

**The University of Western Ontario
London Canada
Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research
Fall/Winter/Intersession WS4456F**

Dance and Embodiment

Instructor: TBA

Email:

Office Hours: TBA

Prerequisite: Women's Studies 2256E or 2257E or 2220E or 2253E or 2273E or permission from the WSFR department.

Course Description:

This course takes up dance as a lens through which to explore contemporary debates within feminist theory. Students will be asked to think critically about dance as a social phenomenon that is implicated in the production and regulation of bodies in the social sphere. Although this course does focus on social and theatrical dance practices, what constitutes "dance" will be left open to interpretation in order to blur the boundaries between "dance/art" and everyday life.

In the first unit, entitled "Dancing Difference," students will explore the complex and contradictory relations between dance and identity. This unit takes as its principal concern the construction of otherness/difference and applies feminist/queer theoretical works to practices of social and theatrical dancing. Through an in-depth examination of how dance practices express, reproduce and reimage dominant social ideologies students will gain critical insight into the different ways that otherness is produced and policed in and through dance practices. Particular attention will be given to how dancing bodies materialize and problematize stable notions of gender, sexuality, race, class and ability.

In the second unit, entitled "Meanings in Motion," students will consider how dance might be taken up as a feminist/queer methodology by exploring the insights that practices of social and theatrical dancing may lend to embodied experiences of grief, trauma, belonging and resistance. Particular attention will be given to the ways that social and theatrical dance practices are capable of disrupting, subverting and politicizing contemporary culture. Students will be encouraged to think through the ways that bodies in motion might provide alternate tools to enliven feminist activism, or ground a reparative experience of community.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students will:

- Become familiar with the general field of dance studies;
- Gain a *comprehensive understanding* of the intersection of dance studies and feminisms with a particular appreciation of the ways that feminist scholars have taken up dance as a productive site for analysis;
- *Identify* and *explain* how power relations are expressed in dance practices;
- *Analyze* the ways that dance reflects, reiterates and resists dominant social ideologies;
- *Critique* the relationships between bodies, dance, identity, politics and social ideologies;
- *Refine* their written and oral communication skills, critical thinking and independent research skills.

Required texts: Readings will be linked through Owl Sakai.

Film Screenings: Films are available through the *Owl Sakai* website (Youtube links) or will be screened before class (screenings will be scheduled for class convenience). Will also be made available through the Film Library.

Assignments:

1. Class Participation 10%

Students will be expected to attend class, read all assigned materials prior to class and participate appropriately in class discussion. There are different ways of participating in discussion. While active and engaged participation in class discussion may include such things as adding to discussion and responding appropriately to others' comments and questions, of equal importance is attentive listening. Furthermore, active and engaged participation in a feminist classroom also necessitates creating spaces for all voices to be heard; taking up too much space in the classroom by dominating conversation is thus not appropriate.

2. Dance Description Assignment (2 pages) 10%

Students will choose from a selection of short dance clips provided by the instructor in order to write a brief description of a given dance performance. This assignment is intended to prepare students to become more critical viewers of dance performance and to help them translate what they see in a dance into *description* and *analysis*.

3. Seminar Presentation and Facilitation of Discussion 20%

At the beginning of the semester students will sign up to lead a one hour seminar. Students will be responsible for presenting the readings on the course schedule. They will be asked to present a brief *summary* and *critique* of the readings, connect the readings to each other and connect readings to other concepts and themes that have been covered in the course. They will address questions such as: What was the main point of the article? What were the arguments made? Were the arguments made effective – why/why not? What are the strengths and weaknesses? How are these readings connected to concepts from previous weeks? Students are expected to facilitate discussion, prepare a powerpoint and/or to incorporate a variety of print or digital media to supplement their presentations. Students will also be asked to incorporate a dance example as well as a group activity as a part of their seminar presentation. Guidance on choosing examples will be provided. Students will sign up for their seminar presentations in the first two weeks of the course.

4. Critical Reflection Paper (5-6 pages) 20%

Students will write a critical reflection paper based on their seminar presentation. The critical reflection paper will be due one week after their seminar presentation, which will allow students to reflect on their presentation before handing in their paper. This paper will give students the opportunity to expand, revise, clarify or correct the critique/analysis of the readings given in their seminar presentation. Students will also be encouraged to draw on the discussions that occur in class in order to refine their arguments. The purpose of this paper is to give students the opportunity to develop a thoughtful *analysis* of the course readings. This is meant to assist students in refining skills in *critical analysis* through a close reading of the course texts. Outside research is not required for this assignment.

5. Final Project/Paper 40%

The final project/paper provides students with an opportunity to *apply* the concepts that they have learned in class in order to explore a topic that they are interested in. Students may choose between two options:

Option 1: Final Paper (10-12 pages)

Students will write a paper that analyzes a theme (or themes) addressed course material.

Option 2: Creative Project (6-8 pages)

Students will create an experimental dance/screendance piece that addresses that addresses a theme (or themes) drawn from course material. This dance/screendance piece will be accompanied by a short paper that explains and critically reflects on the ways that their creative projects explores the themes of the course.

Weekly Reading Schedule: TBA