

## Dance & Body Politics

Dance & Body Politics is a concentrated study integrating expressionist movement from dance (dance theory) and comparative public policy (political science), to study the practices and policies through which powers of society regulate the human body”<sup>1</sup>. Understanding the body as a site of knowledge that physically reflects and internalizes systemic injustice, this IDM’s coursework encompasses dance as a creative method to study the rudimentary principles in global society which operate to manipulate and control human bodies of the global margins. I plan to focus primarily on contemporary African and Asian perspectives, centering intersectionality, which is “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects” (edited definition by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 2017).<sup>2</sup>

This IDM is based in Arts Politics, which is an emerging field concerned with questions about the production of art, political contextualization, and arts activism. This independently designed major primarily references established arts politics programs like that of Chicago institute’s “Art Design and Politics” and NYU’s ‘Art and Public Policy’. These majors provide students with strong background in key concepts such as “theory, methods and criticism.”<sup>3</sup> A Dance & Body Politics IDM is built on the approach of these majors in that it includes observation, recording, and reflection on the human body, but it expands beyond them to include direct embodied experiences as a way of knowing. This IDM’s interplay of comparative politics theory and creative dance theory provide a pathway for embodying, exploring, and processing embodied political questions.

Body Politics is a lens of looking at politics through the context of human bodies. It examines thematic conflicts in power as diplomatic corruption, international exploitation, artistic resistance, and organized revolution. Dance is the central focus of Body Politics in this IDM because it is a connection between human bodies throughout the world. Dance portrays a physical story; art studies confront the violence from the politics perspective, and dance takes a further step to convert the violence into power to be reclaimed by oppressed identities. For example, in Rickerby Hines’ play, *Dreamscape*<sup>4</sup>, a physical expressionist movement responds to violent over-policing of bodies. The real story of a Black woman who lost her life to 12 shots from police brutality are reflected through a 12-step fractal dance which embody the assaults through her declining mobility. Dance embodies vitality; if “war is politics with bloodshed, and politics is war without bloodshed”<sup>5</sup>, where then, does the manipulation of human bodies and lives fall? How can resistance be embodied to reclaim power of the masses and confront systems of manipulative oppression? A Dance and Body Politics IDM strategically combines the subsections of dance theory and comparative politics courses from CC’s theatre and dance political science majors, rather than combining the two majors, to create an interdisciplinary curriculum that challenges the violence inherent in politics.

I plan for this IDM to prepare me with substantial artistic and political knowledge that can develop a thesis project relevant to the Colorado College and Colorado Springs community. In the form of a thematic dance production (through Dance Workshop Spring “24, or another CC arts program), I want to highlight the specific role and importance Colorado Springs has with the rest of the world, assuming its position as such a globally dominant city. Furthermore, such a thesis project would utilize creative movement to reflect the relationship COS individuals have with the global community.

Inspiration for such concepts of global connection come from my experiences around the world that have portrayed the juxtapositions of equity and justice in various environments.

*Experience 1: Founding of the student-led Brown Paper Bag Movement organization in 2018 (NYC)*

While living in New York City, my secondary-school activities largely pertained to topics of equity and privilege. In 2018, I founded a student-led organization, Brown Paper Bag Movement within my district 2 high school (the wealthiest NYC public school district), which brought students from wealthier and advantaged demographics to the parallel realities of homeless communities residing under the concrete of capital centrals like Madison Square Garden, Times Square, and Herald Square. The Brown Paper Bag Movement was my introduction to grassroots operations, prompting further my interest in the legislative and legal circumstances that perpetuate inequality throughout one of the world's wealthiest cities.

