

Ethnic Dance of China

The fifty-six officially recognized ethnic minority groups of China all have unique cultures and modes of artistic expression – with dance an especially striking example. Each variety is expressive of the particular spirit, and particular aesthetic sensibilities, of the culture from which it has emerged. Dance, therefore, is an ideal means by which to better understand the complex multiethnic culture of modern-day China.

Chinese ethnic dances employ song, dance and instrumentation, independently or in combination. In contrast to the emphasis on technique associated with styles like ballet, Chinese dance stresses the sensitive combination of “hand, eye, body, sense, and step,” aiming for an overarching expression of and experience with a culture rather than the mastery of technical details, making it relatively easy to learn. During performances, dancers often wear the distinctive costumes associated with particular minority groups.

The course at CNU will include twelve class sessions in all, divided into three four-class units with each unit focused on a particular ethnic minority dance: these special topics will be Tibetan dance, Uyghur (Xinjiang) dance, and finally the Yang-ge folk dance (handkerchief dance) of the northern Han people. Each class will be approximately two hours in length, with time divided into (1) preparatory activities; (2) warm-up; (3) practice with basic dance and performance techniques; and (4) rehearsal. Over the course of the semester, participants will gain a deeper understanding of Chinese ethnic minority culture, as well as gaining the ability to perform, independently or as a group, three independent ethnic dances.

Tibetan Dance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPEix8HnZqc>

Uyghur Dance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68Kfp5LR5sw>

The Handkerchief Dance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuMzEb5shok>

Do you like the dances? Are you interested in the cultures of China’s ethnic minorities? Would you like to share your passion with others? Join us!