

**The University of Texas at El Paso**  
**Department of Theatre and Dance**  
**Syllabus - Fall 2023**

**Course Information:**

DANC 4390 Dance Seminars

(CRN 11951)

Term: Fall 2023

Delivery Method: In-person

Meeting Day and Time: T,TH - 3:00pm - 4:20pm

Location: Fox Fine Arts Center - Drama D180

**Instructor Information**

**Professor:** Neri Torres, Assistant Professor of Instruction

Written Communication: fntorres@utep.edu and Blackboard

Phone Number: (915)417-7997

Office Location: Fox Fine Arts, Art A452

Office Hours:

- Face-to-Face: Mondays, 2:00pm -3:00pm (By appointment only)
- Virtual: Fridays, 4:00pm -5:00 pm (By appointment only) through Zoom  
Meeting ID: 872 8643 6396 Code: tsha39c8  
<https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/87286436396?pwd=WUtTTmlrTkcxYjcreDI4bWkxcDI4Gdz09>

###

*Do what you love. Love what you do. Take less. Give more. Never quit. Never follow. Be passionate. Be bold. Be honest. Respect people. Respect the environment. Always bring out the best in your family and friends. Change is the only constant. Fear is an illusion. Attitude is everything. - Sonnie Trotter*

**Course Description:**

DANC 4390 is the culminating senior seminar devoted to organizing and combining knowledge and skills gained through undergraduate course work and experience as it applies to dance career readiness and professional development. The course promotes the flourishing of the student as a dance professional capable of fostering a personal vision while cultivating relations and sustaining a life in the field. Particular emphasis will be put onto the student's senior capstone preparatory process.

Dance Seminar also articulates as a critical journey of self-discovery of those visions, aspirations, and goals that shape the student's professional trajectory and intentions. To fully experience such exploration, students are required to be present in class, participate actively and collaboratively, engage with the assigned materials, keep up with assignments, and show the


necessary work ethics. A variety of professionals in the field of dance will support this journey through conversations, mentoring, and professional tips.

The course is articulated in four modules: (1) Mindset, (2) Dance Careers, (3) Fostering a Life in Dance, (4) Portfolio.

The students will progressively develop a professional portfolio to be presented in a final personal website project, able to highlight the student’s professional expertise, aspirations, and career plans.

### Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

<u>Student Learning Objective</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Integrate practical and theoretical dance experiences and knowledges into a professionally fecund synthesis	Clearly articulate a professional philosophy, professional aspirations, and career plans. Integrate research and analytical skills which support student’s ideas and choices based on appropriate analytical frameworks and contextualization of the models shaped in the field.  Critical Thinking Skills
Produce a professional portfolio able to communicate one’s own dance philosophy while engaging with current conversations and issues in the dance field and in its professions	Design a specialized career plan able to integrate knowledges across fields and various life realms. Assess one’s own positionality within the dance field
Acquire and practice communication skills for a variety of professional dance settings	Clearly articulate a professional philosophy, professional aspirations, and career plans
Practicing and enhancing methods to effectively work collaboratively while fostering a shared ethics rooted in justice and equity	Evaluate the social, economic, and political context of each career choice in the larger dance field  Problem Solving and

### Course Requirements

- Mandatory attendance, completion of all assigned materials and assignments, active participation in class and deep engagement with all the material and in all activities
- Collaborative contribution and peer collegiality in conversations, decision-making discussions, and feedback sessions
- Completion of a shareable professional portfolio and final website, which will include: CV, bio, videos and photos, a variety of short statements (vision, mission, pedagogy, etc.), a plan for career development and advancement
- Clear research trajectory and tangible materials to document the student's capstone project

### Class materials to purchase and bring to class

- A resistant, paper notebook (which will become your class "Journal of Radical Permission") ***Always bring this journal to class (it can also work as your regular class notebook)***
- Pens and pencils (colors encouraged)
- Tickets for mandatory performances

(All readings and other assigned materials are free and uploaded on Blackboard)

### Assignments and Grading

#### Grading

- *Your "Journal of Radical Permission" (30 = 2 x 15)*

Weekly entries (total of 15), at least 2 handwritten pages each. Prompts are posted on Blackboard (Course Tasks) and on the Coursemap. All journal entries need to be written by Sunday of each week.

I will collect the journals during the Finals Week presentations (then you can collect them back from the Dept. Main Office, FFA Level 3). Notice that I might ask to read specific entries throughout the semester to check-in with you. Please, let me know if you want to keep specific entries confidential by covering your writing with post-its.

