The course is designed to increase the students’ knowledge of the theory and practice of dance criticism. Organized as a seminar, we will read and discuss articles by theorists and critics in preparation for articulating reasoned assessments verbally and in writing. There are five assigned theatre and dance performances to attend. Lectures by faculty and visiting artists introduce each performance/exhibition experience and lead to thoughtful critical responses.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To study the writing of art theorists and apply to viewing dance
2. To read and analyze dance reviews and the writing of dance critics
3. To articulate a review and provide evidence for one’s point of view
4. To enhance the use of language to describe dance
5. To refine the analysis of choreography and performance
6. To improve the evaluation and judgment of a performance
7. To increase the understanding and appreciation of a dance performance

**Course Requirements:**

1. Prior to reading online lecture, read selected readings and prepare typed study questions;
2. Read and write 2-page response to 11 online lectures; may include writing assignments
3. Arrange a common weekly time slot to video and DVDs with other student; prepare 1-page response;
4. Attend five assigned performances
5. Write reviews of four performances (1 re-write allowed)

Each Friday after “class” date below, you should be submitting:

1. 1 page response to select readings of the week;
2. 2 page response to online lecture; writing assignments are additional with no length required
3. 1 page response to video/DVDs

**Semester Schedule**

| Class | Date       | Lecture #1: Introduction to Major Theories of Art
|-------|------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|       | Sept. 12   | Viewing & Describing Dance
|       |            | Viewing of videotapes, reviews by Jowitt, Terry and others;
|       |            | In-class writing assignment

| Class | Date       | Lecture #2: Analyzing & Evaluating Dance: part 1
|-------|------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|       | Sept. 19   | Pre-class Reading: samples of professional and student reviews and
|       |            | “To Be a Critic” by Walter Sorrell
|       |            | In-class: videos and reading “A Private View of Criticism” by Deborah Jowitt

| Class | Date       | Lecture #3 Analyzing & Evaluating Dance: part 2
|-------|------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|       | Sept. 26   | 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;
|       |            | Videos and in-class writing assignment

| Class | Date       | Lecture #4: Mimetic/Representational Theory;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>Monday holiday; class held on Tuesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture #5:</td>
<td>Formalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class Reading:</td>
<td>Chapter 1 from “New Dance” by Margery Turner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class video:</td>
<td>excerpts of Balanchine’s work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Oct. 17</th>
<th>Lecture #6: Expressionism; “Black and White”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class Reading:</td>
<td>excerpt from Leo Tolstoy’s “What is Art?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class video:</td>
<td>Eiko and Koma, Talley Beatty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Oct. 24</th>
<th>Lecture #7: Review of major theories of art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class Reading:</td>
<td>“…Not to Understand” by Jennifer Dunning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class:</td>
<td>Videos paired with reviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Oct. 31</th>
<th>Lecture #8: Modernism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class Readings:</td>
<td>“Misha’s Passion” by Wendy Perron (Dance Magazine)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class videos:</td>
<td>- Judson Church Movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Nov. 7</th>
<th>Lecture #9: High Brow and Low Brow Art and Entertainment;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class videos:</td>
<td>Rennie Harris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Nov. 14</th>
<th>Lecture #10: Gesture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class Reading:</td>
<td>excerpt: “Ritual of Art” from Jamake Highwater’s Dance: Rituals of Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class videos:</td>
<td>Sleeping Beauty, Joe Good and Ron K. Brown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No class</th>
<th>Nov. 21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Nov. 28</th>
<th>Lecture #11: Cross-cultural perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-class Reading from Gerald Jonas “Dancing: the Pleasure, Power and Art of Movement”;</td>
<td>Pre-class viewing of videos on reserve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class discussion:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Dec. 5</th>
<th>Fourth review due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture #12:</td>
<td>When genres blur…ethnic influences; videodance; performance art; circus; mixed ability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap Up &amp; Evaluation 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| No Class | Dec. 12 | All papers due. |
**Roster of Performances**

Five concerts are required  
Cost: approximately $110 or less (student rush/discounted tickets)

**To Be Determined**

**Four Reviews:**  
The Review Due dates are to make certain you submit within approximately 2 weeks of seeing a performance. These are not hard and fast due dates but for your own benefit, adhere to them as much as possible. Friday, April 29, is an absolute deadline. You maybe rewrite any single review.
Written critiques (4)

- 2 pages double-spaced
- 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.

One way to write a review; please note - there is no formula.

Paragraph #1
- Could be a catchy lead-in as if trying to engage someone or peak their interest. It could be a memorable moment or a striking overall impression. This is something you may choose to refer to at the end of your review.
- Include details of the concert such as name of company, date/time, and location. Describe the concert’s content (showcase, number of pieces, or evening-length piece).

Paragraph #2
- Delve into one piece.
- You won’t be able to include all but choose a few of the following to explore. It needn’t be in this order; your description, analysis and evaluation can be mixed together.
  - Describe using active verbs, adverbs, and adjectives:
  - Number of dancers, music, sets, and/or costumes as it seems relevant to your viewing
  - Movement vocabulary and quality, the vocabulary using action terms. Avoid using technical terms
  - Style of dance or combination of styles
  - How movement related to music or space
  - Structure of the piece
- Analyze, as relevant to your focus:
  - Was the intent clear?
  - Did the title provide insight in to the work?
  - How did the structure of the piece contribute to your viewing?
  - Was there a story, characters or theme? Was it abstract or movement-based?
  - What did you interpret the relationship between the dancers? The music? The space?
  - What did the dance make you think about?
  - Did the dancers perform the choreography well?
  - How did their technical ability contribute or detract from your impression of the piece?
- Evaluate the effectiveness or success of the piece (avoid “liked” or “disliked” but be more creative/descriptive):
  - What engaged or disappointed you about the piece?
  - Was the piece too long or too short?
  - Did the structure of the piece work for what you thought the intent of the piece was about?
  - Did you believe the story or characters?

Paragraph #3 and #4
- Repeat for another dance or two or do an overview of a couple of other pieces.
- It is fine to mention other pieces by title with a brief synopsis or description.

Paragraph #5
- Sum up your appraisal of the concert as a whole.
- What was your overall reaction?
- How did the concert hold together as a whole or provide contrast?
- Was there a stand-out?
- Is this a concert or company you would want to see again?
**Recommendations:**

**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)

Be sure to 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

**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
- Avoid changing tenses
- **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

**Grading:**
- **CFA TH 239:** Letter grade

**Criterion for grading:**
- **50%** Typed responses to study Q’s, online lectures, and videos/DVDs
  - 1-2 points EACH for Study Questions and Video/DVD responses
  - 2-4 points for online lecture responses.
  - To earn more than minimum, responses should be insightful, reflective, thoughtful, and include questions if you want more information or are curious about the views presented.

- **50%** Papers; timely submission and adherence to writing guidelines (pgs 4 & 5 of syllabus); use sample reviews on Blackboard to provide guidance
**CFA Academic Conduct Code:**

The Academic Conduct Code was prepared by the College of Fine Arts Policies and Procedures Committee and approved by the College of Fine Arts faculty. All students and faculty are expected read and abide by the by the policies outlined in this document.  [http://www.bu.edu/cfa/resources/documents/CONDUCTCodeJune2005.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/cfa/resources/documents/CONDUCTCodeJune2005.pdf)

**Bibliography**

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


