

DEPARTMENT OF DANCE

About

Chair: Jennifer Pontius (dnc_jkp@shsu.edu)

Graduate Advisor: Dionne Noble (dln008@shsu.edu)

Contact Information: (936) 294-1875 or Dance (dance@shsu.edu)

Website: Department of Dance (<http://www.shsu.edu/academics/dance/>)

Mission

The Department of Dance at Sam Houston State University delivers a dynamic, holistic, challenging experience that integrates creativity, performance, and scholarly pursuits designed to prepare each student for a 21st-century career in dance.

Highlights

All MFA candidates participate in a thorough and broad-based curriculum that prepares them across a wide range of skills and sensibilities. The curriculum has four major components:

1. Theory and analysis
2. Production
3. Studio practices
4. Creative process

Further, the curriculum is constructed to encourage the student to explore areas of interest beyond the specific discipline of dance that will inform and facilitate future artistic and scholarly investigations. The capstone thesis project requires the candidate to draw on all of his or her talents and education to produce a substantial and meaningful work of creative imagination.

Career Opportunities

Graduates of the Department of Dance are successfully employed around the nation and the state as:

- Dance educators at all levels
- University and community college professors
- Public high school teachers
- Studio owners and teachers
- Performing artists in dance
- Artistic directors of dance companies
- Performing arts presenters and administrators
- Master of Fine Arts in Dance (<https://catalog.shsu.edu/archives/2025-2026/graduate-and-professional/college-departments/arts-and-media/dance/dance-mfa/>)

Scholarships

The Department of Dance awards scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 per academic year. For scholarship consideration, all students must apply through Scholarships4Kats (<http://www.shsu.edu/scholarships/>). For other funding opportunities, please visit the Graduate Studies website (<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/paying-for-school.html>).

Graduate Assistantships

The Department of Dance awards competitive graduate assistantships each year to students based on qualifications and academic standing. The graduate assistantships are usually awarded to second and/or third year students. Assistantship responsibilities include fulfilling six credit hours of assignments in support of the department's activities, equivalent to .50 FTE. Assignments are determined based on departmental needs. Once graduate assistants have completed eighteen hours of coursework, they may be listed as instructors of record for courses and assigned classes to teach as part of their responsibilities.

Assistantship criteria:

- Remain enrolled as a graduate student in the Department of Dance at Sam Houston State University throughout the academic year.
- Fulfill academic requirements as specified by the graduate course of study and graduate faculty.

- Maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- As a recipient of a graduate assistantship, understand that one is representing the Department of Dance. The award may be reevaluated or revoked at any time based upon the review and discretion of dance faculty.

To apply for an assistantship from the Department of Dance, a Graduate Assistantship Application (<http://www.shsu.edu/academics/dance/documents/Dance%20Graduate%20Assistantship%20Application.pdf>) must be submitted along with a teaching resume, two letters of recommendation (at least one from a non-SHSU employee), and unofficial transcripts. Click here (<http://www.shsu.edu/academics/dance/current-students/mfa.html>) for more information.

DANC 5092. Special Topics. 1-3 Hours.

Special Topic. The course content and subject matter for this course is adaptable to the needs of the student body and provide additional opportunity for student investigation of a topics not generally offered in the graduate dance curriculum. May be repeated for credit provided the repetition is in a different area of study. Variable credit (1-3).

Prerequisite: Graduate standing or department approval.

DANC 5093. Independent Study. 1-3 Hours.

This course is adaptable to the needs and interests of the individual student. Students with specific interests are provided the opportunity to investigate and make application in theoretical, creative or field experience approaches to their area of concentration. May be repeated provided the repetition is in a different area of study. Course Equivalents: DANC 5377, DANC 5393

Prerequisite: Permission of Dance Program Coordinator.

DANC 5301. Pilates Teaching Methods Seminar. 3 Hours.

Students prepare to teach Pilates Matwork from the fundamental through the Super Advanced level in a class or individual private setting. Essential aspects of the course include personal practice, observation of professional Pilates teachers in practice, and student teaching hours.

Prerequisite: Acceptance into the MFA program.

DANC 5333. Development of Advanced Skills In Dance. 3 Hours.

This course includes theoretical concepts and laboratory experiences in dance technique. Course may be repeated for credit with approval of Graduate Advisor of Dance.

DANC 5360. Seminar In Dance Production. 3 Hours.

This course provides experience and information regarding all aspects of dance performance production. Content areas include costuming, lighting and sound design as well as practical skills, such as light board operation, sound recording, and board operation.

DANC 5371. Theory Of Dance. 3 Hours.

An examination is made of the philosophical context within which of dance as an art form functions. Two vastly contrasting aesthetic theories are presented and explored as a means to developing in the student a well-considered and grounded personal aesthetic.

