

The Blue Banner

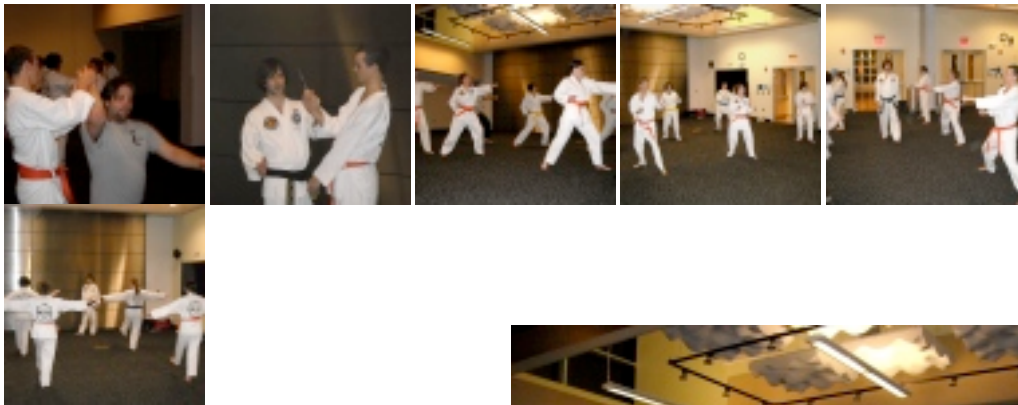
Martial arts club advocates 'the natural way'

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UNCA Martial Arts Club



The UNC Asheville Martial Arts Club strives to teach self-health rather than flashy moves, according to the club's founder and leader, Matthew Mitchell.

"What I teach is lifestyle martial arts. You can do this from all ages and then you can take what you learned in here, the philosophy behind it, the patience and the discipline, and apply it to your daily life," Mitchell said.



The style of martial arts Mitchell teaches is called Chayon-Ryu, which means "the natural way."

"Natural body motion means doing what your body naturally does in order to facilitate balance, both of movement and of your mental state," Mitchell said.

According to the 25-year-old, Chayon-Ryu's purpose is to help people defeat their internal enemy, as opposed to any external ones. It's all about personal health, Mitchell said.

"This is different from the mixed martial arts that you see on TV. I don't see too many guys in their 70s still doing that. It has its interesting points. I watch it. I'm a fan of it, but I don't practice it. I respect it for its art, but it's not an art I want to participate in," he said. "I see a lot of injuries and I just don't see a need for that."

Chayon-Ryu is a combination of five different types of martial arts, including Karate, Chinese Chu'an Fa, Korean Taekwon, Aikido/Hapkido and Judo/Jujitsu, according to Mitchell,

UNCA junior Kaci Campbell is not a newcomer to Chayon-Ryu. She has taken classes since high school and progressed to blue-belt status.

“My counselor in high school put up flyers and said, ‘We have this new class that we’re starting.’ I didn’t know anything about it, but I knew people that had taken martial arts. I was really interested, and I ended up joining the first day, I was hooked ever since,” she said. “Thankfully, Matthew was able to bring it to UNCA. It follows me now.”

Unlike many other forms of martial arts, Chayon-Ryu is not based on competition.

“I like the fact that it’s not competition-based because I’m not a very aggressive person. I like the fact that it is very personal,” Campbell said. “Not only does it allow you to defeat your external enemies, but also the internal ones. It’s all about self-confidence.”

While the UNCA Martial Arts Club does not hold competitions, it does perform demonstrations.

“We haven’t done any this year, but we’ll sometimes be on the Quad. I’d like to do a halftime performance at a basketball game,” Mitchell said.

Campbell said she appreciates the theme of natural movement.

“Because it’s natural movement, there’s no stress on my body. This doesn’t put any stress on me. You just stretch right and you do exactly what he teaches you. Anybody can do Chayon-Ryu,” she said. “There’s lots of meditation, breathing and focusing on what you’re doing and why you’re here. I like the slower pace.”

Junior and yellow belt Alan Beny said he likes the discipline and pace of Chayon-Ryu, as opposed to other styles of martial arts.

“It’s a faster-paced class, but you don’t realize it because of how it’s taught. If you compare it to other disciplines, you don’t get to a lot of the things we’re doing until you’re at a higher belt level,” he said. “It gives you some practicality for things that you would do in real life.”

Ciorstaidh Eales, an orange belt and a native of Wales, echoed that sentiment.

“I think it’s important for females to defend themselves. If I’m walking back from town after clubbing at 3 o’clock in the morning by myself, I need to know how to defend myself just in case,” she said.

Chayon-Ryu is something anybody can do, and anyone who is interested is encouraged to check it out, Mitchell said.

“People who think that it’s ‘beat ‘em up’, ninjas flipping over cars, it’s not. It’s not the movies. It’s a living, breathing art. It’s something that facilitates self-control, self-discipline, confidence and patience. If you don’t want those four things, then this isn’t for you. But I don’t know many people who don’t want those things,” he said.

Anyone interested in joining UNCA’s Martial Arts Club should attend the meeting in Highsmith Union at 6 p.m. tonight.