

Choreography 1 (DANC 360)

University of South Carolina – Department of Theatre and Dance

Faculty: Marc Kenison

Term: Fall 2025,

Credit Hours: 3

Class Time & Location: Monday/Wednesday, 9:40–11:10am, 707 Catawba

Contact & Office Hours: By appointment | mkenison@mailbox.sc.edu If you need to reach me, email is the best method.

The Choreography 1 Course Syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Description

Choreography 1 is a second-level, face-to-face studio course designed to deepen students' creative voice, choreographic craft, and understanding of the dance-making process. Building on the foundation of Improvisation and Composition, students will generate and refine original solo and group works through structured in-class exploration, composition assignments, presentations, and supportive peer critique.

Course content includes the Viewpoints, tools for developing movement material, translating inspiration and content into choreography, working with music, exploring dance structures, and composing group forms. Instructional methods include guided exercises, movement labs, discussion, and feedback. Learning happens through exploring, making, sharing, and reflecting.

Prerequisite: Improvisation and Composition

Official course description from Undergraduate Academic Bulletin: An intermediate level choreography and composition course designed to create and adapt work in different dance forms in modern, jazz, and ballet

Course Objectives

- In Choreography 1, students will:
- Discuss and explore content and its translation into dance making.
- Review and create using the Viewpoints.
- Learn new ways to build, develop, and manipulate movement.
- Expand movement vocabulary while developing personal aesthetic and creative agency.
- Explore various ways of working with music.
- Use visual imagery and other sources of inspiration to generate movement.
- Explore compositional forms (e.g., AB, ABA, rondo, accumulation, puzzle, hero's journey, recipe).

- Work with group forms and formations.
- Practice collaborative creative processes and direct one another in group compositions.
- Give and receive respectful, constructive feedback.
- Lead the group in a movement warm-up.

Expectations and Class Culture

This is a participatory studio course that requires your attendance, active engagement, and focus. Each class will include physical and creative exploration, and missed classes cannot be fully replicated. Successful completion depends on your active participation in class explorations, composition creation, and discussions.

Whenever possible, I will provide time during class for you to work on and develop compositions. However, some assignments may require additional rehearsal and creative work outside of class.

I believe critique should inspire creativity, not stifle it. Feedback will follow a specific structure designed to ensure it is constructive and supportive, fostering a respectful and encouraging environment where everyone can learn, grow, and thrive.

Being present, punctual, and ready to work is essential. Consistent attendance, active participation, and timely completion of assignments will contribute to a strong assessment and final grade.

I strive to create a classroom environment that is both a safe space—where all students feel welcome to engage with the material—and a brave space, where you are encouraged to take risks and explore creatively.

Class Structure

Whenever possible, classes will follow this general structure:

- Check-in / Meditation
- Warm-up
- Composition exploration, creation, and/or presentation
- Circle up and share observations / discussion

Each class will likely include a 5-minute break. Whenever possible, please use this time for water or restroom needs to avoid disruptions during class.

Assignments

Assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Completion of assignments is essential to your success in *Choreography 1*. Each task is designed to support your development as a dance maker. Assignments will be created and presented in class, with time provided for rehearsal and feedback whenever possible. However, some outside rehearsal may be required.

CONTENT / CRAFT

- **Viewpoints / Content / Movement Development Study** – Build complexity into and develop your content and Viewpoints phrase using multiple choreographic manipulation and crafting tools.
- **Postcard Study** – Create a short study inspired by the visual content of a selected image.

WORKING WITH MUSIC

- **Origin Phrase to Music** – Create an “origin phrase” in response to a selected piece of music.
- **Origin Phrase to New Music** – Re-set your “origin phrase” to a new piece of music and reimagine it choreographically.
- **Origin Phrase Development** – Create duets or trios to music, using your Origin phrase content

FORM

- **Structure Study** – Choose a compositional form and use it to develop a movement study.

GROUP FORM

- **Group Exploration and Direction** – Compose and direct dancers in movement that explores spatial design and group form.

