Beginning Ballet

“We learn by practice. Whether it means to learn to dance by practicing dancing or to learn to live by practicing living, the principles are the same. One becomes in some area an athlete of God.” –Martha Graham

Welcome to the Beginning Ballet in the Spring 2011. This course is designed to introduce the basic concepts of ballet at the beginning level.

Course objectives:
- To demonstrate an understanding of ballet as stylistic genre and history
- To demonstrate enhanced kinesthetic awareness and understanding of correct body alignment with torso, rotation of hips and upper legs, knees, feet along with focus of the head an arm positions at the beginning level.
- To demonstrate basic knowledge ballet vocabulary and technique
- To perform beginning level concepts of technique and begin to create quality artistic expression

Grading Policy:

75% of the grading scale is based upon attendance. (We only meet three hours a week so we have a lot to learn each day.) I will make no excuses, so use your absences wisely. You may have two absences before your grade will be affected. 15% is based on participation, attitude, concentration, application of corrections and ideas concerning alignment, and injury prevention. I expect each student to put just as much energy into this class as any other academic course. Finally, 10% is based on the final, which is a group choreography project. You are also required to attend St. Mary’s College Dance Company Show in May and write a response to one of the dances you see. We will discuss the details of these projects in more depth later in the semester.

Please come to each class prepared to dance. Wear clothes you feel comfortable moving in (sweats, shorts, t-shirt), and have dance shoes or socks. Long hair must be properly secured in bun or ponytail. Proper dance etiquette is required, this includes being in class on time, staying the whole length of class, courteous studio behavior, a good working attitude, full concentration and participation. I will mark your grade down for not adhering to etiquette.

If you are late it your responsibility to come to me after class and make sure I got you on my roll sheet as present. I will count three tardies as an absence.
If you are injured, and would like to watch class instead of participating you may sit in on the class, pick one dancer to follow and write about what you observe. Your notes should be equal amounts of positive feedback and constructive criticism. The dancer will not see your notes, this assignment is for your growth as a dancer.

My classes are based on a system of mutual respect, my respect for you, your respect for each other, your respect for me.

If you ever have questions, comments or concerns feel free to give me a call.

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(I do not check my SMC account regularly)

**Ballet** is a formalized form of dance with its origins in the French court, further developed in France and Russia as a concert dance form. It is a highly technical form of dance with its own vocabulary. It has been influential as a form of dance globally and is taught in ballet schools around the world which use their own culture and society to modernize the art. Ballet dance works (ballets) are choreographed, and also include mime, acting, and are set to music (usually orchestral but occasionally vocal). It is best known in the form of classical ballet, notable for its techniques, such as pointe work and turn-out of the legs, its graceful, flowing, precise movements, and its ethereal qualities. Later developments include neoclassical ballet and contemporary ballet.

The Ballets Russes of Sergei Diaghilev and its successors were particularly influential during this period. It has continued to draw on and be enriched by folk dance and local dance traditions. In the 20th century ballet has continued to develop and has had a strong influence on broader concert dance. For example, in the United States, choreographer George Balanchine developed what is now known as neoclassical ballet. Subsequent developments have included contemporary ballet and post- structural ballet, seen in the work of William Forsythe in Germany.

The etymology of the word "ballet" is related to the art form's history. The word *ballet* comes from the French and was borrowed into English around the 17th century. The French word in turn has its origins in Italian *balletto*, a diminutive of *ballo* (dance). *Ballet* ultimately traces back to Latin *ballare*, meaning to dance.
Brief List of Ballet Terms

Alignment: Refers to the relationship of body parts to one another.
Turnout: Classical ballet is based on turnout. 90 degree by right foot and 90 degree by the left foot. The turnout starts at the hip (pelvic area) and not at the knees. A full 180 degree turnout is not required in order to be a good dancer.

Basic Leg Positions:
1st Position: Heels together, 180 degree. The feet form one line. This is varied for beginners.
2nd Position: The feet still form one line but with a space of 1 1/2 individual's foot between the heels.
3rd Position: Not very common in classical ballet. One foot in front of the other. The front heel is in midpoint of the back foot.
5th Position: One foot in front of the other as the 3rd position, but crossed further. The heel of the front foot touches the big toe of the back foot.
4th Position: Same as the 5th position with a space of one individual's foot between the feet.
6th Position: Not very commonly used, this position is described best as feet together, making two parallel lines.

6 Basic Positions of the Arm:
Bras bas: Preparatory, small finger barely touches outside of thigh.
1st Position: Same as the bras bas but slightly higher, and hands in front of the navel.
2nd Position: Arms extended outward, making an open circle form shoulder to shoulder.
5th Position: Hands above the head but visible to the individual's eyes (not directly above the head).
3rd Position: Combining 5th and 2nd position. One hand above the head and the other in the 2nd position.
4th Position: Hands are both in front. One is below the eye level and the other above the navel.
Plie: Bending of the knees.
a)demi-plie: heels on the floor.
b)grand-plie: heels off the floor.
Demi-Point: Standing on the ball of the foot, giving an image of floating.
Battement tendu: Most important exercise, standing on one foot and stretching the other to a variety of positions while touching the floor with the free foot.
Battement degage: "Separate". Described exactly as battement tendu but the
free foot is not touching the floor.

**Grand battement:** Same as battement tendu but larger action of the leg to the variety of positions.
**Battement frape:** "Strike"
**Petit battement:** "Small beat"
**Battement fondu:** "To melt"
**Rond de Jambe a Terre:** "Circle on the floor"
**Grand Rond de Jambe en L'air:** "Bit circular motion in the air with free leg."
**Develope:** "To unfold," "to develop"
**Releve:** "To rise"