

Barnard College Pre-College Programs: Dance in the City
The World of Dance: From Theory to Practice

Instructor: Sydnie L. Mosley
Diana LL 104 1:30-3:30pm/305 Barnard Hall 4-5:30pm

Course Description

This course constructs a bridge between topics in dance scholarship and applied practices. We learn to critically analyze, write and discuss various forms of dance while engaging with New York City artists, institutions and live performances. Topics we will investigate include: reading dance as a cultural text, understanding the role of the teaching artist, understanding the effects of dance criticism, discovering post-modernism and its contemporary legacy in New York City, and understanding music-dance relationships from the perspective and process of composers & choreographers.

A larger theme we will investigate over the course of the week is: Culture as Creative Process. We will look into our own cultural histories and contexts, and choreograph our own stories.

Class time each day will be split into two sessions:

- **In the classroom** we will discuss the theme for the day while engaging with texts, guest lecturers, performances we have seen and other experiences.
- **In the dance studio** we will further our investigation of these themes with movement experiences and composition tools to create our own movement study over the course of the week.

A Note about Field Trips

Please note that we will take several field trips together during this course, as specified in the syllabus. You should expect to travel together and pay your own transportation by bus or subway. Barnard will cover admission fees, unless otherwise stated. If you do not intend to return to campus after the trip you must let me know a few days IN ADVANCE so that I can notify the Pre-College office before we leave campus.

Disability Services

Students with disabilities who be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Before a student can receive classroom accommodations, she/he must be registered in advance with the PCP Office by filling out a 'Needs Assessment Form'. If you have any questions or concerns, you may also talk to the Director of the Pre-College Program. The form is available at <http://barnard.edu/precollege/summerprograms/accepted>.

Course Requirements

- Attendance to classes, performances, and other planned activities each day.
- Course readings and critical questions.
 - Each student is expected to arrive to class having read the required reading for the day, with typed, short answers to each of the critical questions. In

addition, each student should prepare 1-2 questions of her own for discussion about the reading that analyzes and interrogates the material.

- **Course Reader for *The World of Dance: From Theory to Practice* can be purchased upon arrival.**
 - Daily discussion participation.
 - Create a short dance composition in collaboration with your classmates to be presented on **Sunday, July 15.**
 - 4-5 page paper, typed, double-spaced, written analysis about your movement composition. **Due on Sunday, July 15.**
 - Your paper should focus on culture as a creative process. Applying major themes and concepts acquired over the course of the week in discussions and readings, **how does the content and form of your dance reveal a personal story, history, or context?**
 - Outside research/resources appreciated, but not required.
 - Please properly cite any readings you reference or quote. Refer to http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0011.html for proper citations.
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Monday, July 9: Reading Dance as Cultural Text

Performance: 7:30pm Ronald K. Brown/Evidence at Joyce Theater

Guest: Rebecca Bliss

Readings Due:

- Sklar, Deidre. "Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance." *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 30-32.
- Foster, Susan Leigh. *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull*. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002. 3-4, 16-17.
- Bull, Cynthia Jean Cohen. "Looking at Movement as Culture: Contact Improvisation to Disco." *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 404-413.

In the studio: What's my story? What *embodied knowledge* do I hold? What can we learn from the performance of my body?

- Concepts
 - Contemplate what story you might like to tell. Consider these questions as you brainstorm: Who are you? What makes you unique? Where is your family from? Where do you currently live? How did you get there? What is a social or political issue you are passionate about? What other types of art inspire you (music, theater, visual arts, literary texts)? What's a funny thing that happened to you yesterday?
- Movement Generation (15 min)
 - Come up with 8-10 movements or gestures that reveal your story.
 - These can be anything. Here are some ideas: mimed gestures, a traditional dance in your family or culture, pedestrian movements,

- your favorite dance party moves, your favorite movements from dance technique class etc.
 - Create movement phrases that tell pieces of the story.
 - Perform for group. [5 groups of 4.]
 - For the watchers: What do you learn about Name from watching her movement? What context can you gather just by looking at WHAT she performs, and HOW she performs it?
 - For the creator/performer: Listen to the feedback from your classmates. Take notes. What did they notice? Is this the same/different than what you wanted to show? If you want, ask them for suggestions to develop your phrase(s) in the direction you want.

Tuesday, July 10: Dance Criticism and its Effects on the Field

Screening: 10am *Bill T. Jones/ Still Here*. Dir. David Grubin. Bill Moyers, 1997. Film.

