DNC 71: DANCE MOVEMENT & CREATIVE PROCESS
Instructor: Renata Celichowska, renata.celichowska@tufts.edu
Summer Term 2019
3.0 credits
(Please note that the schedule and assignments are subject to change)

DESCRIPTION: Dance Movement & Creative Process explores the relationship between movement, the creative process and improvisation. The course emphasizes individual and group movement improvisation and creative problem solving. Designed for students of all levels, classes begin with a non-technical warm-up, followed by guided movement assignments focusing on various methods of sourcing material, basic contact improvisation, and oral and written language skills based in Laban Movement Analysis for describing movement. The course is organized into 3 general segments:

**Segment 1.** Introduction to basic elements of movement, as defined by Rudolf Von Laban: Body Shaping, General & Personal Space, Time, Movement Quality & Efforts, and Movement Relationships.

**Segment 2.** Increased emphasis on group relationships (e.g., mirroring, following and their variations); movement sourcing from materials such as every day life, written word, visual texts, props, etc. Includes an introduction to basic contact improvisation skills.

**Segment 3.** Emphasis on movement invention; more complex partnering; ensemble improvisation. Exposure to designing and embodying structured improvisational scores.

GOALS: The course focuses on exposing students to the movement vocabulary and techniques involved in generating original movement expression in independent and group movement situations. Goals for the course include cultivating the student’s physical movement capabilities, expanding expressive movement options and creative problem-solving skills, and developing collaborative abilities in improvisational situations. An additional goal of the summer course in Talloires is to become acquainted with the historical evolution of creative improvisational dance, emphasizing its origins in the work of Rudolf von Laban in Switzerland, France, and Germany in the mid-1910s and 1920s. Sourcing inspiration for movement research will be inspired by the work of French artists from Laban’s time and those French artists working currently, and by the natural environment of the village of Talloires.
LEARNING OUTCOMES:
• Students will demonstrate increased physical facility (in such areas as movement range, endurance, speed, core strength, sequence memory)
• Students will know and be able to use basic Laban movement vocabulary in describing their own and other students’ work
• Students will cultivate an independent & reflective physical practice
• Students will demonstrate respectful and fruitful collaborative process
• Students will be able to assume a creative leadership role
• Students will apply critical thinking and reasoning skills in creative problem-solving
• Students will be familiar with the historical development of and current work in dance improvisation

REQUIREMENTS & ASSESSMENT
(Attendance & participation are essential components for studio/lab dance courses) – For a complete explanation of assessment policies please see the Tufts Dance Program Assessment & Grading Policies.

Attendance: 25%
Participation: 35%
Individual Progress: 15%
Assignments: 25%

ATTENDANCE: The success of an intensive movement workshop is the responsibility of both the instructor and students. Experientially-based dance workshops build material progressively. It is in your best interest to attend every session. PLEASE ATTEND ALL SESSIONS.

PARTICIPATION & INDIVIDUAL PROGRESS: Active participation in class is essential for individual progress. Active participation includes: promptness & preparedness; focused physical practice; active engagement with technical and creative problem-solving assignments; demonstrated retention of movement material and vocabulary; positive contribution to group collaborative activities and the classroom environment. Progress is demonstrated by contributing to an in-class atmosphere of mutual respect, responsibility and risk-taking; by consistently attending and being focused, curious, committed; by experimenting; by risking discomfort and applying what you learn from that; by being patient with yourself and others and supporting others in class.

You will receive a written mid-point participation grade based on the fulfillment of these standards in your daily class work.
ASSIGNMENTS: Assignments will be adjusted to accommodate the availability of technology and suggested work-load for each Talloires course. Written work should be well-written, well-organized, inventive, concise, and demonstrate an understanding and integration of the readings, viewings, and experiential aspects of the class. Written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, in the equivalent of Times New Roman 12-point font and one-inch margins. Please proofread! Refer to Modern Language Association (MLA) style formatting for all writing assignments. Late assignments will be subject to grade deductions.

Assessment Rubric for Written assignments:
- **A to A-**: Novel, integrative, and original thinking, above and beyond required elements listed in Dance Program Assessment Policies. Flawless grammar.
- **A- to B+**: Very competent work that is clearly expressed, showing good comprehension, following instructions rigorously.
- **B to B-**: Average work, some good ideas, showing an understanding of the assignment.
- **B- to C+**: Less than average work, minimal effort shown.
- **C to D-**: Little to no effort shown, repetitive, excessive grammatical and/or spelling errors.
- **F**: Unsatisfactory or incomplete work, lack of comprehension, poorly written expression, off topic.

COURSE SCHEDULE: The following is a course outline of activities based upon the approximate schedule mentioned in the proposal.