ONGOING / WRITTEN PRACTICE

- **Journal** – Maintain a movement journal to record notes, observations, peer feedback, ideas, and choreography. Bring it to every class.
- **Final Class Reflection** – Content TBD

Grading Breakdown (Total: 130 points)

There is a point value for each of the following:

- Attendance, Engagement & Participation – 30 points
- Group Discussion & Peer Feedback – 30 points
- Viewpoints / Content / Movement Development Study – 8 points
- Postcard Study – 8 Points

- Origin Phrase to Music – 8 points
- Origin Phrase to New Music – 8 points
- Origin Phrase Development/Duets/Trios – Based on Origin Content – 8 points
- Structure Study – 8 points
- Group Form Directing – 8 points
- Movement Journal – 6 points
- Final Reflection Paper – 8 points

Total: 130 points

Assignments are graded on a complete/incomplete basis. Full points are awarded when the study is presented in class, receives feedback, and clearly embodies the assigned compositional content.

If a composition or exploration does not meet these criteria, students may be asked to revise or redo the assignment. This offers an opportunity to refine their understanding and strengthen their work.

Grading Scale

- A = 90–100% (117–130 points)
- B+ = 85–89% (111–116 points)
- B = 80–84% (104–110 points)
- C+ = 75–79% (98–103 points)
- C = 70–74% (91–97 points)
- D+ = 65–69% (85–90 points)
- D = 60–64% (78–84 points)
- F = below 60% (0–77 points)

Weekly Timeline - *subject to change at the discretion of the instructor, * indicates scheduled showing dates.*

Week	Mon. Class Content	Wed - Class Content
8/18	No Class	Discuss and explore the Viewpoints
8/25	Discuss and explore the Viewpoints	Work Session - Discuss and explore Content and the Viewpoints
9/1	Labor Day - No Class	Work Session - Content/Viewpoints/Development Tools

9/8	Work Session - Content/Development Tools	Work Session - Content/Development Tools
9/15	Share Viewpoint / Content / Movement Development Study *	Work Session - Postcard Study
9/22	Work Session - Postcard Study	Work Session - Postcard Study
9/29	Work Session - Share Postcard Study*	Music Discussion, Work Session - Origin Phrase to Music
10/6	Work Session - Share Origin Phrase to Music*	Work Session - Origin Phrase to New Music
10/13	Work Session - Share Origin Phrase to New Music*	Work Session - Duets and Trios
10/20	Work Session - Share Duets and Trios*	Discuss Structure, Work Session - Structure
10/27	Work Session - Structure	Work Session - Structure
11/3	Work Session - Structure	Work Session - Share Structure Study*
11/10	Work Session - Group Form Directing	Work Session - Group Form Directing
11/17	Work Session - Group Form Directing	Work Session - Group Form Directing
11/24	No Class - Thanksgiving Recess	No Class - Thanksgiving Recess
12/1	Work Session - Group Form Directing	Critical Discussion, Last Day to Share Any Outstanding Assignments, Journals, and Final Reflection Due

Journal

Students will maintain a written journal for this course. The journal will serve as a space to:

- Record assignments and take notes on course content
- Write reflective observations and personal reactions to class experiences
- Chronicle comments and observations from peers about developing compositions
- Document choreography
- Capture ideas and inspirations for future creative work
- Make observations about others' work

Please bring your journal and something to write with to every class. Journals will be reviewed for credit (6 points) on the final day of classes, **Wednesday, December 3**.

Required Resources & Technical Skills

To participate fully in this course, please make sure you have:

- Reliable internet access and the ability to regularly check **email and Blackboard**
- A **phone, tablet, or device** that can play music
- **Headphones** for listening and creating movement in shared studio spaces
- Access to **Spotify and/or Apple Music** (free or premium accounts)
- A **movement journal** for notes, feedback, and choreographic ideas

You should also be able to:

- Use **email and Blackboard** for communication, updates, and assignments
- Open and view **shared documents or video links**
- Type, save, and submit your **final reflective paper** digitally
- Record **short videos** on a smartphone or similar device if required

Attire

Please come to class dressed appropriately for movement to ensure safety and ease of motion. Wear form-fitting clothing such as leotards, tank tops, t-shirts, tights, leggings, or sweatpants. Supportive undergarments are required. Avoid excessively baggy clothing, as your movement must be clearly visible.