*Experience 2: My work as a database intern in the summer of 2021 for the non-governmental organization (NGO) Fambul Tok, in Freetown (Sierra Leone)*

Currently, I am a database intern for a local NGO in Freetown, SL, named Fambul Tok; while abroad I am responsible for digital data input, and when in Sierra Leone, I collect field and office research. Fambul Tok works to heal the economic, emotional, and societal wounds resultant after a civil war that lasted 10 years (1991-2002). After the UN attempted to intervene with peace initiatives that sowed additional chaos, Sierra Leonean John Caulker founded *Fambul Tok*. Within Fambul Tok, the subprogram *Peace Mothers* empowers women in rural communities around Sierra Leone to sustain community peace. Leading women partake in economic training for sustainable community development: running revolving loan schemes with capital from agriculture activities, to finance community support systems such as orphan education and widow support<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, rotational meetings to embrace peace and cohesion facilitate community mediation and emotional healing. Focus on the body is particularly significant in this kind of healing, as many women during the Sierra Leonean Civil War were subjected to sexual violence and slavery. Gender, class, and race oppression are but few of the intersections these women are standing in.

Upon my field research with women in upcountry villages of Moyamba, it was the intensity of emotion shared in these spaces that inspired dance as method for political analysis within this major — dance plays a role in connecting through vulnerability, the wounds of women. In the Fakunya chieftdom of the Moyamba district, women utilized dance and traditional drumming music to mediate the structure of field research between the intimate sharing that happens in peace mothers' meetings. Though I am a Black woman of African-Haitian descent, I entered as an American intern, oblivious to the magnitudes of various regional factors affecting the Sierra Leone community. However, dance served as a very personal connector with Peace Mother's and their communities at the beginnings and ends of the meetings. This independently designed major, Dance and Body Politics, hopes to emphasize the raw experiences of intersectionality, as seen with the Peace Mothers program—grounding awareness in the physical unity and equality amongst human bodies resisting oppressive political regimes in our global community.

*Experience 3: My job in mineral retail during the fall of 2021 (COS).*

From September to December of 2021, I worked mineral and crystal retail in Colorado Springs (Pikes Peak Rock Shop). The owner's business encompassed exploitive mining conditions that resulted in profits for the store from raw materials pillaged in vulnerable communities throughout the world, especially war-torn countries. The gap between owners, workers, and customers capacity to contextualize how purchases of 'Ethiopian Opal', which fund the Ethiopian civil war, display the impact of unconscious interaction between advantaged and disadvantaged human bodies within the world. The US is a dominant global power; and proximity to the thought-processes of a large demographic of US military-associated customers in Colorado Springs informed my awareness of how this specific US city sanctions operations of US domination indirectly and directly.

In summary, the questions I choose to address concern the ways in which systems of power in global society regulate human bodies, and regional resilience to such regulation. Bodies are used in modernity as political tools, the people are not the ends, they are the means. Through dance however, the devotion to empowering the human bodies silenced in society by institutionalized concepts of race, gender, ability, result in a concept of radical embodiment in body politics. Dance and Body Politics is a major which contextualizes what it means to be connected to the human bodies close and far to oneself on the scale of intersectional geopolitical placement.

## IDM Plan of Study

### At-A-Glance Table

Academic year	Course number	Course Title	Units
2022	DA125	The Body in Motion	1.00
2022	PS236	Introduction to Comparative Politics	1.00
2022	DA200	Topics in Theatre: Nhaka: Art Making, the Animist Body, and Radical Black African Presences	1.00
	PS339	The Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa	1.00
	PS350	Theories of the Contemporary International Politics	1.00
2022	DA311	Encountering Global Dance	1.00
2023/4	DA329	Queer Performance and Body Politics	1.00
2021	PS331	Comparative Politics: China	1.00
	PS313	Comparative Politics: The Middle East and North Africa	1.00
	DA237	Art of Insurgency: Performance and Political Order	1.00
2024	GS400	IDM Thesis I	1.00
2024	GS401	IDM Thesis II	1.00
	GS350	Junior Seminar	1.00

Total units: 13.00

## **COURSE JUSTIFICATIONS**

### **Foundations:**

Course: **The Body and Motion DA125**

Prerequisites: Not officially listed

Justification: This course serves as an introductory to the discipline of dance and movement. In the curriculum, students are introduced to the study of embodied knowledge. Coordination of the body becomes a method of interacting and interpreting dance and physical movement improvisation. The four coordinations of the body as homolateral, contralateral, top to bottom, and radially, are a few forms of movement studied by instructors and students to develop understanding between basic kinesiology and somatic dance composition. This course will give methodological insight to creative movement, preparing me for more intensive courses in the dance theory department which study the academic and critical components of dance.

