

Winter 2024
Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University

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Independent Study: Intermediate Dance Composition & Production DANCE 4492B

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Group creative movement exploration and problem-solving using form and structure of movement to express ideas, images and/or feelings in the finished product of a dance composition.

Half course: 1 hour lecture, 3 hours lab; In-Person Format. Prerequisite: Special Permission.

Prerequisites:

1. Special permission of the Faculty
2. Familiarity with the elements of dance: time, space, motion, and shape
3. Understanding and experience using improvisation as a process
4. Ability to create a movement phrase
5. Experience creating a variety of compositions including theme and variation

Course Content:

Dance composition at this level concerns itself with the form, structure and considerations for group relationships. Approaches similar to those used in other art forms (theme and variation, abstraction, repetition of line, dramatic line) are applied to movement principles.

While the components are present in solo composition, they become more apparent in group work. Understanding these components (unity, variety, repetition, contrast, transition, sequence, climax, proportion, balance, harmony) will be used to help the student build and evaluate compositions. The artistic merit of the compositions will be analyzed as well.

Class Organization:

Introductory exploration of selected compositional problems from the following:

- Developing teaching and compositional materials
- Use of patterns (floor, spatial, direction, movement, step) in creating compositions
- The use of stage space, implications for design and proportion, effect of space on an audience
- Theme and variation by manipulation of a simple movement phrase with group relationship and design
- Duet and Trio - similar and oppositional structures, balance and counterbalance
- Building movement material and phrases based on movement quality and dynamics
- Abstraction of everyday movements, objects and shapes, literal events and ideas
- Other choreographic approaches and ideas

Further development of improvisation as a process or tool for discovery, creativity and expression.

Organization of the group choreographic assignments.

Expectations /Assignments:

1) Duet or Trio – 20%

Each student will be responsible for choreographing a “duet” or a “trio”. The length of each will generally be 2 minutes (tempo and choice of movement material will affect this).

The choreographer will select their dancers and set the rehearsal times (approx. 1 to 3 hours). The choreographer must not be in the dance!

You should consider the following as you create your piece:

- how to create the visual relationship of the dancers
- how and where the dancers activate the stage space (consider spatial design) i.e. locomotor patterns should enhance the spatial design rather than emphasize steps and step patterns
- the proportion of motion to shape (pay attention to the use of shape - don't be afraid to hold a shape or allow some dancers to move while others stay in place)
- dancers could also support or counter balance another dancer
- the piece has a clear beginning and ending

2) Group Composition – 30%

Each student will be responsible for choreographing a group composition (four or more dancers).

- The length of the composition will generally fall between 2 to 4 minutes.
- The choreographer will select their dancers, set the rehearsal dates, and the day the composition will be presented in class. Each choreographer must hand in a list of their dancers including contact information (email and phone number for all dancers). (Dancers may be selected from outside of class.) The choreographer should not be in the dance!

Part 1 (10%) – Organization and Thematic Material (Due ASAP)

If the choreographer chooses to use music they must have it approved. They may select from the following, the title of the music and composer should be included:

- classical, pre-classical, impressionistic
- jazz, afro, percussion
- electronic, avant-garde, modern, mood

Based on the topic, the choreographer is responsible for providing the instructor with a written plan describing the material they have selected to build the movement material on (images, action words, relationships, etc.).

Based on the plan ideas, the choreographer must show the instructor the thematic material they have composed and be prepared to discuss and demonstrate how they think it could be used in creating the composition.

Choreographers are encouraged to check with the instructor if they have questions or concerns. Don't wait until the last minute.

Part 2 (20%) – Presentation of the Group Composition

- The choreographer should be prepared to
 - Give a brief introduction to their composition
 - Show the work
 - Answer questions at the end of the performance
- Each choreographer will write a short evaluation of their composition!

3) Participation as a Dancer – 20%

- Given the number of students in the course, each student should be prepared to participate in 4 or 5 of the small group pieces. (Warning: set your obligations early so you can spread out your time.)
- Students should plan on rehearsal times outside the class time.
- Dancers - it is problematic if you do not show up. These obligations are extremely important.
- Each dancer will write a short evaluation of two choreographers. (These evaluations are due one class period following the presentation of the composition.)

Choreographers:

- It is important that you come prepared and ready to work.
- Let me know if a dancer does not show up for rehearsal or if there are other problems.