Bare feet are preferred unless you need to accommodate an injury or specific personal need. Socks may be worn but must be removed if they inhibit movement (e.g., slipping). Hair should be secured away from the face. Please avoid gum, dangling jewelry, or other items that could be hazardous during class. Excessive layers and jewelry will be asked to be removed if interfering with coursework and/or safety. Please keep Fitbit/Apple watches on 'do not disturb' for the duration of class. If a dancer has a question of what is appropriate, please reach out to

Communication & Announcements

I will communicate with you in person, through email and Blackboard. Email is the best way to reach me.

Course announcements will be posted on Blackboard as needed, and I will send important updates to your university email. Please make sure it's correct and working.

Check or Update Your Email in Blackboard

1. Log in to Blackboard.

2. Click your name in the left-hand navigation panel.
3. Review the email address listed. Blackboard uses your university-issued email by default.
4. If you need to update your primary university email:
 - Visit the myaccount.sc.edu portal.
 - Under Personal Information, click Manage Email Addresses.
 - Add or change your preferred email, then select it as Primary.

If you're having trouble with course material, assignments, or communication, please don't hesitate to reach out. I'm here to support your success.

Injury Policy

While we work to provide dance spaces and resources to reduce injury risk, unfortunately, injuries are an inevitable part of dance. If you become injured during the semester (in or out of dance), it is important that you address it as soon as possible. Dancers are required to report injuries to the USC Dance Athletic Trainer and see a doctor or specialist, as needed. We work with each student to ensure their grade will not be affected by an injury, but in extenuating circumstances, the student may need to withdraw from the course or receive a reduced grade.

If an injury is preventing you from participating fully in class, the following protocol will be followed.

- A dancer may sit, observe, and take notes for 1 week
- Beyond 1 week, a meeting with faculty (and Athletic Trainer, if applicable) is required to determine a timeline for return to dance.
- The dancer will be encouraged to return to dance in a modified capacity.

If the injury is so severe that even modified participation is not possible in any capacity 3 weeks post injury, the student will be encouraged to withdraw from the course. If past the withdrawal deadline, they will be required to complete an alternative assignment. This protocol also applies to students who must undergo surgery, which would prevent them from participating in class beyond 3 weeks.

Modifications in Class

When managing an injury, understanding ways in which you can still participate in class is part of your training. Dancers dealing with injuries are encouraged to find ways to participate on a

modified scale. For example, taking class while seated is a great option and provides an opportunity to focus on your upper body. The dance faculty and Athletic Trainer will support you by providing options and movement restrictions, but it is up to you to discover how that works with your own body and translates to the movement being presented in class.

Expectations, Course Culture, Academic Integrity, and Safety Disclosure

Students are expected to demonstrate engagement in each class and to receive full 60 participation points (4 per class). Please use the following as a guide for expectations.

- Students are ready to work at the beginning of each class.
- Students inform the instructor of any limitations of participation due to injury or illness before class begins.
- Students are expected to refrain from negative body talk about themselves and others while in the studios and dance building.
- Phones are to be kept in bags throughout class.

All members of this course are treated with respect and are responsible for maintaining an environment that emphasizes open communication about physical and emotional safety. Students are responsible for informing faculty of anything that might limit their full participation in the class (injuries, restrictions, etc.). We strive to create an environment where dancers feel encouraged to advocate for their needs, so if you have a concern, please speak up. Depending on the situation it can either be addressed in the moment or a meeting can be arranged to discuss ways in which we can all work together to create a safe dance environment.

Appropriate physical contact between student and student, as well as student and instructor, can be expected in the practice of dance. When dance work involves physical contact, students are responsible for clearly communicating to the instructor and fellow students about specific touch parameters. This includes whether they do not wish to be touched, for any reason, and can be changed at any time. We encourage you to keep us updated if you would prefer not to be touched on a given day. There is no penalty for requesting verbal cueing, and a student's grade will not be affected by a request to adapt an activity to allow for safe participation. We strive to keep a safe and inclusive learning atmosphere by maintaining open communication.