*You're more than welcome to use the same journal as your class notebook, and to add journal entries or expand on the existing prompts as much as you want to.*

- *In-class participation and work ethics (20)*

You are expected to come to class prepared to ask questions to our guests, so before meeting them, write down some questions aimed at fostering your professionalization. You are also expected to discuss about the mandatory performances and events and connect them to our course content.

- *Midterm: Vision Board (10)*

A vision board is a visual representation of your goals. Specific instructions and guidelines will be given in class and on BB. **Due on Blackboard on Sunday, October 15 by 11.59 pm (Sunday of week 8)**

- *10 Portfolio- and Website-Building Assignments (20 = 2 x 10)*
- *Final Website Project (20)*

Specific instructions and guidelines will be given in class and on BB. Structure, content, design coherence

- Digital website: must be published online (in private, viewable by others by sharing a link) by **Sunday, December 3, 11.59 pm**. Share the link
- Final presentation in class: **Tuesday, December 5, in class (Finals week)**

### **Grading Scale**

A = 90 +      B = 80–89      C = 70–79      D = 65–69      F = < 65

### **Technology Requirements**

Some course content is delivered via the Internet through the Blackboard learning management system. Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Windows Media Player, QuickTime, and Java. Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course.

If you do not have word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office 365](#) and follow the instructions.

**Course Resources:** Where you can go for assistance

### **Technology Resources**

Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus. You can contact Help Desk via email, [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu), by phone 747-5257.

**IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

## Academic Resources

- UTEP Library: Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

## Individual Resources

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.
- UTEP Title IX (Anti-Sexual Harassment and Anti-Sexual Violence) Office: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix>
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- Need more dance in your life? Join the UTEP student organization DESERT DANCE. E-mail [desertdanceutep@gmail.com](mailto:desertdanceutep@gmail.com)

## Course Communication: How we will stay in contact with each other

Here are the ways we can keep the communication channels open:

- Office Hours: I will have office hours for your questions and comments about the course. My office hours are in-person, however, you can request a virtual meeting and I will send you a Zoom link. Please see the days and times at the top of this syllabus.
- Email: UTEP e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your e-mail within 24 hours of receipt. When e-mailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student e-mail account and please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number.
- Announcements: Check the Blackboard announcements frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

## Attendance Policy

- In a course that meets twice a week, a student is allowed a maximum of 4 absences in an entire semester, 2 of which require no justification and result in no penalty. A student can use these absences based on personal necessity. The 3rd and 4th absences will result in a drop of ½ a letter grade each in the student's overall grade. At the 5<sup>th</sup> absence, regardless of the student's current course standing or grade the student will automatically fail the course.

Exceptions:

- - In the event of international bridge closures, exceptions may be made and make-up work may be assigned.
- - In case of an injury or extended illness, it is the student's responsibility to meet with his or her instructor to discuss possible solutions for course continuation or to consider dropping the class.

- - In the event of highly unusual or extenuating circumstances, a student may petition the course instructor and department chair for permission to continue in a course.
- - In case of injury, a student who is able to be present in the studio may observe class and complete alternative and equivalent assignments to be negotiated with the instructor.

### **Illness Precautions**

Please stay home if you have symptoms of a communicable illness. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations.

### **Course Drop Policy**

According to UTEP Catalog, “At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of “W” will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.” See the Attendance policy above. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email.

Because every student’s circumstance is unique, we encourage students to be as open and honest as possible when encountering unexpected challenges (job schedule change, family issues, etc, as well as to **communicate in advance** potential issues that could affect their commitment to class.

E-mail me as soon as an issue comes up, this is the only way you can get help and possible accommodations while minimizing the impact on your academic progress. While every situation will be assessed by the instructor, the more a student is responsible to communicate in a clear and effective way, the easier it will be to find a positive solution.

### **Deadlines and late work**

Be aware of all assignment’s deadlines. No late work will be accepted if the reason is not considered excusable.

- Late work will be deducted a full letter grade or more (depending of the time elapsed from submission) with the only exception of a proven and documented emergency,

### **Make-up Work**

Make-up work will be given only in the case of a documented emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and may be graded with penalty points. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to me—in advance if at all possible—and explain with proper documentation why you missed a given course requirement. Once a deadline has been established for make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

### **Alternative Means of Submitting Work in Case of Technical Issues**

I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. I also suggest you save all your work (answers to discussion points, quizzes, exams, and essays) in a separate Word document as a backup. This way, you will have evidence that you completed the work and will

not lose credit. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through Blackboard, please contact the UTEP Help Desk. You can email me your backup document as a last resort.

### **Incomplete Grade Policy**

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.

