



**MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE**

MFA DANCE, STUDENT HANDBOOK

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN DANCE

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our MFA in Dance students. We have assembled a world-class faculty with whom you will study, both face to face and online, over the next two years. It is our intention to make this course of study as informative, engaging, refreshing, and stimulating as possible. This Handbook has been assembled to orient and guide you as you begin this exciting journey. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about this or any part of your MFA course of study. We are thrilled to be on this journey with you!

Beth McPherson, MFA Dance Program Director

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OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this program are:

1. Provide an opportunity for artists to examine and enhance their artistic skills with an eye toward developing an articulated creative research practice
2. Prepare leaders in the field who will contribute to shaping the future of dance by engaging in the ongoing theoretical discussions surrounding the field
3. Encourage students to become conversant in new digital media technologies and their impact on dance as an art form and discipline in higher education
4. Nurture pedagogic ingenuity by encouraging mid-career artists to deeply examine and develop their teaching practice
5. Foster students' development of their own areas of interest and specialization to create a unique voice in the dance field

ADMISSIONS

Interested students should first submit an application to the Montclair State University Graduate School. See guidelines for graduate school application here:

<https://www.montclair.edu/graduate/how-to-apply/>. Admission to the MFA in Dance program is by interview and portfolio review to be conducted by the Program Director and other members of the Dance Program faculty. Prospective students will be invited to an interview that will be conducted via video conferencing.

Applicants are required to submit the following materials for review:

- Transcripts – one from each college attended. Please note that an Undergraduate degree is a prerequisite for acceptance.
- Two letters of recommendation that speak to your contribution to the field

- A portfolio including a resume and evidence of creative work (personal performance and/or choreography). Please submit these as video links.
- A statement of artistic purpose of 1 – 2 pages which should describe your creative interests and goals as well as how you believe that an MFA in Dance will facilitate your artistic progress.

Only candidates with at least five years of professional experience in dance and who have earned a bachelor's degree will be considered. Admission decisions will be announced following the application deadline.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial Aid

The Office of Student Financial aid can provide assistance in financing your college education. Financial aid is comprised of various forms of scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. Financial aid comes from federal, state and institutional sources. By applying for financial aid, you may reduce the costs of your college education making it an affordable reality.

Detailed information regarding financial assistance can be found on the MSU website at <http://www.montclair.edu/financial-aid/>

Teaching Opportunity

We offer the opportunity to apply to teach a section of the non-major online course Dance Appreciation (3 credits). Those selected to teach a section of the Dance Appreciation course will use the syllabus and outline that has been created for the course but will tweak the deadlines and other minor information. Currently the rate to teach one 3- credit course for adjuncts is \$4200.

CURRICULUM AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

FIRST YEAR

Summer Semester (in person)

DNCE500: Special Topics: Contemporary Dance Practices (3 credits)

DNCE501: Improvisation (3 credits)

DNCE502: Creative Practices I (3 credits)

DNCE520: Dance Technology (3 credits)

Total: 12 credits

Fall Semester (online)

DNCE509: Special Projects (3 credits)

DNCE510: Performance Perspectives (3 credits)

DNCE511: Research, Writing, and Publication (3 credits)

Total: 9 credits

Spring Semester (online)

DNCE509: Special Projects (3 credits)
DNCE503: Creative Practices II (3 credits)
DNCE521: Application of Digital Media (3 credits)
Total: 9 credits

SECOND YEAR

Summer Semester (in person)

DNCE500: Special Topics: Contemporary Dance Practices (3 credits)
DNCE513: Danceaturgy: The Performer as Spectator (3 credits)
DNCE531: Laban Movement Analysis and Applications (3 credits)
DNCE533: Functional Anatomy (3 credits)
Total: 12 credits

Fall Semester (online)

DNCE509: Special Projects (3 credits)
DNCE512: Dance and the Arts in the 20th Century (3 credits)
DNCE530: Survey of Pedagogical Perspectives (3 credits)
Total: 9 credits

Spring Semester (online)

DNCE532: Business of Academia (3 credits)
DNCE698: Thesis Project (6 credits)
Total: 9 credits

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Complete 60 semester hours including the following 6 requirement(s):

Artistic Practices

DNCE500 Special Topics: Contemporary Dance Practices (3 credit studio)
This technique course presents students with approaches in the modern and postmodern dance vernacular, developing in-depth understanding of contemporary dance techniques and practices. Offered each summer by alternating instructors, this class is led by innovative dance artists in the field of contemporary movement. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits.

