Aesthetics and Dance: Form and Structure

KHC Freshman Seminar: KHC TH 101
TR 9:30-10:45am

Instructor: Micki Taylor-Pinney (PERD and CFA)
Office: FitRec Rm. 236, 915 Commonwealth Avenue
Office Hours: bu.edu/fitrec/dance
Phone: 617-353-1597; email: mtaypin@bu.edu

Course on Blackboard Learn; no text book

Course Description:
Welcoming the uninitiated and dance enthusiast alike, this course looks at three major theories of art and applies them to dance. How do we view and perceive dance? The theories that provide us the most insight are the mimetic/representation, formal, and expression theories. While these theories have been in existence for centuries, we will use them to consider visual art, theater, and music, and then focus on dance. How is movement and gesture organized to tell a story, convey an idea and/or create an aesthetic experience? How do we make sense of this nonverbal form of communication and increase our appreciation for dance’s power to engage an audience? In a seminar format, we will read and discuss articles by theorists and critics. Videos and workshops will provide historical context for four excursions to dance performances. With the premise of learning from doing, some class time will be spent in the studio, using it as our laboratory for experimentation and exploration of principles and ideas from the lectures and discussions. Coursework includes: attendance and participation in class; experiential time in the studio; readings and written responses; a final group project; and four written dance reviews.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will be familiar with the three major art theories and apply to viewing and perceiving dance.
2. Students will increase their understanding and appreciation of dance as capable of provoking one’s imagination, curiosity and emotions through the use of form and structure.
3. Students will be able to articulately enhance the use of language to describe dance and craft a review that provides evidence for one’s point of view
4. Students will demonstrate their comprehension of use of form and structure by creating/presenting a group project/movement study.

Course Requirements:
1. Attend all class meetings. Only 2 absences allowed. Makeups by arrangement.
2. Prior to class, read selected readings and submit 1-2 pages or written responses; see details p.4
3. Attend four assigned performances; see roster
4. Write reviews of four performances; not to exceed 3 pages; 1 re-write allowed; see details p.4
5. Journal of responses to studio lab activities and final project; not to exceed 15 pages; see details p.4
6. Final group project: a movement study of form and structure using text, gesture, and/or rituals; See details p.5

Semester Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>week of 1/19 and 1/23</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture #1:</td>
<td>Introduction to Major Theories of Art</td>
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<td>Viewing &amp; Describing Visual Art, Music, and Dance</td>
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<td>Slides and videotapes, reviews by Jowitt, Terry and others;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In-class writing assignments and studio lab assignments</td>
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| Class | week of 1/30 | **Lecture #2**: Part 1: Analyzing & Evaluating: part 1  
Pre-class Reading: samples of professional and student reviews and  
“To Be a Critic” by Walter Sorrell; “A Private View of Criticism” by Deborah Jowitt;  
Overview of Pre-20th century dance history through samples of videos |
|-------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Class | week of 2/6  | **Lecture #3**: Part 2 Analyzing & Evaluating  
Pre-class Reading: Dance Criticism introduction from *What is Dance?* edited by Roger Copeland and Marshall Cohen; “A Prolegomenon to an Aesthetics of Dance” by Selma Jeanne Cohen;  
Overview of 20th century dance history through sample of videos |
| Class | week of 2/13 | **Lecture #4**: Mimetic/Representational Theory;  
Pre-class Reading: “Perceiving Dance” By Joanna Friesen |
| Class | week of 2/20 | **Lecture #5**: Formalism  
Pre-class Reading: Chapter 1 from “New Dance” by Margery Turner  
Guest lecturer on George Balanchine and Igor Stravinsky  
*First review due* |
| Class | week of 2/27 | **Lecture #6**: Expressionism; “Black and White”  
Pre-class Reading: excerpt from Leo Tolstoy’s “What is Art?” |
| Class | week of 3/13 | **Lecture #7**: Modernism and nonconformity  
Pre-class Reading: TBD - excerpt from Choreographing Differences; “Misha’s Passion” by Wendy Perron (Dance Magazine)  
Guest lecturer: Carrie Preston and guest artists: AXIS Dance Company |
| Class | week of 3/20 | **Lecture #8**: Review of Major Theories of Art  
Pre-class Readings: TBD - Visual Thinking Strategies; Viewpoints  
Lab: composition fundamentals of form and structure |
| Class | week of 3/27 | **Lecture #9**: High Brow and Low Brow Art and Entertainment;  
Studio lab: composition studies using text  
*Second review due* |
| Class | week of 4/3  | **Lecture #10**: Gesture  
Pre-class Reading: excerpt: “Ritual of Art” from Jamake Highwater’s *Dance: Rituals of Experience*  
Studio lab: composition studies using gesture  
*Third review due* |
| Class | week of 4/10 | **Lecture #11**: Cross-cultural perspective  
Pre-class Reading from Gerald Jonas “Dancing: the Pleasure, Power and Art of Movement”;  
Studio lab: composition studies using ritual  
*Fourth review due* |
Class week of 4/17  **Lecture #12:** When genres blur…ethnic influences; videodance; performance art; circus; mixed ability
Class time for final group projects

