

Fall 2023
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University

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DANCE IMPROVISATION

Dance 2270A

2270A Dance Improvisation. Students will explore improvisation as a process that facilitates the spontaneous response to cues and stimuli for the purpose of opening doorways to their own movement creativity. Topics will consider relaxation, improvisational states, structures for improvisations, participant and leader roles, building group trust, and the progression from spontaneity to form. Half course: 1hour lecture, 3hour lab; In-Person Format. Prerequisites: None.

Introduction

Improvisation is a highly sensitized mental state where the dancer, working within specific preset limitations, makes instantaneous movement decisions based on incoming space, time and force data rather than on preconceived movement patterns or plans. The dancer must stay with the set limitations of the improvisation while at the same time allowing the body and mind the freedom to explore new movement ideas and solutions. Ultimately, the dancer should be able to instantly reproduce the movement solutions exactly as they occurred during the improvisation. This movement memory skill is called “recall”.

Students begin to understand the interaction of the mind and the body by working through the process of improvisation. As they begin to recognize, understand and appreciate this complex mental state, the ability to read and discuss information regarding improvisation follows.

Lecture Topics:

1. improvisational states and the states of improvisation: experiential and contextual introduction to movement improvisation
2. opening up the mind and body to allow the creative process to happen
3. from spontaneity to form - understanding the creative process
4. dance improvisation as a tool
5. building a group feeling/trust
6. the role of relaxation and play
7. improvisation as an aid to developing movement and instructional material
8. identification of psychological and sociological aspects that emerge in and from the process

Practical Sessions:

The practical sessions will consist of studio work in movement improvisation. The practical sessions will explore topics and problems presented in the lectures.

This program of study and exploration will aim to give the student experience in:

- moving with more released movement patterns and an increased movement repertoire
- exploring and discovering different sources to inspire the creation of movement
- exploring and creating structures with which to frame improvisation

Students are expected to participate fully in all practical work and keep a twice weekly journal of their subjective and objective observations, and analysis of their response to each session. Practical evaluation commences from the first day of the course.

Practical sessions will include:

- tuning into yourself – self talk/internal dialogue
- a comparison of structured and free improvisations
- discovering the “improvisational state”
- work on release techniques
- individual and group improvisation techniques including contact improvisation
- developing “recall”

Attendance:

Because of the nature of the course material, **students are required to attend all classes.** The acceptable exceptions will be an illness that legitimately prevents attendance, or a personal crisis. These events must be proved with documentation. On days when a student does not feel up to physical participation, they should attend class and they will be given an observation assignment.

Dress:

Students should be prepared to work in bare feet, wear layers of soft cotton clothing such as leotards, footless tights, sweatpants, leg warmers, etc., and bring a towel and cotton socks to be used when required.

50% - Practical Evaluation will be based on:

The students increased ability, ease, and comfort with the work as expressed through their physical, verbal and collaborative contributions to the class

- quantity of participation (attendance and readiness to work)
- quality of participation (doing, seeing, commenting)
 - increased ability to become and remain involved
 - increased ability to find new/fresh solutions to movement problems given
 - ability to work with others as an equal, leader or follower
- apparent overall individual improvement
- completion and quality of specific movement assignments

(Specific details on the above will be provided as the instructor has the opportunity to meet the students and set assignments appropriate to the backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses within the class.)

Journal, Personal Profile, 3 summaries

Journal 10%

The journal should document the students' mental, physical, and emotional progression through the course. Following each class, the student should think about the experience (s), then briefly describe the task, what happened including how or in what way it affected them. The journal should indicate the student's ability to:

- reflect on personal movement experiences during each class.
- observe movement and translate this movement observation into words
- evaluate the creative environment.
- observe and identify the elements at work within the improvisation.
- express their relationship to the work and their understanding of the work.

The ability to work creatively should expand beyond this course. Therefore, students are encouraged to also note when they connect concepts and processes used during this course to other areas of university study.

Note: Your journal will provide the information and insights to write your summaries.

[The instructor will ask the students to submit their journals 2 – 3 times during the semester].