- **2.5 hour sessions** will include a 1-hour, non-technical movement practice that builds from session to session as a basic movement technique class emphasizing somatic awareness. This aspect of the course will cultivate basic body awareness and abilities via investigations of principles of alignment, neuro-muscular-skeletal patterning, and movement efficiency. The second part of the 2.5 hour sessions will focus on movement improvisation techniques, beginning with individual experimentation and leading toward more group-oriented process.
- **1.5 hour sessions** will include a 30 minute basic movement class, followed by 1 hour of improvisational investigation. Depending upon how the longer and shorter classes are scheduled, 1 class per week will be used to review all skills to date via an open structure improvisation of longer duration.
- **Culmination** – In lieu of a course Final and depending upon the schedule of other course finals, the course will culminate in either a public or private showing for students, staff and invited guests. This will be based upon student interest in
performing. A majority of students will need to express an interest in performance in order to move forward with a public showing.

Week of May 16: Session 1
- Introduction to Laban Movement Concepts and Historical Perspectives
- French perspectives in art during the 1910s (Laban in relation to the French avant-garde)

Week of May 20: Sessions 2-4
- How to Vary a Movement: Options in Space, Time, Body Instrumentation, and Effort
- Relationships: Self to Self; Self to Others; Group to Group (Mirroring, Shadowing, Flocking)

Week of May 27: Sessions 5-8
- Sharing Weight: Contact with the floor; Using Pull and Push; Safe Yielding and Supporting
- What does the Picture need? Entering and Exiting a Moving Frame
- Music & Movement: A Love/Hate Relationship (sourcing from music compositions)

Week of June 3: Sessions 9-11
- Sourcing Movement: Text, Visuals, Characterizations (sourcing from 2-dimensional visual artists)
- Abstract Expressionism versus Concrete Formalism
- Contact and Momentum

Week of June 10: Sessions 12-14
- Site-Specific Improvisation: Practice and Factors (sourcing from architectural and photographic images)
- Open Structures: Limitations and Sequencing

Week of June 17: Sessions 15-17
- Props & Narrative
- Open Structures: Durational Performance & Dynamic Variations

Week of June 24: Session 18 & Final Showing

ASSIGNMENT 1: DUE week of May 20
All Students read, watch and write, responding to the following.

Read:
2) Banes, Sally, “Spontaneous Combustion: Notes on Dance Improvisation from the Sixties to the Nineties,” pp. 77-88.

**Watch:**
1) *Rudolf von Laban: Excerpts of Laban Documentary*
2) *Free Soul* (2016) Momo Sanno (5:27) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wFmeOeBrCE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wFmeOeBrCE)
3) *Contact at 10th and 2nd* (1983) (48:46-watch 10 or so min at whatever place you want to start-middle is good) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xSi76Fnki4&list=PLVrVGMAlwfLxoE-nwlqfiwr2YxjDwcyyX](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xSi76Fnki4&list=PLVrVGMAlwfLxoE-nwlqfiwr2YxjDwcyyX)
4) *Hip Hop Improv* (2012) 3REE ART (3 min) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F49Mym9beQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F49Mym9beQ)
   “Dance improvisation is a free art form born from music, emotional state, creative philosophy and life experience of the dancer”

**Write:** 3-4 pages. Explore two ideas from the readings and dance videos in relation to experiences from class. How do you see the role of “non-conformity” manifested in improvisation and the creative process? Are there any generational similarities or differences you note between the dance excerpts, and or between what you feel is your generational viewpoint and other generational viewpoints described in the readings and videos? Do you see similarities or marked differences in ideas from other aspects of your life? Are there new ideas presenting themselves to you?

**ASSIGNMENT 2: DUE week of May 27**
All Students read, watch and write, responding to the following.

**Read:**

**Watch:**
1) *Fall After Newton*, Steve Paxton
   Part 1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k768K_OTePM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k768K_OTePM)
   Part 2 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GTJSxNUpl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GTJSxNUpl)
   Part 3 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMj3Coktu40](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMj3Coktu40)
2) *Chute* (1972) Steve Paxton (9:31) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FeSDsmIeHA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FeSDsmIeHA) or [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FeSDsmIeHA&list=PL9ufKYIAKO8kd1xOG3IlaTh-dLhnwxSOq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FeSDsmIeHA&list=PL9ufKYIAKO8kd1xOG3IlaTh-dLhnwxSOq)
3) *ISTA Copenhagen-Improv Solo* (1996), Steve Paxton (9:47) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdcu3t3Z8NA&index=4&list=PL9ufKYIAKO8kd1xOG3IlaTh-dLhnwxSOq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdcu3t3Z8NA&index=4&list=PL9ufKYIAKO8kd1xOG3IlaTh-dLhnwxSOq)
4) *The Poetics of Touch*: Nancy Stark Smith [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6Pt0OXK7es](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6Pt0OXK7es)
Write: 2-3 pages. Using some of the "reporting" techniques described in the DeSpain article and other reflective practices mentioned by Paxton and Smith in their articles and video excerpts, write a reflection of an in-class movement experience. You might plan to take notes during and immediately after class so that your impressions stay as fresh as possible. You do not have to write in complete sentences, but rather go for a shifting dialogue between "I-ness" and the activities performed "by the I" that DeSpain describes. Try not to edit or filter your impressions. This is similar to automatic writing, coming from your physical movement experience.