Blue wristbands will be available to wear on days when you prefer **no physical contact**—this will always be respected.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating, falsification, or misrepresentation of any kind will result in academic penalties and may be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. As the Carolinian Creed states: *"I will practice personal and academic integrity."*

Attendance: Absences, Tardiness, and Observation Policies

Attendance is necessary to understand and embody the disciplines and intricacies of dance technique. All studio courses are experiential learning practices. Attendance and physical participation are crucial. More than 4 absences (excused or unexcused) will prompt a full faculty discussion with the student, with the possibility of a grade reduction.

Observations

Students may choose to observe class and take notes if they are injured or ill and unable to participate. For a class that meets 2x a week, students are allowed 2 total observation days. For a class that meets 4x a week, students are allowed 4 total observation days. If observations are due to an injury, please see injury policy.

Tardiness

Tardiness is both disruptive and potentially unsafe. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late will be marked with a partial absence. Three partial absences equal one full absence.

Participation after arriving late is at the instructor's discretion, as students may have missed the warm-up, which is essential for physical safety.

Unexcused Absences

Students are allowed two unexcused absences for courses that meet two days per week (1 credit course). Please note, this is slightly more than the university minimum of the "5% rule" for unexcused absences. [USC Attendance Policy\(https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/#text\)](https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/#text)

Unexcused absences are considered personal days or wellness days and may be used at the student's discretion. **Please note that a doctor's visit or appointment does not qualify as an excused absence unless approved by the Office of Student Advocacy.**

Two unexcused absences will not affect the student's grade.

Each subsequent absence (excused or unexcused) beyond the allowable two will result in a **full grade drop** per absence. Missed work will not receive full points, contributing to the grade reduction.

Excused Absences

Instructors may refuse to grant a request for an excused absence or for make-up work that would result in a fundamental alteration of the essential academic requirements of the course. In

such instances, students should be apprised of the University's policy regarding course withdrawals, including undergraduate hardship withdrawals.

The University of South Carolina is required by law to excuse absences from class for the following reasons:

- Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
- Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding, including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate judicial or administrative authority.
- Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.
- A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student from attending class.
- Observance of a religious practice, holiday or holy day, if the instructor of the class is provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious practice, holiday or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of the drop/add period for any other term. The [InterfaithCalendar](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_experts/our_offices/student_life/spiritual_religious_life/interfaith_calendar/index.php) - (https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_experts/our_offices/student_life/spiritual_religious_life/interfaith_calendar/index.php) showcases religious holy days, observances, and recommended accommodations for students, staff, and faculty.
- Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

The University of South Carolina requires that absences from class for the following reasons must also be excused:

- Participation in an authorized University activity, in which the student plays a formal, required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances, academic competitions, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
- Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with appropriate documentation.
- Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate documentation.
- University closure for weather-related or other emergencies.

If You Miss a Class

Whether excused or not, students are responsible for staying on track. To make up for a missed class:

- **Check your email** for class updates and missed content instructions

- **Engage physically** with the missed content in a studio setting. You may be asked to film yourself demonstrating embodied exploration of missed material and create a short movement study or composition.
- **Meet with the instructor** (if requested) to confirm understanding.
- **Complete any missed assignments.**

Note: While efforts will be made to help you catch up, some collaborative or experiential aspects of the course cannot be fully replicated.

Anticipated Excused Absences

To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of the term and are considered an excused absence under the USC undergraduate attendance policy(<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/#text>) (e.g. authorized University activities, religious observances), you should:

- Submit a written request (email is acceptable) to the instructor no later than the end of the second week of the course stating the dates of the anticipated absence.
- Explain the reason for the absence and include any supporting documentation for the absence.
- Include any request for make-up work, including an updated timeframe and due date.
- For additional information, consult the USC undergraduate attendance policy(<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/#text>).

