

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON DANCE

THUR 10:00-12:30 AM

3 credits/45 Contact Hours: No Prerequisites

Office Hours: TUE 12:30p-1:30p

Instructor: Dr. Lorenzo Perillo

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Course Description

Dance 255 is a survey of global perspectives on dance. The practice of dance can be found as an expression of ritual, social events, court tradition, classical theater, and contemporary styles in live and digital performance. At the heart of this course is how dance embodies and is in dialogue with concepts of culture, myth, performance, and social bodies. Lectures and film screenings provide a basic understanding of contemporary issues around movement practices and the global migration of dance genres. Classroom participation cultivates the ability to engage in discussions about dance and gain a wider appreciation for the range of commonalities and differences in movement aesthetics and theory. The W designation focuses on writing and thinking critically about the role of movement and the body in society.

Student Learning Outcomes (integrated with Study Abroad Center Student Learning Outcomes)

At the end of this course students should be able to:

SLO1: Identify and explain global dance concepts in cultural context: Demonstrate knowledge of key dance theories, histories, and embodied practices, and explain how dance functions within culture, ritual, myth, religion, politics, and social bodies—while recognizing how their own cultural values and biases shape interpretation.

SLO2: Apply dance theories and research methods to lived experience: Use appropriate concepts, fieldwork methods, and writing skills to analyze performances, sacred rituals, archives, and site visits in Florence. Connect academic readings with experiential learning through journals, discussions, and movement-based reflection

SLO3: Compare and critically analyze diverse dance forms and perspectives: Distinguish, compare, and evaluate how dance is expressed in ritual, court, folk, classical, colonial, diasporic, and contemporary settings across cultures. Demonstrate the ability to consider multiple and contrasting viewpoints with respect and critical insight.

SLO4: Collaborate and communicate across cultures: Work responsibly and respectfully with peers, artists, and communities to co-create a meaningful learning environment abroad. Communicate effectively across cultural differences in spoken, written, and embodied forms.

Required Text

Beaman, Patricia Leigh. *World Dance Cultures*. Routledge, 2018.

Pina Bausch & Digital Dance Archives (Tanztheater Wuppertal)
<https://www.pinabausch.org/archives>

Google Arts & Culture – 'Move Mirror' experiment
<https://experiments.withgoogle.com/move-mirror>

MotionBank – Digital Dance Scores by Forsythe Company
<https://www-archive.motionbank.org/en/content/scores.html>

Week 1	What is Global Dance? Experiential Activity: Observe movement and gesture in Piazza della Signoria; field journal entry.
Week 2	Dance, Myth, and Ritual Experiential Activity: Attend Catholic mass or procession at Duomo; reflect on ritualistic movement.
Week 3	Court & Classical Dance – Italy and France Experiential Activity: Visit Palazzo Pitti or Uffizi; analyze Renaissance depictions of dance in Donatello's <i>Cantoria</i> in Museo dell'Opera del Duomo Reading: Sim, Catherine. <i>Renaissance Court Dance in Italy and France: A short summary</i> . 2012. URL: https://dancetimepublications.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/REVISED-REN_Dance_8_31_12.pdf
Week 4	Folk and Social Dances of Italy Experiential Activity: Observe a Tarantella or Tuscan folk dance event. Reading: Florence Dance Festival https://www.florencefestival.org/festival/
Week 5	Africa and the Diaspora Experiential Activity: Attend Afro-Italian or West African dance class in Florence (Dance Studio Firenze: https://www.dancestudiofirenze.it/)
Week 6	Swing Dance Forms Experiential Activity: Field workshop or performance viewing of Swing Dance in Florence. https://www.lindyhopinflorence.com/en/
Week 7	Midterm Reflection Experiential Activity: No field trip – submit journals and share reflections in class.
Week 8	Indigenous Dances of Oceania Experiential Activity: Watch <i>American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawai'i</i> or <i>Nā Kamalei: The Men of Hula</i> directed by Lisette Flanary; compare to Italian folk traditions.
Week 9	Hip-Hop and Street Cultures Experiential Activity: Observe breakdance or hip-hop cypher at Piazzale Michelangelo or Santa Croce
Week 10	Dance and Globalization Experiential Activity: Guest talk from Florence Dance Festival organizer.

	https://www.florencefestival.org/festival/
Week 11	Contemporary European Dance Experiential Activity: Attend performance at Fabbrica Europa or Teatro Puccini. Source: https://fabbricaeuropa.net/en/festival-fabbrica-europa-2025/ https://www.puccinifestival.it/en/il-gran-teatro-giacomo-puccini/
Week 12	Dance, AI & Digital Futures Experiential: Visit La Compagnia digital arts cinema or motion-capture demo. https://www.cinemalacompagnia.it/
Week 13	Research Workshop Experiential Activity: Peer feedback session – no fieldwork.
Week 14	Final Presentations Experiential Activity: Student presentations & aperitivo celebration.

Assignment Descriptions & Rubrics

Weekly Reflection Journals (written or video – 250 words min. each)

Each week, students will submit a reflective journal that responds to assigned readings, class discussions, and personal observations in Florence. Journals should connect course themes—such as embodiment, diaspora, religion, gender, or nationalism in dance—to lived experience and site visits (e.g., churches, festivals, museums, rehearsals). Students are encouraged to include sketches, photos, movement notation, or brief videos where appropriate. These journals are not summaries but critical and personal reflections that ask: *What did I notice? What surprised me? What challenged my assumptions?* Thoughtfulness, specificity, and integration of theory and experience are prioritized over formal academic structure.