ASSIGNMENT 3: DUE week of June 3
Read:
Research & Record: Using the images [AND/OR] music from previous class experiences, create a series of 10 shapes that you can show in class. Keeping some of the ideas expressed by Shahn and Goldsmith in their essays, design a system of recording/notating these shapes so that you can remember them. Record the source and some of the main movement characteristics that are specific to each shape. You can use short hand or prose to express your ideas. Use Laban movement description in your notation of the shapes.
Present: You will present these shapes in class and will be asked to work with them further in class.

ASSIGNMENT 4: DUE week of June 10
Read:
1) Hunter, Victoria. “Spatial translation, embodiment and the site-specific event”
2) Metal-Corbin, Josie. “Dancing in place: site-specific work”
3) Pearson, Sara. “The Honeymoon is Over”
Watch: TBA
Find & Move: Take a journey through a particular space that interests you. Investigate it from 5-8 different angles. Working both in the space and from memory, photographs, drawings, etc., create a movement structure for this space. Be prepared to share these images in class and to perform your structure both in and away from the space.
Write & Present: 2 pages. Discuss at least two ideas about space and structure that led your movement investigation. Use Laban movement specificity in your description. How did you respond in levels, facings, body initiation, relationship to the structure, interaction with negative space, etc. Can you recall and describe the sequence and quality of your structure without being in the space or looking at the photographs? Did your photographing of the space play an improvisational or choreographic role? Do any ideas from the reading help you organize the space or your sequence and structure? Explain.

ASSIGNMENT 5: DUE week of June 17
Read:
1) Greene, Maxine, “About the Aesthetic Experience” from Variations on a Blue Guitar. 1 page.


4) Dewey, John, “Having an Experience” from *Art as Experience*, pp. 35-mid-46. This is dense reading but well worth it.

**Write:** 3-4 pages.

Considering Maxine Greene’s short essay, do you think being in France these past weeks has altered your relationship to “aesthetic experiences?” If the idea of aesthetic experiences is new to you, try to describe something that felt like an “aesthetic” experience.* How has studying dance movement and the creative process influenced the way you experience and see dance and/or other aspects of your life. Try to be specific and relate what you can to your work and what you have read, experienced and seen during the class. What connections, if any, have you found in your dance practice to other aspects of your creative life and research in other fields? Are there transferrable methodologies that have been used in this class that you could see applying to other situations and interests in your life? Explain.

* Defined by American pragmatist philosopher, John Dewey, an aesthetic experience is not primarily emotional, practical, nor intellectual, though it contains equal aspects of these. It has a distinct beginning, middle, and end, and, as Greene further articulates, it has to be attended to in a particular way. (Dewey explains this attention as being between modes of a “lust for action” when one is overly distracted by the “doing” or “undergoing” of life, versus having an “excess of receptivity,” when one finds all stimuli equally powerful so that no distinct form of an experience can take hold. You might think of these ideas in relation to your improvisational experiences as a mover, or as a spectator of the improvisations you have seen in class.

**CULMINATING ASSIGNMENT: DUE week of June 24**

**Perform:** Working as an ensemble, we will create a performance using improvisational techniques from the class. The time, location, size and scope of the performance will be determined by the entire group during the last few meetings of the course. This will not include “set” choreographic pieces, but will be an opportunity for the group to revisit movement ideas and experiences.

**DRESS CODE:** Bare feet, yoga pants, warm-up pants, sweat pants, T-shirts, leotards. We do not recommend bare legs. Bring water. Do not chew gum or eat during class. Dangle earrings, rings, bracelets are potentially hazardous: please do not wear them during class. Dancers should plan to bring dance clothes in which they would feel comfortable performing.

**A NOTE ON PHYSICAL SAFETY:** The study of dance offers opportunities to relate to others in physically safe, non-sexual, and non-aggressive situations. Therefore, students should expect to be interacting with others in collaborative movement experiences involving physical cooperation and, in some classes, direct physical contact. There are also times when the most direct way for a faculty member to convey a physical concept is by the application of “tactile aid” (light touch). In both instances, (in peer to peer, and in instructor to student contact), it is expected that the scope of physical touch in class will be relegated to pertinent classroom practice and activities and that all participants will continue to respect the physical boundaries of the other people in class. A main goal for Dance Program faculty is to create a safe environment for all. If a student feels that he/she might not be comfortable participating in classroom activity that requires crossing certain physical boundaries, would prefer not to receive “tactile aid,” or feels that certain personal boundaries are being crossed in class, we urge the student to speak with the instructor or the Director of the Talloires Program promptly. That
being said, please bear in mind that contact improvisation is a significant component of this particular course. If contact is an insurmountable challenge, we urge you to consider another dance course.

Additionally, please identify any new or ongoing injuries and/or conditions to your instructor. Refrain from activity that will harm or further injure yourself or others. This will not impact your grade. If you are sick, report to Tufts in Talloires support staff. You will need a signed Physician’s note for an excused absence due to health issues. Please note: Studio/Lab dance courses may not be appropriate for those who must frequently refrain from activity due to ongoing physical or psychological issues.

Thank you for joining this course. I look forward to dancing with you!