Important: Any anticipated absences related to **medical concerns** must be submitted to the Office of Student Advocacy(https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_initiatives/academic_success/ombuds_services/index.php) instead of the instructor.

Unanticipated Excused Absences

To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of the course and are considered excused (e.g. illness or injury, legal proceedings, or immediate family deaths) under the undergraduate attendance policy(<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/#text>) you should, at the first opportunity, submit an absence request through the Office of Student Advocacy (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_initiatives/academic_success/ombuds_services/index.php).

- Fill out the online Student Advocacy Report Form (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_affairs/our_initiatives/academic_success/ombuds_services/our_services/class_absences/index.php).

- If the absence meets the requirements for an excused absence, the Office of Student Advocacy will certify the absence and provide notification to your instructors.
- Students must reach out to instructors to request make-up work; all make-up work may need to be completed within one week of returning to class.

Point Policy and Grade Impacts for Absences

Attendance, engagement, and participation are worth 30 points in this course and play a critical role in your final grade.

Excused Absences

Absences are deemed *excused* only when I have received certification and notification through the Office of Student Advocacy (or other appropriate USC channels such as the Disability Resource Center or official documentation for military duty, jury duty, or religious observance). Certified excused absences will not result in point deductions, but you are still required to complete all missed content to remain on track (see *If You Miss a Class*). In addition, excused absences require a conversation with me to determine a way to proceed on a case-by-case basis, so that we can develop the most appropriate plan for your learning and participation.

Unexcused Absences and Point Deductions

Missing class without approved certification will result in point deductions as follows:

- First Unexcused Absence: -4 participation points (126 total points). This will not affect your grade; you will still have an A.
- Second Unexcused Absence: -4 additional points (122 total points). Your grade will still be an A.
- Third Unexcused Absence: -4 participation points for engagement plus -5 points for missed content or composition showing (9 points deducted). This brings your total to 113 points, dropping your grade to a B+.
- Fourth Unexcused Absence: -4 participation points plus -5 points for missed content or composition showing (9 more points deducted). Your total will now be 104 points, dropping your grade to a B.

Important: If you miss more than two classes, you are still required to make up the missed content, but you will not receive points for that work if the absences are unexcused.

The takeaway: Excused absences verified by USC channels protect your grade but still require make-up work and a follow-up conversation with me. Unexcused absences reduce your point total and can quickly impact your letter grade. Don't let absences create extra work without the benefit of points—make attending class a priority!

Generative AI Policy

In this course, all movement, choreography, and written reflections should originate from your own ideas and embodied experience. While generative AI tools (like ChatGPT) may be used for brainstorming or research support, they may not be used to generate choreographic material, write journal entries, or complete assignments.

Disability Services

The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) empowers students to navigate challenges and limitations imposed by disabilities. To receive reasonable accommodations in this course, students must be registered with the SDRC, located at 1705 College Street, Close-Hipp Suite 102, Columbia, SC 29208 (803-777-6142). If you have a documented disability, please contact the SDRC to initiate accommodations. Once registered, you are encouraged to contact me during the first week of the semester to discuss how we can best implement your accommodations in this class.

Mental Health Support

If stress or mental health challenges are impacting your well-being or academic performance, USC offers many supportive resources at no additional cost. Services include individual and group counseling, wellness coaching, 24/7 crisis support, and online self-help tools.

- **Counseling & Psychiatry:** (803) 777-5223 or visit MyHealthSpace - [Student Health and Well-Being](#).
- **Wellness Coaching:** (803) 777-6518 or MyHealthSpace - [MyHealthSpace](#).
- **24-Hour Support Line:** Call for Immediate Support (833) 664-2854
- **Therapy Assistance Online (TAO):** Self-guided virtual modules [TAO registration](#).
- **Anonymous Mental Health Screening:** [mental health screening](#)

For more information, visit Student Health and Well-Being. [Student Health and Well-Being](#).

Acknowledgement: Marc Kenison thanks Jen Deckert and the USC Center for Teaching Excellence for their invaluable contributions to this syllabus.

Please note: This syllabus and course calendar are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Students will be informed of any updates or adjustments in a timely manner.