DNCE501 Improvisation (3 credit studio)

In this class, students will engage with various approaches to improvisatory movement to further artistic practice, develop kinesthetic sensitivity and spontaneity, and both deepen and broaden personal movement capabilities with an eye towards teaching improvisation skills.

DNCE502 Creative Practices I (3 credit lab/studio)

In this workshop, led by a renowned choreographer, students will create and present works-in-progress, dialogue about current creative practice challenges and strategies, and reflect upon the relevance of art to the world of ideas through assigned readings and viewings. Critical reflection and provocative conversations will enable students to better understand themselves as active players in the cultural landscape, capable of challenging social norms and dominant attitudes.

DNCE503 Creative Practices II (3 credit lab/studio)

Building on the foundations of Creative Practices I, Creative Practices II is designed to facilitate the student's ability to develop a substantial choreographic work, culminating in a public performance (site-specific, studio showing, theater, shared program). Prerequisites: DNCE 502.

Theory And Research

DNCE510 Performance Perspectives (3 credit online seminar)

In this online course, students will observe dance performances in person and through digital and online platforms to discern new trends, philosophies, and directions in the dance field. Reflection on the student's personal performance perspective with respect to what they are seeing in the field will be encouraged and fostered in online discussion groups facilitated by a faculty member. Students will also read and evaluate dance criticism related to the performances they are viewing.

DNCE511 Research, Writing, and Publication (3 credit online seminar)

This online course will engage students in the process of research and the creation of a written body of work. Through various writing assignments (for example reviews, narratives, grants, and research-based essays) as well as revisions of that work, students will gain experience and confidence in presenting their knowledge in written form.

DNCE512 Dance and the Arts in the 20th Century (3 credit online seminar)

Embracing dramatic similarities, surprising disjunctions, and formal innovations in poetry, music, painting and sculpture, this course will be an immersive experience through the trajectory of dance within the context of the literary, visual and performing arts, spanning from pre-World War I early Modernism to the turn of the new millennium.

DNCE513 Danceaturgy: The Performer as Spectator (3 credit seminar)

In this workshop/seminar course, students will bear witness to self and others as well as self with others, finding the words to objectify the processes informing her/his singular performance, as well as describing those sharing the stage. Guided out-of-body prompts in intentional over-thinking will result in short- and long-form writing, in class and outside. These pieces, critiqued around the table, will ensure that students emerge from the course with refreshed spirits of kinesthetic insight and empathy.

Technology

DNCE520 Dance Technology (3 credit lab/seminar)

Through this course, students will gain a broad understanding of the use of visual and audio technology in live performance, dance film, and digital media. This course will develop students' practical skills in technology through hands-on creative experiments, as well as provide an overview of historical and current uses of technology in the field.

DNCE521 Application of Digital Media (3 credit online seminar)

In this online course, students will expand on skills developed in DNCE 520 to apply their technological knowledge to the production of a creative work that utilizes digital media to further artistic aims. Prerequisites: DNCE 520.

Pedagogy

DNCE530 Survey of Pedagogical Perspectives (3 credit online seminar)

This online course will provide students with experiential activities leading to greater knowledge of the art of teaching dance. Students will observe master teachers, and then through online discussion groups and written analysis, compare teaching strategies and the content of classes with a goal towards developing and strengthening their own teaching.

DNCE531 Laban Movement Analysis and its Applications (3 credit studio/seminar)

In this course, students will learn the rudiments of Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) and strategies to apply it to the teaching of dance technique, improvisation, and choreography. Widely used and respected as an aid to teaching dance technique, improvisation and choreography, LMA is a method and language for describing, visualizing, interpreting and documenting all varieties of human movement. Created by Rudolph Von Laban, it enables the observer/ teacher/practitioner to analyze every movement with regard to Body, Effort, Space, and Shape.

DNCE532 Business of Academia (3 credit online seminar)

This course offers a preparatory tool kit for working in education that covers the spectrum from getting the job to succeeding and advancing, including: job search and application; interview skills; syllabi and course preparation; curriculum and program development; advising; expectations beyond the classroom; remaining current while teaching; collegiality; and the host of details that attend the teaching professional of today.