Course: **PS236 Introduction to Comparative Politics**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: This class is the second intro course to my IDM, introducing me to definitions, concepts, theories and scholarly approaches used for case studies of different regions in the world. This course prepares me with substantial understanding to engage in academic discourse concerning the functionalities of political systems.

### **Global Contexts:**

Course: **DA200 Topics in Theatre: Nhaka: Art Making, the Animist Body, and Radical Black African Presences**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: This class is integral to my IDM, and I am including it to gain insight on the functionalities of art in the context of a post-colonial global society. Nora Chipaumire is the instructor of this class, a seventh block (2021-22) Artist-in-Residence here at Colorado College. In this class, Nora leads a workshop that examines the intersections of race, history, and art, focusing on the human body and its relation to societal systems. Questions within the already established Arts Politics field concerning production of art, purpose of creation, and influence of artistic projects are investigated; however, specific focus on dance methodizes academic understanding of how society places various intersectional bodies.

Course: **PS339 The Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: This course broadly seeks to teach as much information as possible about Africa's politics and to provide a continent-wide theoretical framework. Within the IDM, empirical data material from this class is greatly relevant to creative method from other classes which are centering African perspective. Taken alongside a current internship with Sierra Leone's local NGO, Fambul Tok, this class is intended to inform the similarities and difference between narratives of the global majority and global margins.

Course: **PS 350 Theories of the Contemporary International Politics:**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: This course joins this IDM as a methodologies class in preparation for a thesis project. Surveys contending theories of the US contemporary global system are investigated with attention to topics as globalization, regional conflict, and more—all aligning with the core questions of Dance & Body Politics.

**Course: PS331 Comparative Politics: China**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: Comparative politics for China is an important course for this IDM in centering Asian perspectives as the complexities of China's political system are holistically studied from the lens of specific regional circumstance. This course examines in what ways Chinese society is shaped by its political system; and begins to understand concepts of mass-line, mobilization, performative governance, and how human bodies are managed through such regimes.

**Course: PS313 Comparative Politics: The Middle East and North Africa**

Prerequisite: Not listed

Justification: This class traces major themes and developments in MENA politics through the 20th and 21st centuries, developing an all-encompassing understanding on the complexities of contemporary events which include African perspectives. This course roots activist art of this IDM and studies marginalized perspectives with information from both social scientific theory and lived experience. Topics explored include authoritarianism, state capacity, ethnic and sectarian politics, ideology, and nationalism, structuring this IDM's analysis on political regulation of bodies.

**Embodied Political Perspectives:****Course: DA329 Queer Performance and Body Politics:**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: This class is very important on the course list as the studied material and readings focus on the way queer artists have challenged conventional ideas and regulations of the human body. Readings on dance and performance art approach questions of embodied resistance to political regulation, white patriarchal idealism, and creative embodiment of intersectional resistance—all key components of this IDM's core disciplinary questions.

**Course: DA237 Art of Insurgency: Performance and Political Order**

Prerequisite: Not listed

Justification: This course situates my independent study in a global context that prepares my thesis. This class examines the arts that expose narratives of power and oppression, and the societal reality that allows structures to maintain dominance, or not. Two weeks of study are in Serbia and Bosnia; this prepares my thesis to engage in silenced narratives and stories through the art focus of performance, and with holistic registration of political realities around the world.

**Course: DA311 Encountering Global Dance**

Prerequisites: Not listed

Justification: This is a critical creative class where dance works are studied by numerous artists in a global context, connecting the ranges of forms, aesthetics, and movement, to conceptual understandings of post-colonial and critical social studies. The material from this course propels my independent study by teaching how to approach dance from an intersectional perspective through focus on abstraction, narrative, and realism.