4) Class Work and Participation – 30%

Because much of the course content is taught in the context of the choreographic assignments, and the choreographic assignments are of a group nature, class attendance is mandatory.

Each class member will have the opportunity to work in the role of choreographer and dancer. They will be evaluated according to their ability to function in both roles.

Students will be expected to participate in the evaluation process. This will provide an opportunity for the students to observe some of the various compositional problems listed.

Suggested Reading:

- Blom, Lynne Anne, & Chaplin, Tarin L. (1982). *The Intimate Act of Choreography*.
Ellfeldt, Lois & Carnes, Edwin. (1971). *Dance Production Handbook or Later is Too Late*.
Hayes, Elizabeth R. (1982). *Dance Composition and Production for the High Schools & Colleges*.
Humphrey, Doris. (1962). *The Art of Making Dances*.
Lockhart, Aileene, & Pease, Ester R. (1977). *Modern Dance: Building and Teaching Lessons*.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

20% - Composition Presented (Duet or Trio)

10% - Group Composition: 1) the written intent, lists of dancers, music used and etc.

20% - Group Composition: 2) preparation for rehearsals, 3) actual finished product, and 4) evaluation of your composition

20% - Participation as a Dancer: 1) participation in other compositions (duet, trio and group pieces), (2) comments on your choreographers (what was learned in the rehearsal and creative process and summary comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the final product that was created)

30% - Class Work and Participation: attendance, participation in the evaluation process, participation and input in classes other than the duet, trio, and group compositions

List of Possible Composition Assignments

1. Compositions based on "Shape"
 - a) still body shapes and body shapes in motion (angular, curved, twisted)
 - b) individual and group shapes
 - c) creating shapes without contact
2. Compositions based on "Space"
 - a) directions, levels, dimension, range
 - b) moving through space – locomotor patterns
 - c) engaging in space; with objects, others, yourself
 - d) Intimate, Personal, Social and Distant: Spatial distinctions/defining social distancing
3. Compositions based on "Motion"
 - a) engaging with energy in motion
 - b) movement around a focal point
 - c) throwing the focus through space (axial and locomotor)
 - d) movement qualities / movement dynamics

swing	suspended	sustained
vibratory	percussive	collapse
4. Compositions based on "Time"
 - a) rhythm problems - axial and locomotor movement sequences
 - b) discussion of how to use time

Time will be considered in its relationship to each compositional problem involving motion, space and shape.
5. Compositions based on "The Use of a Prop or Costume"
6. Compositions based on "A Movement Phrase"
7. Compositions based on "Story Line or State of Being"
 - a) Story Line from a poem, picture, sculpture or story
 - b) emotional state of being

COURSE FORMAT

The course may vary somewhat in content and progression because of two unpredictable factors, first the size of the class and second, the movement background of the students in the class.

The classes will be devoted to defining, discussing and demonstrating what dance composition is and how the students should approach movement-solving problems. In general, the students will progress through a series of specific composition assignments at the approximate rate of one per week. An important part of this learning process is allowing the students in the class to observe each other and listen to the evaluation of the compositions, given by the instructor. As the course progresses, the students will be expected to take more responsibility in the evaluation process. Because the medium for problem-solving is movement, evaluation cannot be done strictly by written form. The students are expected to develop an "eye" for judging the merit of a composition.

January 9 - 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating SHAPE Dance Compositions
January 16 - 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating SPACE Dance Compositions
January 23 - 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating MOTION Dance Compositions
January 30- February 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating TIME Dance Compositions
February 6 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating PROP and COSTUME Dance Compositions
February 13 - 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating PHRASE Dance Compositions
February 27 - 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating STORY LINE Dance Compositions
March 5 - 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating “STATE OF BEING” Dance Compositions
March 12 - 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Final Compositions!
March 26 – April 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating & Performing Final Compositions!

The class will meet 4 hours per week. Students are expected to do outside work on their compositions. Where possible, studio time will be made available. **It is mandatory to attend classes.**

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 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 information to consider...ponder

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

Important Notes:

i) **Course Prerequisites:** Special permission of the Faculty.

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 (≥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) This course has received an exemption from the requirement in the Senate Policy on Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Performance that stipulates “At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a 1000- or 2000-level course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade.”
- ii) **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.
- iii) **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).
- iv) **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.
- v) **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/>).