Class week of 4/24  **Optional rewrite due**
Presentation of final group projects and journal due

**Grading:**

20%  Attendance and participation
    Presence required in class: Only 2 absences allowed.
    Thoughtful, active participation in class discussion

20%  Written response to study questions submitted online by midnight Tuesday

40%  Papers; timely submission and adherence to writing guidelines (pgs 5 & 6 of syllabus);
    use sample reviews on Blackboard to provide guidance

15%  Studio Journals: quality of summary and self-reflection on the activity of each studio class;
    Description of process and analysis of final project

5%  Final project: cohesive group study of form and structure

**Arrangements for Students with Disabilities:** If you require course material in an alternative format or need special accommodations due to a disability, please contact the instructor and the Office of Disability Services (http://www.bu.edu/disability/) as soon as possible.

**Roster of Performances:**

**Four concerts are required**

**Cost:** For most performance, KHC will provide a subvention for the cost of tickets

1.2/10-2/11
Gallim Dance
ICA

2. Friday, 2/24 KHC at Boston Ballet (also available Sunday, 2/23 – 3/5)
Boston Ballet: William Forsythe’s Artifact
Opera House

3. Tuesday 3/14 at 3:30pm
AXIS Dance Company
BU Metcalf Ballroom

Alvin Ailey Dance Theater
Boch Wang Center

**Alternates:**
1. Thursday, 4/20, 7:15pm Dress; Friday, 4/21, 8pm; Saturday, 4/22, 8pm
Dance Theatre Group Visions (review minimum of four pieces)
BU Dance Theatre, enter from Buick St. entrance

2. Friday and Saturday, 1/27 and 1/28
Jessica Lang Dance
Boch Center Schubert Theatre

KHC CFA 101 Aesthetics and Dance Syllabus - 3 -
Requirements for Study Questions:
400 – 800 words; 1-2 pages; double-spaced submitted online
Thorough, reflective responses using examples from reading or own experience.
Pose one question you would ask the author about material in article or something you believe warrants further investigation.

Requirements for reviews:
Minimum of 800 to maximum of 1200 words; 2-3 pages; double spaced.

Recommendations for reviews:
Remember:
• This critique is a reflection of your vision and your feelings
• Therefore, write in the first person
• Your opinion needs to be backed up by description and examples
• Use active verbs and pungent adverbs
• Do not make assumptions for the audience, for example, “the audience was excited for the second half of the concert”, though you can write of what you see/hear, for example, “the audience rose to their feet to give the dancers a standing ovation.”
• Keep your humility and avoid witty put-downs

Choose a point of view; it can include elements of the following to different degrees:
• describing what you saw (description)
• writing about the images and ideas it suggested to you (analysis)
• offering an opinion of its worth (evaluation)

Back up the key points with details.

You may focus on one piece or one aspect if you wish rather than treating the program equally

Elements you may choose to explore:
• Content of the work (meaning)
• Form of the work (architecture/structure)
• Movement vocabulary and/or style
• The performers; use first and last names first time, then just last names if you refer to them again
• The relationship between the music, dance or visual components

You may choose to include:
• Historical relevance or historically relevant information
• Social relevance

Avoid pitfalls:
• Confusing "liking" or "disliking" with a value judgement
• Getting lost in interpretation at the expense of stating what you actually saw

Check your spelling and grammar.

Deadlines are negotiable only if they don’t coincide with the schedule of concerts you are attending. It is recommended you submit your review within two weeks of viewing the performance.

Requirements for Studio Journals:
Not to exceed 15 pages (a. weekly entry and b. summary of final project)
a. One entry/one page response per studio activity.
   Give your reaction to the assignment.
   Was it difficult to understand? Interesting? Exciting?
   Did it introduce you to a new way of thinking about something? If so, how?
Come up with a question you have about some aspect of the activity.

b. Summary of final project (4 pages)
   Detail choice of source material and process for creating final project
   Describe your response to the end result as a performer

Requirements for Final Group Project:
   A 3-5 minute study of movement devised from the participants using movement from their own
   vocabulary, i.e. may or may not include formal dance technique
   The study can include set and/or improvised movement
   Source material should be drawn from class explorations of text, gesture, and ritual
   The form and structure should be evident as phrases and segments organized into a cohesive piece
   Music should be instrumental unless integral to the piece

Students in this course must maintain the standards of the BU Academic Conduct Code. Please read the document at
http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/
Bibliography

Assigned readings will be available at the Blackboard website. For those who are unable to access the website, hard copies may be borrowed. Subject to change.


Siegel, Marcia B. *Watching the Dance Go By*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company,


