused absences (those that can be documented) may be made-up in the following manner:
 - Non-Majors: Approved Performance Event/Written Assignment
 - <http://www.shcc.ufl.edu/excuse.shtml> (Infirmary)
 - <http://dso.ufl.edu/> (Dean of Students)
 - If unable to dance, you may 'actively' observe one time for full credit.
 - You will complete an observation paper due at the end of class.

Requirements / opportunities to make up missed material for unexcused absences is up to the instructor's discretion

Injuries are special cases. If an injury occurs see/contact me immediately regarding absences, make-ups or possible withdrawal from the class.

Late assignments: Unless otherwise indicated, all written assignments are due by 11:59 pm on the date listed on the syllabus. An essay received after the due date is late and will result in a reduction of grade.

All evaluations are due in class on the dates listed. Late assignments are not accepted after seven days past the due date.

Studio Rules of Conduct:

In effort to keep our dance space a peaceful, safe and clean environment for our students we ask that you observe the following:

- No gum- this is also for safety reasons since we don't want dancers choking.
- No talking, food or quick pick-me-ups during class. However, you may keep water bottles inside the studio for hydration provided they have caps to prevent spills.
- Turn off all cell phones before entering the studio. Please make this a habit. All phone calls must take place outside of the studio and NEVER during class time. If you have an emergency situation you should inform the instructor prior to the start of class. Ringing cell phones, texting etc. are disruptive to classroom activity. Please be considerate.

Note: To help organize accommodations, students should inform the instructor by the end of the second week of classes of religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance this semester. Any absence from class for the following reasons must be supported by official acceptable documentation to avoid a grade penalty: illness (doctor's note must be on official letterhead with address and phone number, noting the date and time of visit and diagnosis verifying that an absence from class is warranted and when the return to class activity is expected, doctor name and signature), serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate, court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena).

VII. COURSE SCHEDULE AND TOPIC OUTLINE:

Class schedule is subject to modification, but not without prior notification. Please note class material is sequential and comprehensive. Please take time to review movement sequences before and after class.

Week One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction• Building a set Warm Up I for first half of semester (a set warm up is a sequence of physical exercises that will prepare students to execute West African dance)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Going across the floor (will help students apply movement practice abilities through space. During this phase students will learn a new movement phrase per class) ● The following areas are the proposed goals during the Warm Up and Across the Floor phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● building stamina ● articulation of spine ● developing movement retention ● understanding culture and customs ● understanding musicality ● isolating movement ● After movement experience, students will learn West African rhythms through drumming. ● <i>Kassa</i> is the traditional dance students will learn in the first half of the semester.
Week Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Warm Up I ● Across the Floor ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Kassa</i>
Week Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Warm Up I ● Across the Floor ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Kassa</i>
Week Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building Warm Up I ● Across the Floor ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Kassa</i> ● Reading Assignment I: pp. 56 -71 on Embodying Community in West African Dance Class

<p>Week Five</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm Up I (by now, students should know all the warm up material and will execute it efficiently) ● Across the Floor ● Prepare official movement phrase for Evaluation I. ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Kassa</i> ● Response paper from Reading Assignment I due Monday, Feb. 5 11:59 pm
<p>Week Six</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm Up I (by now, students should know all the warm up material and will execute it efficiently) ● Across the Floor ● Review Movement Phrase for Evaluation I ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Kassa</i> ● Reading Assignment II: pp. 84 -101 on The “Gospel” Of Memory
<p>Week Seven</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm Up I (by now, students should know all the warm up material and will execute it efficiently) ● Across the Floor ● Review Movement Phrase for Evaluation 1 ● Peer-Review of Movement Phrase (working with partners) ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Kassa</i> ● Response paper from Reading Assignment II due Monday, Feb. 19 11:59 pm
<p>Week Eight</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluation I- In-class performance ● This is the midpoint in-class assessment. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the material presented in the first half of the

	<p>semester. The following rubrics are used for assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o - Retention: students remember movement phrase and can perform it in its entirety. o – Movement Quality: students clearly design space with movement and execute movement with sophistication and nuance. o – Musicality: students demonstrate clear understanding of rhythm and execute movement in time; students accurately recognize and respond to “the break.” o – Energy: students reproduce an appropriate level of energy when executing movement.
Week Nine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building a set Warm Up II for second half of semester ● Going across the floor (will help students apply movement practice abilities through space. During this phase students will learn a new movement phrase per class. (Please see Week One for goals of Warmup and Across the Floor) ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Yankadi/Makru</i> are the traditional dances students will learn in the second half of the semester. ● Reading Assignment III: pp. 205-224 on Embodying Rhythm: Improvisation as Agency in African Dance
Week Ten	Spring Break
Week Eleven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building a set Warm Up II ● Going across the floor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Yankadi/Makru</i> ● Response paper from Reading Assignment III due Wednesday, March 20 11:59pm
Week Twelve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building a set Warm Up II ● Going across the floor ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Yankadi/Makru</i> ● Reading Assignment IV: pp. 21-34 on Conjuring the African Dream in America through Dance
Week Thirteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm Up II (by now, students should know all the warm up material and will execute it efficiently) ● Across the Floor ● Prepare Official Movement Phrase for Evaluation II ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Yankadi/Makru</i> ● Response paper from Reading Assignment IV due Monday, April 1, 11:59 pm ●
Week Fourteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Warm Up II ● Across the Floor ● Review Movement Phrase for Evaluation II ● Peer-Review of Movement Phrase (working with partners) ● West African rhythms through drumming ● <i>Yankadi/Makru</i>
Week Fifteen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evaluation II – In class performance ● This is the final in-class assessment. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the material presented in

	<p>the second half of the semester. The following rubrics are used for assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o - Retention: students remember movement phrase and can perform it in its entirety. o – Movement Quality: students clearly design space with movement and execute movement with sophistication and nuance. o – Musicality: students demonstrate clear understanding of rhythm and execute movement in time. students accurately recognize and respond to the “break.” ● – Energy: students reproduce appropriate level of energy when executing movement. ● Mock “Dununba Party”
Week Sixteen	<p>Finals Week No regular class.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Response paper from dance event due Monday, May 1 11:59 pm.

VIII. GRADING CRITERIA:

Final Course Grade:

Your final grade is determined by your performance on a number of different tasks:

Evaluation 1(Retention, Movement Quality, Musicality, Effort)	30%
Evaluation 2 (Retention, Movement Quality, Musicality, Effort)	30%
Dance Concert Attendance	10%
Participation (active engagement in the class experience)	10%
Assignments	20%
TOTAL	100%

Letter grades translate to percentages as follows:

Grades

95 – 100	A
90 – 94	A-
87 – 89	B+
84 – 86	B
80 – 83	B-
77 – 79	C+
74 – 76	C
70 – 73	C-
65 – 69	D+
60 – 64	D
59 and below	F

Semester Calendar

TBA

University Policies

1. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.
2. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean's Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

