

## Purpose and Practice of Dance Critique

XXXXX.2515

Spring 2014

INSTRUCTOR Benny Simon

TIME Mondays, 3:30-5:00

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LOCATION Studio C2

PLEASE EMAIL INSTRUCTOR WITH QUESTIONS OR TO SET UP AN APPOINTMENT

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose and practice of dance criticism will be examined. Two methods of dance criticism will be explored and practiced through the analysis of existing works on video and choreography produced by students. These experiences will provide tools and context that complement choreographic skills and the discourse of dance.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course the student will be able to:

1. Describe the purpose of dance criticism
2. Explain the role of criticism in the discourse of dance
3. Summarize and apply the steps involved in two methods of dance criticism
4. Apply dance criticism concepts and methods to their own dance practices

### COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Attendance at all classes and on-time arrival is required
2. Please complete assigned readings ahead of time as outlined in the Course Calendar
3. Constructive and courteous participation in class discussions is expected
4. Dress comfortably for movement
5. Please turn off and put away phones for the duration of class; devices may be used to take notes during lectures and discussions

### COURSE PROTOCOL

1. Written assignments must be typewritten in 12pt font and double-spaced. Please use a header and page numbers, and follow APA guidelines (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>).
2. All written assignments should be submitted online in Word format (no PDF) via Classes. Email submissions will not be accepted.

3. Attendance at all sessions is required, and any missed classes after one will reduce your final grade by one increment for each absence. Please notify the instructor ahead of time via email if you will be late or absent.
4. Assignments turned in late will be reduced by one grade increment for each day. Assignments turned in later than one week after the due date will not be accepted.
5. Students requiring special accommodations due to chronic health issues or learning disabilities should register with the University Center for Students with Disabilities.
6. Compliance with the University's standards of academic integrity are expected (<http://xxxuniversity.edu/academic-integrity>).
7. Grading is as follows:

GRADE LETTER	GRADE NUMBER	KEY
A	94-100	Exceptional
A-	90-93	Excellent
B+	87-89	Extremely Good
B	84-86	Very Good
B-	80-83	Good
C+	77-79	Satisfactory
C	74-76	Mostly Satisfactory
C-	70-73	Nearly Satisfactory
D+	67-69	Passing
D	65-66	Passing
D-	60-64	Passing
F	0-59	Failure

## COURSE TEXTS & MATERIALS

Lavender, L. (1996). *Dancers talking dance*. Human Kinetics.

Lerman, L., & Borstel, J. (2003). *Liz Lerman's critical response process*. Takoma Park: Dance Exchange.

Speir, S. (2011). *William Forsythe and the practice of choreography: It starts from any point*. New York: Routledge.

Strauss, M. (2005). *The dance criticism of Arlene Croce*. Jefferson: McFarland.

*Note: You do not need to purchase Forsythe and Strauss texts; copies of relevant chapters will be provided.*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **Reading Assignments and Class Participation**

Weekly assignments should be read in the order listed in the course calendar. Please be prepared to discuss or apply the material in class. Class participation consists of attendance, and engagement in classroom discussion and movement activities.

### **Assignment #1: Choreograph a Solo Work**

*Due at your first critique practice presentation (10% of grade)*

Each student will choreograph a short (approximately 3-4 minute) solo work. This work will be used to practice critical methods during the course, and should be done in a style that the student is already comfortable working in.

### **Assignment #2: Critique a Existing Dance Work**

*Due Week 4 (10% of grade)*

Choose one of the example dance videos provided in class and write a three-page critique using Larry Lavender's steps of critical evaluation:

- Observation
- Reflection
- Discussion
- Evaluation
- Recommendations for revisions

### **Participate in Practice Critique Sessions**

*Weeks 7-12 (55% of grade)*

Each student will have three chances to present their choreography and will participate in two critical discussions of their work. Three students will present each week.

After each presentation students will participate in a 20-minute critical discussion using the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process. Students will take turns acting as the Facilitator, and presenters are expected to revise their choreography based on the feedback received.

The third and final presentation will include all students on the last day of class, and is an opportunity to demonstrate the choreographic progress made as a result of the critical discussions.

**Assignment #3: Reflections on the Impact of Critical Discussion**

*Week 13 (25% of grade)*

Write a 12-15 page reflection that demonstrates the following:

- What is criticism, why is it important, and what role does it play in the discourse of dance?
- Use the Lavender method to critique a work that we have not viewed/discussed in class (this can be a live performance you attend or a video of a performance)
- Reflect on your experience using the Liz Lerman Critical Response Process in the context of your own choreographic process
- Discuss how critical discussion skills may be used in your own dance practice

Note: This should be a cohesive paper; do not respond to each prompt above in bullet point form. Please include references to class texts or other scholarly sources.

**COURSE CALENDAR** (CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

WEEK	TOPIC	DUE THIS WEEK
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Overview of topics</li> <li>• Independent time to work on solos</li> </ul>	n/a
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lecture/discussion:</b> The purpose of investigation</li> <li>• Independent time to work on solos</li> </ul>	Forsythe (read the Introduction & chapters 3, 4, 7 & 11)
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lecture/discussion:</b> Tradition, musicality &amp;</li> </ul>	Strauss (read the Introduction & chapters 2, 5 & 6)

	<p>craftsmanship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent time to work on solos</li> </ul>	
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Lecture/discussion:</b> Larry Lavender's five steps of critical evaluation</li> <li>Independent time to work on solos</li> </ul>	<p>Lavender (familiarize yourself with the steps in the "O.R.D.E.R." process)</p> <p>The following videos will be viewed and critiqued in class using the Lavender process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dance Up Close / ChrisMastersDance <a href="http://bit.ly/1oGXlo8">http://bit.ly/1oGXlo8</a></li> <li>between sleep and wake / ChrisMastersDance <a href="http://bit.ly/PFNBR2">http://bit.ly/PFNBR2</a></li> <li>The Loss of Small Detail (Forsythe) <a href="http://bit.ly/11FOCDJ">http://bit.ly/11FOCDJ</a></li> </ul>
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Lecture/discussion:</b> Larry Lavender's five steps of critical evaluation</li> <li>Independent time to work on solos</li> </ul>	<p>The following videos will be viewed and critiqued in class using the Lavender process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Milkdreams</i> by Alexandra Beller</li> <li><i>James Brown</i> by Monica Bill Barnes &amp; Co.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Videos not available online; will be shown in class</i></p>
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Lecture/discussion:</b> Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (CRP)</li> <li>Independent time to work on solos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lerman (read the whole book)</li> <li>Hand in Assignment #2</li> </ul>
Week 7	Presentations and critical discussion using the CRP (round 1)	Three students will present their solos, following by a critical discussion using the CRP
Week 8	Presentations and critical discussion using the CRP (round 1)	Three students will present their solos, following by a critical discussion using the CRP
Week 9	Presentations and critical discussion using the CRP (round 1)	Three students will present their solos, following by a critical discussion using the CRP
Week 10	Presentations and critical discussion using the CRP (round 2)	Three students will present their solos, following by a critical discussion using the CRP
Week 11	Presentations and critical	Three students will present their solos,

	discussion using the CRP (round 2)	following by a critical discussion using the CRP
Week 12	Presentations and critical discussion using the CRP (round 2)	Three students will present their solos, following by a critical discussion using the CRP
Week 13	Final presentations of all solos and course reflection discussion	Hand in Assignment #3