Upon beginning this class, I viewed dance primarily through the lens of an observer as my only dance experiences stemmed from watching people perform on television, in movies and on shows such as *Dancing with the Stars*. While this exposed me to a variety of different types of dances, and demonstrated that dance can convey stories and emotions, I never knew the extent of dance’s influence until taking this class; specifically as we learned about the various factors throughout history and life that have affected dance styles and how types of dances have influenced each other in turn. In this reflection I will primarily be addressing the objective: “cultivate an awareness of the range of influences (artistic, cultural, historical, etc.) that shape various dance forms” while utilizing facets of the objective: “reflect on personal experiences with dance in relation to class activities and apply insights into new domains,” as my participation in class activities and discussions allowed me to further understand dance, its role throughout history and modern times and the origins/reasons behind certain dance styles.

I chose to take this class because I was eager to learn about and experience a subject that I had always admired but always felt out of reach-either because of busy schedules, stereotypes, et cetera. Each class brought a new idea, lesson or new information to add to my mental dance portfolio and I steadily watched my knowledge of dance grow throughout the semester. Although I started the class as an objective dance observer, by its completion, I feel as though I can understand and be in the mindset of a true dancer due to this class and its activities. I believe that I truly began to understand the depth and meaning behind dance when making the concept maps for different dance styles (specifically tango) and dance in general based on the assigned reading by Desmond in January. The tango portion of this class was one of my favorites because it was during the tango experience at Tango del Barrio that I took my first steps into the mindset of a dancer and began to realize the affect dancing can have on someone by participating in the dance itself and interviewing passionate tango dancers.

The historical aspects and influences on tango that we learned about through the videos and class discussions also helped me to make connections between other dance types and their origin time periods; for example, during the Great Depression, there became a need for (free) fun and excitement in the midst of the greatest monetary drought the country has ever experienced-thus swing dancing was born. Swing originated to lift peoples’ spirits and allow them to exhibit a sense of impassioned freedom during a time of great confinement and limitation. It can also be derived that contemporary dance style originated as a form of emotional expression and means of communication in a society that pays little attention to personal issues and emotions-instead focusing on money and personal advancement. I now recognize these instances of cause and effect/demand and supply in dance and in other aspects of daily life more easily because of what I have learned throughout the semester. At the beginning of the semester, I admired dance for its beauty and the stories it could convey through movement, I did not take into consideration why a specific dance style originated, if other dance styles had influenced the one I was watching or understand the mindset of the dancers themselves while dancing. However, because of the class activities, such as the concept maps, performance reflections, and readings, I have become more aware of factors influencing dance and my own thoughts towards/about dance. I look forward to watching and experiencing more dance styles in the future now that I can view them through a deeper/more complex lens: the lens of a dancer rather than an observer.

I value my experiences in this class as by the end of the semester I have learned how to view dance through the lens of a participant and understand the depth and emotion in different dance styles rather than through the objective lens of an observer as I had initially at the beginning of the semester. Although I did not have any prior dance experience or believe that I could be a dancer, I found a connection with dance that I will treasure into the future. One of my favorite quotes from the readings assigned throughout the semester addressed who/the kind of people dance and creativity were for, “creativity is not just for artists. It’s for business people looking for a new way to close a sale; it’s for engineers trying to solve a problem; it’s for parents who want their children to see the world in more than one way” (Tharp, 2006), and essentially states that creativity, manifesting in any form, is for everyone. I find this quote to be inspiring and reminiscent of my participation in this class as I tried something new that many people, including myself, could not have seen me doing in the past; I found a new source of expression and outlet of creativity for me to continue to mold and shape in the future.