DNCE533 Functional Anatomy (3 credit lecture)

This course will provide students with core knowledge of bones, joints, and muscles; body orientation terminology; biomechanics; and an anatomical basis for lifelong learning within the discipline. This course will include information on teaching from an anatomically safe viewpoint, emphasizing injury risk evaluation, exercise/combination selection, and skill progression that supports execution of the desired aesthetic while minimizing injury risk.

Thesis

Complete:

DNCE698 Thesis Project (6 credit project with online check-ins)

In this capstone course, students will create a significant work that can manifest in the format most in keeping with the background, goals, and future objectives of the student. Examples of acceptable formats are: choreographic work, dance on film, or other project with supporting written documentation. The thesis will be completed during the final spring semester, remotely. The thesis project must be a performative project with written component. The project will need to be documented and made available for viewing by the thesis committee. Here is a link to the guide for the thesis from the Graduate School:

<https://www.montclair.edu/media/montclairedu/graduateschoolthe/pdfs/Thesis-Procedural-Manual.pdf>

Specific guidelines for Dance are listed in the next section.

General Elective

Complete three times for 9 semester hours.

DNCE 509 Special Projects (3 credit project with online check-ins)

Students will have the opportunity to add or deepen specific areas of expertise by the selection of courses of study unique to their own interests. Examples include: Butoh, Laban Movement Analysis, Somatic Practice, Body-Mind Centering, Community Building, Dance for Special Populations, Technology in Dance, and Dance Science.

THESIS GUIDELINES

Description of DNCE698: Thesis Project

This 6 credit thesis will be the culmination of the student's work in the MFA program, reflecting the depth of study and demonstrating a distinctive voice. The thesis project builds on the coursework taken in the MFA, with particular connection to the areas studied in the Special Projects courses. The thesis project will present a *synthesis* of the student's studies and new knowledge, not a compilation of previous work. It should demonstrate critical thinking and a clear direction that will take the students forward on their research journey post-graduation.

Students are supported through the thesis process by a sponsor and two readers, who will give final approval and grading of all work completed. Students will work with sponsors individually to determine deadlines, requirements, and expectations for the thesis work.

The culminating thesis has two parts:

1. A large-scale performative/creative project that is the main thesis project

2. A written support paper that provides context and analysis of the creative project

Both parts will be submitted digitally to the MFA Dance Coordinator and to The Graduate School where it will be archived and accessible to other scholars.

Performative/Creative Project Guidelines:

The student's thesis research will result in a substantial performative/creative work that is presented to the public. While guidelines might vary depending on the endeavor, it is expected that a live work would be at least 20 minutes in length, and a dance film would be least 12 minutes in length. Exact requirements will be determined with the sponsor.

The performative project should have a public presentation of some kind. The student will document the presentation in a manner that best captures the event and will make that documentation available through Canvas to the thesis sponsor and readers by the due date.

If a collaboration is to be undertaken for the performative portion of the thesis, it must be clear that the MFA in Dance student is the architect of the project and is taking the lead role in terms of research, direction and execution of the project.

Support Paper Guidelines:

The written portion of the thesis will be 5000-7000 words in length and will document the research, including a Bibliography. This support paper will document the performative/creative project and will include:

- Description of student's initial interest in the project
- Research into the project (which could incorporate a literary review, interviews, classes and other performative experiences)
- Context for the importance of the project
- A critical analysis of the work itself
- A concluding statement about how this project might initiate a future research agenda.

The paper should have an introduction, review of the literature and creative works of other artists, main body, conclusion, works cited page, bibliography and an appendix (if needed). Video, pictures, and other support imagery may be included, but do not go towards the required word count.

For the Dance Division, use MLA as a style guide. See the guidelines for the font and style in the Graduate School Procedure and Guidelines for the Master's Thesis:

(<http://www.montclair.edu/media/montclairedu/graduateschoolthe/pdfs/Thesis-Procedural-Manual---September-2017.pdf>). The paper and video documentation will be submitted digitally and must conform to the guidelines found in the Guidelines for Master's Thesis as stated above.