In this program, journalist Bill Moyers and filmmaker David Grubin give viewers a rare glimpse into dancer/choreographer Bill T. Jones's highly acclaimed dance, "Still/Here." At workshops around the country, people facing life-threatening illnesses are asked to remember the highs and lows of their lives, and even imagine their own deaths. They then transform their feelings into expressive movement, which Jones incorporates into dance.

Guests: Eva Yaa Asantewaa, Siobhan Burke

Readings due:

- Jowitt, Deborah. "Beyond Description: Writing Beneath the Surface." *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 7-11.
- Croce, Arlene. "A Critic At Bay." *New Yorker*. Dec. 1994: Vol. 70 No. 43

In the studio: Developing the story. Feedback and its effects.

- Revise and/or Develop your movement phrases based on your feedback from yesterday. Edit.
 - Abstract like Gatekeepers – Still tells a story. Stevie Wonder piece is about the music. Bill T. Jones
 - Toolbox:
 - Generating tools: retrograde,
 - Shape: Levels, Symmetry vs. asymmetry, scale
 - Space: spatial pattern, scale
 - Timing: tempo, meter, rhythm
 - Dynamics: flow (bound-free), space (direct-indirect), time (sustained-sudden)
- Stay true to your vision.
 - Do suggestions from your classmates help you achieve your vision better?
 - Will you disregard their feedback altogether and keep working on your own?

- Do you have new thoughts, ideas, or inspiration for creating?
- Perform your new phrase material for your same group.
 - For the watchers: How has the material developed? What more do you understand about Name and her story?
 - For the creator/performer: Listen to the feedback from your classmates. Take notes. What did they notice? Is this the same/different than what you wanted to show? Continue to take into account (or not) their thoughts.

Wednesday, July 11: Contemporary Dance Scene

Performance: 8pm Paris Opera Ballet at Lincoln Center

Guest: Kendra Portier

Readings due:

- Banes, Sally. *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987. Preface & Introduction

In the studio: A dance that describes itself.

- Contact improvisation is a dance that describes itself.
 - Beginner's exploration led by Kendra.
 - What can we learn from improvisation? What can we bring from our improvisation to our composition?
- Composition tools to shape movement phrases offered by Kendra.
- Thinking about structure (Form & Content): How will you shape your composition? Your story may be narrative, linear, abstract, repetitive etc. We are focused on making meaning, and any of these structures may illuminate your meaning.
 - ABA, Rondo, Theme and Variation
 - Have a beginning, middle, and end – although it doesn't have to be linear.

Thursday, July 12: Pedagogy – Role of the Teaching Artist

Site Visit: 8:45am National Dance Institute

Readings due:

- Kealiinohomoku, Joann. "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance." *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*. Eds. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001. 33-42.

In the studio: Teaching your art.

- Teach a section of your dance to a partner well enough so that she could perform it on her own. Coach her to perform it with the proper intent. Switch roles and learn a section of your partner's dance.
- For the teacher: What aspects of your dance did you learn were most important while teaching it to someone else? (Perhaps you didn't realize this before?)
- For the student: As you begin to sink into someone else's material, what did you learn about her, or her story, that you didn't know before?

- Run your composition. Continue to shape the structure of your work.

Friday, July 13: Music-Dance Relationships

Performance: 1pm Tap It Out, River to River Festival at World Financial Center Plaza
6:30pm Midsummer Night Swing at Lincoln Center (optional)

Readings due:

- Goler, Veta. "Moves on Top of Blues: Dianne McIntyre." *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*. Ed. Thomas DeFrantz. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. 205-219.
- Banes, Sally. *Terpsichore in Sneakers*. CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987. 5-10.

In the studio: Music! (and other essential elements)

- What is the sound score for your work? Is it music? Text? Silence? Ambient sound? Test different musical choices with your feedback group.
- Are there costumes pieces, or props that are essential to dancing your story? How will you incorporate them?

Saturday, July 14: Rehearsal in the studio

12-1:30pm: Shaping our sharing
--Unison/non-unison
1:30-4pm: Polishing

Sunday, July 15: Final Presentation in the studio

12-1:30pm Warm Up and Rehearsal

2-3pm Final Presentation with families and guests

Final Paper DUE.

Hard copy in my hand OR emailed by midnight. This gives you the opportunity to consider feedback and audience reaction to your compositions in your paper.