### **Accommodations Policy**

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

### **Scholastic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

### **Guidance on Artificial Intelligence**

The use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Summaries/reflections from required article

Students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

### **Plagiarism Detecting Software**

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

### **Mandatory Performances and Events**

- *postdata (or what I wish I said)*
- *Metamorphoses* [has a large dance component]

All info here: <https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/theatre-dance/about/prices.html>

**If you cannot afford a ticket, there are ushering opportunities for departmental performances.** Students can sign up to usher all departmental productions via the Theatre and Dance Audience Development office. Ushering opportunities open one month before opening night. Ushers will see the production for free and must commit to the full time they are needed. If an usher doesn't show up or leaves early, they will not receive credit for seeing the show and will not be allowed to usher for future events.

- Usher sign-up link  
for *Posdata*: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16eJ50efcSvtKPWQRCYJSirc8bhp0rlhHP6n85OT1RwQ/edit?usp=sharing>
- Usher sign-up link  
for *Metamorphoses*: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HZ4I5HdTVbrMJ0y9ddGDWwc4UdNGZC2SUXzXtKg7NWk/edit?usp=sharing>

Also keep your emails checked for **Tickets in Kind** opportunities. Tickets in Kind are free tickets for students, donated by audience members and faculty.

Also consider this Fall musical of the Dinner Theatre, *Damn Yankees*. Note that the Dinner Theatre operates separately from our dept theatres and is not under Audience Development. For ushering opportunities, students should contact [udt@utep.edu](mailto:udt@utep.edu). Student price vary.

**If you cannot pay for a ticket, there are ushering opportunities for theatre performances.** Students can sign up to usher all of our productions. They need to come to the audience development office (lobby of the Wise Theatre in Fox Fine Arts level 2) in person to sign up.

For events hosted by the Dinner Theater check: <https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/udt/index.html>. Check out the Departmental Events for more information and tickets: <https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/theatre-dance/events/index.html>

### **Policy on Sensitive Subject Matter**

The performing arts have a power to stir strong emotions, or possibly touch on subjects you might not feel comfortable seeing on stage. If you have concerns about viewing or discussing specific subjects that may trigger specific emotions, please see me as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations. As I will respect your individual's rights to choose what performances and topics you can engage with, I expect all our discussions and reflections to be conducted in a respectful and professional matter.



## COURSEMAP

### MODULE 1: MINDSET

#### Week 1

##### Tuesday

Syllabus and coursemap, Collective crafting of class work ethics and shared rules, Intro to Module 1: Mindset, in-class activities

##### Thursday

Connecting body and intention, in-class activities

##### Networking

**\*Assignment 1:** Connect with at least 1 artist in the community, get their contact info, and prepare a follow-up email to the artist but send it to Neri only! Send it with the subject "Connecting e-mail to artist by [your own name] (**due on Sunday, 09/10 by 11.59 pm**)

**\*Journaling check-in:** The next 15 weeks will be a chance to practice more deeply finding your life trajectory/ies. In this journal entry, reflect upon the following questions: First, *Where in my body do I feel my resistance to change? What am I resisting?* Then, *Where in my body can I feel the desire to run, dance, flow? What am I running from or toward? What is the source of my flow?*

#### Week 2

##### Tuesday

On Art and Fear, in-class activities  
Discussion on follow-up emails with artist.

##### Thursday

**Watch before class:** "Beyond Winning" TEDxUCLA talk by Janet O'Shea, <https://youtu.be/MWrRkzluCPo> (less than 9 mins)

Beyond the failing vs. succeeding mindset, in class activities

**\*Assignment 2:** On your journal, craft a 1-page manifesto with principles, ideas, practices, etc. (organized in bullet points) to have a happy career in dance. Make sure to bring the journal to class on Tuesday. Due Sunday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> by midnight

**\*Journaling check-in:** First, *What is one time I remember being satisfied? (It doesn't have to be dance related! It can be a small example or a very large one). How did my body know?* Then, *What does give me satisfaction in my dance practice?*

### MODULE 2: DANCE CAREERS

Keywords to keep in mind: Inter/Intra/Multi/Transdisciplinarity, in-class activities

## Week 3 – Teaching & Performing

Tuesday

**Read before class:** Takiyah Nur Amin, *Forward to Dance Pedagogy for a Diverse World: Culturally Relevant Teaching in Theory, Research and Practice* pp 1-5

Teaching opportunities with a degree in dance

What's a Teaching *Philosophy*?