Deadlines:

The thesis must be completed and submitted (both performative project and paper) in late April (exact date determined each year) in order to be placed on the May Graduation List. (This requires an earlier deadline for the performance and the submission of the paper to the sponsor and readers so there is time for discussion, editing, and revision prior to the final submission date). If your project is not received in The Graduate Office on time you will receive an "S" (Satisfactory which indicates that the project is in process). To be eligible for the August 2018 graduation, you will have until early August (exact date to be determined each year) to submit your completed project and paper. If you do not complete your project by the August deadline, you will need to register and pay for DNCE699 (a 1 credit extension) for each fall and spring semester until the thesis is complete.

ACADEMIC RULES AND PROCEDURES

- Students are expected to complete the program in the order in which it is designed and as part of a cohort.
- Every effort should be made to complete assignments on time. This is an intensive program, and falling behind can make it difficult to continue progress towards graduation.
- Faculty estimate that the Fall and Spring semesters will require approximately 8-10 hours of homework per week. Make sure to plan accordingly for this time commitment.
- Plagiarism is defined as the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person. Any use of another's work must be documented, whether using direct quotes or paraphrasing. See University Academic Dishonesty Policy:
<https://www.montclair.edu/policies/academic/policies/academic-dishonesty-policy/>
- See also The Graduate Schools online guide:
<https://www.montclair.edu/graduate/current-students/>

CAMPUS MAP

A detailed campus can be found on the Montclair State University website or by using this link:
<http://www.montclair.edu/campus-map/>

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

To promote the use of public transportation and reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles driven to campus, MSU and NJ Transit have partnered to offer full-time undergraduate and graduate students a 25% discount on a rail, bus, or light rail monthly pass when they enroll online through NJ TRANSIT's Quik-Tik program.

Buses – MSU's shuttle fleet runs on low sulfur diesel fuel. In addition to MSU's shuttle fleet, fine bus lines currently operate on campus – four from NJ Transit and one private carrier.

Trains – There are two train stations adjacent to MSU's campus – Montclair State University station at the north end and Montclair Heights station at the south end.

On campus parking – Everyone who parks on campus needs to register their vehicle and obtain a parking permit. The only exceptions are for those who will park only in metered spaces in Lot 19, pay the hourly rate in the Red Hawk Garage, or pay the daily rate in the NJ Transit Garage. You can register your vehicle and get your permit online.

Detailed information regarding on-campus parking may be found on the Montclair State University website or by using this link: <http://www.montclair.edu/facilities/logistic-support/parking-services/>

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

In case of emergency, dial 5222 (MSU Campus Police).

First aid kits are mounted to the wall in each studio. Purell dispensers are in hallways.

Ice is available in the freezer in the Dance Office (LI 2203).

In case of acute injury ice should be applied immediately and the Campus Police (X5222) should be called. The campus police then contact the health center who arrive with an ambulance. After assessing the situation, the student may be taken to a local emergency room for appropriate treatment.

HOUSING

On-campus housing is available upon request. Please contact the Office of Residence Life directly at 973-655-5188 or via email at reslife@mail.montclair.edu. Residence Life staff is available to answer questions weekdays from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

However, it is strongly suggested that you will be more satisfied with housing that you find for yourself off campus. Students in the past have found satisfactory options through Air B and B.

COMPUTERS/TECHNOLOGY

Incoming students are required to have sufficient computer skills to use web browsers and word processing programs, along with the ability to watch and upload videos online. Many online courses will be taught using *Canvas*, which is the University's Learning Management System. The Office of Information Technology offers both face-to-face and online training classes for assistance with using *Canvas*.

The "A Student's Guide to Information Technology" guide is available online to all new and existing students. This guide provides students with pertinent information regarding email accounts, lab hours, printing and *Canvas*.

<https://www.montclair.edu/media/montclairedu/oit/helpdesk/Student-Guide-2018.pdf>

The following guide titled "Student Guide: Becoming a Successful Online Learner" may also be useful: <http://tti.montclair.edu/studentonline/>.

For questions regarding technology (including using *Canvas* and options for training sessions), please contact the University Help Desk at <http://www.montclair.edu/oit/contact-us/>.

CONTACT LIST

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The Theatre and Dance Office is located in Life Hall 0335.

The Dance Office is located in Life Hall 2203.

Beth McPherson's office is Life Hall 2217A.