DANC 5373. Laban Movement Analysis. 3 Hours.

Students are provided an overview of Laban Movement Analysis at the graduate level. Course emphasis is placed on the areas of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space as means of describing and understanding non-verbal communication. Focus is on the psychophysical connections that facilitate efficiency and expressivity in movement. Course concepts are introduced through observation, improvisation, exploration, composition, readings, group discussions, and movement assignments. The methodologies of observation and description are explored as means of identifying and analyzing the meaningful and qualitative aspects of human movement. A brief history/application of LMA is included in the curriculum.

Prerequisite: PHYS 1305 and BIOL 2401 or their equivalents.

DANC 5376. Dance Composition I. 3 Hours.

This course includes the analysis of various components of design and development of basic dance studies into more extended dance works.

DANC 5378. Dance Composition II. 3 Hours.

The purpose of this course is to extend understanding of dance as an art and a craft and to improve ability to choreograph an extended dance work.

Prerequisite: DANC 5376 or permission of instructor.

DANC 5380. Dance Composition III. 3 Hours.

This graduate level choreography course builds upon earlier classes as students examine various approaches to the creative process. Emphasis is placed on preparing students for the graduate thesis concert. Exercises and assignments test the student's ability to adapt to a variety of situations and hone problem-solving skills.

Prerequisite: DANC 5376, DANC 5378.

DANC 5384. Dance Pedagogy in Higher Education. 3 Hours.

Students examine various philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approaches to dance pedagogy for teaching at the collegiate level. Content areas include practical application of methods and theories, including designing lesson and unit plans, and composing teaching philosophies.

DANC 5385. Research Methods In Dance. 3 Hours.

Research methods specific to dance theory, choreography, and performance are introduced. Standard and electronic information resources, methods of investigation, and various means of organizing a review of literature are examined. Written and organizational skills are evaluated.

Prerequisite: Graduate standing or permission of the instructor.

DANC 5388. Dance and Integrated Technology. 3 Hours.

Students are introduced to methods of integrating media technologies into the dancer's experience in the areas of dance graphics, sound design for dance, and dance video. Graduate students learn camera, computer and software skills that facilitate their ability to expand creative expression as well as enhance their ability to package and promote themselves as artists in a variety of media.

DANC 5389. Professional Issues in Dance. 3 Hours.

This course is designed for the graduate level student who is preparing to enter the dance profession. Major emphasis will be placed on identifying professional issues in the field of dance and preparing the student for career advancement. By the end of this course, each student will create and package a portfolio in the areas of performance, choreography and academia.

DANC 6098. Thesis. 1-3 Hours.

This phase of the thesis development involves the selection and design of a suitable performance and/or creative project with the completion of review of related literature and research work necessary. The thesis committee must approve a pilot showing of the work-in-progress. Variable Credit (1-3). Course Equivalents: DANC 6398 .

DANC 6099. Thesis. 1-3 Hours.

The exhibition of the thesis consist of a formal thesis concert of the student's performance and/or creative work accompanied by a supporting thesis portfolio. The written paper must comply with the specifications of the written thesis, which are available online via SHSU's Newton Gresham Library website. The student must also pass an oral examination, testing general knowledge of dance concepts and traditions that relate to his/her thesis work. (The student must be registered in DANC 6099 the semester in which he/she receives the M.F.A. degree.) Variable Credit (1-3). Course Equivalents: DANC 6399

Prerequisite: Dance 6098 and permission of thesis committee.

Director/Chair: **Jennifer Karen Pontius**

Rasika Nitin Borse, MFA (rnb020@shsu.edu), *Lecturer of Dance, Department of Dance*, MFA, Sam Houston State University; BA, Univ of Calgary

Travis Dale Lake, MFA (tlake@shsu.edu), *Assistant Professor of Dance, Department of Dance*, MFA, Sam Houston State University; BFA, Univ of Utah

Adele Nickel, MFA (axn051@shsu.edu), *Assistant Professor of Dance, Department of Dance*, MFA, Univ of Washington; BA, New School/Soc Rsrch

Andrew M Noble, MFA (amn008@shsu.edu), *Professor of Dance, Department of Dance*, MFA, Florida State University; BA, Univ of South Florida

Dionne L Noble, MFA (dln008@shsu.edu), *Professor of Dance, Department of Dance*, MFA, Univ of Utah; BA, Univ of South Florida

Jennifer Karen Pontius, MFA (dnc_jkp@shsu.edu), *Associate Professor and Chair of Dance, Department of Dance*, MFA, Florida State University; MA, California St Un-Dominguez Hil; BA, Univ of Alabama-Birmingham