Field Journals (250 words min. each):

For each experiential learning activity—such as attending a dance performance, Catholic procession, opera, folk festival, or studio class—students will complete a structured fieldwork journal. This will document sensory detail (space, movement, sound, audience behavior), cultural context, and interpretive insight. Students should analyze how movement functions: as ritual, protest, entertainment, labor, or memory. Observation must be grounded in respect for artists and communities, following site etiquette. Journals should connect directly to course readings and class themes. No filming of sacred or restricted moments unless permitted. These serve as both academic records and rehearsal for embodied research methodologies

Midterm essay (1,000-1,500 words)

The midterm essay invites students to critically analyze one theme from the first half of the course—such as colonialism and court dance, Renaissance body ideals, diaspora, or sacred movement—through at least one site observed in Florence. Students must use two assigned readings and draw connections between theory and space, artifact, or live practice. Essays should address historical context, embodied meaning, and personal interpretation. This is not a travel narrative, but a scholarly essay grounded in experience. Proper citations, clarity, and depth of thought are expected. Topics must be approved in advance through a short proposal or conversation.

Rubric:

10 pts: Descriptive detail

10 pts: Cultural analysis

10 pts: Connection to readings

AI Creative Assignment

Students will explore the relationship between artificial intelligence and the dancing body through a creative or analytical project. Options include: generating AI-assisted choreography prompts, mapping motion-capture sequences, analyzing dance algorithms on platforms like TikTok, or critiquing AI-generated performances and ethics of cultural memory. Students must connect their work to at least one course reading and one live or digital performance encountered in Florence or online. A 2–3 page written reflection or 5–7 minute video must address embodiment, authorship, authenticity, and whether AI can “remember” culture. Collaboration is allowed, but reflections must be individually written.

Final Research Paper (8–10 pages):

The final paper is a culminating research project that synthesizes academic study and experiential learning in Florence. Students will choose a topic related to dance, embodiment, ritual, or cultural performance—past or present—and support their argument using scholarly sources and field observations. Examples include: non-Italian Dance form (i.e. Swing) in Florence and Identity, Renaissance body politics and ballet, street dance communities, or AI and choreography in Italy. Papers must cite at least four academic sources (two from class, two independent), include field notes, and demonstrate original thinking. Creative approaches—choreographic score, podcast script, or digital archive—are welcome with instructor approval.

Rubric:

20 pts: Research depth

20 pts: Analytical clarity

10 pts: Writing & organization

5 pts: Correct citations

Final Presentation (8-10 minutes):

In the final weeks, students will present a lecture, performance, digital media piece, or movement-demonstration based on their research paper. The presentation should clearly communicate the research question, supporting evidence, and personal or artistic response. Students may use PowerPoint, dance notation, video clips, live movement, images, or sound. Each presentation must reference at least two course readings or artists and include one audience engagement element (question, demonstration, or brief participation). This assignment assesses clarity of thought, creativity, embodiment of knowledge, and ability to translate scholarship into public or performative form.

Point Breakdown

Weekly Reflections (200 pts)

Field Journals (150 pts)

Midterm Essay (100 pts)

AI project (100 pts)

Final Paper & Presentation (200+150 pts)

Participation & Attendance (100 pts)

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Percentage
Weekly Reflection Journals	20%

Field Journals (Experiential)	15%
Midterm Reflection Essay	10%
AI Creative Assignment	10%
Final Research Paper	20%
Final Presentation (Lecture/Performance)	15%
Participation & Attendance	10%

Study Abroad Etiquette & Attendance Policy

This course involves experiential learning in cultural sites such as churches, museums, studios, and performance venues. Students are expected to:

- Dress appropriately (shoulders and knees covered in religious or sacred spaces).
- Arrive 10 minutes early to all site visits and performances.
- Refrain from speaking loudly, eating, or disrupting events.
- Follow all photography/recording restrictions.
- Show respect for local customs, artists, and community spaces.

Attendance is required. More than 2 absences (classroom or field) without approval lowers the final grade by one letter per absence. Missing a scheduled performance or site activity requires a written make-up report approved in advance.

Appendix

Weekly Reflection Journal Template

Name: _____ Week: _____

1. Description of Experience:

2. Cultural/Movement Analysis:

3. Connection to Readings/Concepts:

4. Personal Reflection:

Reflection Journal Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (9-10)	Developing (5-8)
Description of Experience	Detailed, clear, insightful	Basic description, lacks detail
Cultural/Movement Analysis	Strong analytical connections	Minimal analysis
Connection to Readings	Clear integration of sources	Weak or no connection
Personal Reflection	Thoughtful, introspective	General or surface-level reflection

Performance Attendance Checklist

For each required performance, students must record:

- Name of Performance / Company
- Venue / Location
- Date & Time
- Ticket Cost (if applicable)
- Main Artistic Director / Choreographer
- Observations on lighting, staging, costumes
- Audience demographics & engagement
- Funding or sponsor logos visible (Business class)
- Cultural/embodyed themes present (Global Perspectives class)

Site Visit Checklist

During weekly site-based learning, students should note:

- Location Name
- Type of Site (museum, church, studio, festival, archive)
- Entry Fee or Access Requirements