Personal Profile (part of your practical evaluation)

To begin the journal process; students will describe, in written form, specific things about themselves in relation to their perceived body image, movement facility and ability. (These descriptions are to be typed and submitted online.) This Personal Profile will aid in developing the summary improvisational paper. (due on September 21st)

20% - 2 Summaries (10% each)

Using their journal entries, students will summarize important experiences, changes, and observations from the previous class sessions. The summary is to be no more than 2 typed pages, double spaced. They are due on October 5th and November 7th (These dates could vary slightly depending on the class progress.)

Fall Reading Week October 30th - November 5th (No Classes)

20% Final Summary Paper

This paper is meant to help students understand how improvisation can be used as a process to work through issues preventing them from reaching their movement and creative potential.

- isolating problems or blocks
- determining what the issues are
- developing a plan

Towards the end of the term the improvisations will include projects designed to challenge students based on specific issues determined by both the student and the instructor.

Students are to hand in a final 3 to 4 pages double spaced, typed summary on December 5th highlighting their experience and observations surrounding the summary improvisational projects and reflections on the course.

Grade Breakdown

50% - Participation

10% - Journals

20% - 2 summaries -10% each

20% - Summary Improvisation Paper

Late Assignments:

When written assignments are not handed in on the due date, 1 point will be deducted for each day after the due date.

Suggested Reading Sources

- “The Creative Experience”, edited by Stanley Rosner & Lawrence E. Abt.
- “The Intimate Act of Choreography”, Lynne-Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin.
- “The Moment of Movement”, Lynne-Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin.
- “A Sense of Dance”, Constance A. Schrader.
- “Contact Quarterly” (journal)
- “Dance Imagery for Technique and Performance”, Eric Franklin.

Important information to consider...ponder

Students must turn their cell phones off during class. No pictures or videos can be taken without permission of the instructor and participant(s).

Instructor’s policy on attendance and late assignments: If you are unable to attend a class, please make every effort to let the instructor know in advance by email (preferably). Full attendance at all classes is expected and medical documentation is required unless you have the instructor’s permission to be absent. Unexplained absences will result in a reduction in your participation grade. Students with medical documentation or an acceptable excuse for an absence will not be penalized. Late written assignments will only be accepted and graded if permission has been granted by the instructor in advance of the deadline.

Important Notes:

i) **Course Prerequisites:** None.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

ii) **Grading scale:** A+=90-100%, A=80-89%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, D=50-59%, F=0-49%.

iii) **Academic Consideration for Student Absence & Missing Work ($\geq 10\%$):** Students are responsible for making up any missed classes or assignments as soon as possible. The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet their academic responsibilities.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate (TC210), together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. Students are directed to read the Senate policy on accommodation for medical illness at the following website for further details regarding requirements and procedures for the supporting documentation:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Whenever possible, students who require academic accommodation should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

*Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty. For the Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

iv) **Academic Consideration for Missing Work ($< 10\%$):** In cases where students miss work that is worth less than 10% of the total course grade (two or fewer assignments) due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if documentation is voluntarily submitted to the Associate Dean's office and the Associate Dean grants an accommodation, then the missed assignment(s) or quiz(zes) will be discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the course. If documentation is not voluntarily submitted then the missed assignment(s) will receive a grade of zero. Students who have been denied accommodation by an instructor may appeal this decision to the Associate Dean's office but will be required to present appropriate documentation.

v) **Academic Offences:** Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

vi) **Mental Health & Wellness:** Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in UCC room 76. **Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in UC11 or to click on the green “I Need Help Now” button on the Health and Wellness page above.**

vii) **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** Students work with Accessible Education Western (AEW, formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

viii) **Religious Accommodation:** Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar. <http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

ix) **Contingency Plan:** Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 restrictions may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

x) **Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:** Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519 661-3568.

Additional applicable statements

i) **Examinations & Attendance:** Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

ii) **Electronic Devices in Exams:** Electronic devices of any type will not be permitted during the Midterm Test and/or Final Exam in this course (unless required for accessibility reasons based on an approved accommodation request from Accessible Education).

iii) **Electronic Devices in Classrooms:** The in-class use of electronic devices (other than for instructor-approved in-class uses) is expressly prohibited. Students found guilty of disrupting the class with electronic devices will be asked to leave the class and may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

iv) **Plagiarism Detection Software Usage:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).