*Conversation with Kiri Avelar, Deputy School Director for Ballet Hispanico, multidisciplinary artist and scholar. Personal website: <https://www.kiriavelar.com/> Sept. 12*

(visit site before class)

Thursday

*Conversation with Dr. Andrea Woods- Director of Duke University Dance Program. Personal Website: [www.souloworks.com](http://www.souloworks.com) Sept. 14*

**Listen before class:**

- Ep. 8 Dance Auditions from the podcast *A Dancer's Guide* (22 min)
- Ep. 21 Audition them! You're in control from the podcast *A Dancer's Mindset* (8 min)

A specific aspect of professional performance practice about which we don't talk enough: auditioning (formats, possibilities, as a performer, as a choreographer, etc.)

(visit site before class)

**\*Assignment 3: Craft a Teaching Philosophy.** Critically using the proposed examples as a guide, craft a 1-page, double-spaced, font Times New Roman 12 Teaching Philosophy, in which you really foster your own peculiar teaching values and goals. You're warmly encouraged to read each others' documents and offer feedback, highlighting what works well and what can be modified and further thought-through.

**\*Journaling check-in:** *What are some of the strategies, thoughts, or rituals I practice when I need to focus for an important task or when I feel overwhelmed by worry and I want to 'relocate' myself in a more positive emotional, mental, and physical space? How do my shoulders feel right now processing this task? And my belly? What about my toes?*

## Week 4 - Choreographing & Dramaturging

Tuesday

**Explore before class:**

*Conversation with Gabriela Estrada, Founding Director of Dance Collage, dance educator, artist, and producer dedicated to promoting the development of art, tradition, and culture, <https://www.gabriela-estrada.com/> (visit site before class)*

Thursday

**Read before class:** The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research (2-page pdf)

**On Culturally Specific Dance**

**\*Journaling check-in:**

## Week 5 – Dance Entrepreneurship & Dance Documentation

Tuesday

*Conversation with Dr. Kathryn Austin, nationally recognized dance educator in the private sector. <https://www.dancecdpa.com/director> (visit site before class)*

Thursday

Notes on archiving and documenting

\*Journaling check-in:

\*Assignment 4: Craft an Artist Statement

## **Week 6 – Dance Writing & Community Engaged Dance Practices**

Tuesday

*Conversation with performing arts critic Dr. Celeste Fraser Landeros* Interdisciplinary artist, writer, journalist and innovative leader, professor of Barry University

On Community-Based Dance

Thursday

*Conversation and workshop for capstone prep with former UTEP alumnus currently enrolled in an MFA program.*

Theme of the upcoming Spring festival Personhood.

\*Journaling check-in:

## **Week 7 – Dance Scholarship & Dance in Graduate School**

Tuesday

Midterm Assignment explanation: Vision Board

\*Assignment 5: List of Graduate School Dance programs

Thursday

Applying for MA, MFAs, and PhD in Dance

\*Journaling check-in:

Work on your Midterm

## **MODULE 3: FOSTERING A LIFE IN DANCE**

## **Week 8 – Promoting your Vision**

Tuesday

Debunking misconceptions of branding (see Ch. 3 of *The Artist's Compass*)

Thursday

**Midterm:** Complete your Vision Board

(Thursday, Melissa out of town at Dance Studies Association conference)

\*Journaling check-in:

## **Week 9 – Financial Literacy**

Tuesday

Ch. 6 *The Artist's Compass*; pp. 59-67 *A Life in Dance*

Thursday

\*Journaling check-in:

\*Assignment 6: Budget

## **Week 10 – Networking**

Tuesday

Networks of support and professional networks

Ch. 4 and 5 *The Artist's Compass*

Thursday

*Conversation with Elena Holly Klaver, ambientalist, activist, musician & radio producer*

Email four professionals in the field inquiring about Summer intensives, auditions, opportunities

\*Journaling check-in:

\*Assignment 7: Contact and outreach list, motivating the reason/realm

## **MODULE 4: PORTFOLIO**

### **Week 11 – CV and Bio**

What is a portfolio?

How to write a bio.

CV vs resumé; rules and tips.

\*Journaling check-in:

\*Assignment 8: Craft your CV

### **Week 12 – Website and Digital Presence**

Tuesday

**Bring your laptop in class**

How to build a website to manifest your vision as a dance professional: workshop

Thursday

In-class activity: Mapping and structuring your website

\*Journaling check-in:

\*Assignment 9: build the structure of your website

### **Week 13**

Tuesday

In-class activity: Bring your computer, and continue to build your website (bio, CV, professional photos, videos, etc.)

Thursday

CAPSTONE

\*Journaling check-in:

### **Week 14**

Tuesday

CAPSTONE

(Thursday: Thanksgiving Holiday)

\*Journaling check-in:

\*Assignment 10: on capstone

### **Week 15**

Tuesday: LAST CLASS

\*Journaling check-in:

**Finals Week**

Capstone and future professional projects presentations with classmates and advising committee