Course Syllabus HAAS-D
21M.670/SP. 591/WGS. 472, Traditions in American Concert Dance: Gender and Autobiography
Spring Term 2009: T/Th 11:00-12:30 PM

Professor: Carl Paris, Ph.D.
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-4:00PM or make appointment for other times by telephone or email. Telephone: 617 253 8844 Email: cparis@mit.edu

Course Description
This course explores forms and traditions in dance that have played a crucial role in shaping American concert dance. Of particular importance to this investigation will be the construction of gender and autobiography, with emphasis on women’s issues. We will follow an historical and contextual arc that moves from dance as a world cultural phenomenon to the development of American theatrical ballet and modern dance into the 21st-century.

In the part that focuses on American theatrical dance, we will briefly examine the historical development of classical ballet and several of its important figures, male and female. Somewhat more comprehensively, and with particular attention to socio-political contexts, we will examine the development of modern dance and its important figures, including the parallel and intersecting African American cultural and artistic contribution. The final part of the course will focus more specifically on the centrality of the body as the site of individual and cultural representation in contemporary dance.

Through viewing videos and live performances, students will examine elements of style, meaning and choreographic structure in selected works. This examination will include short written analyses and a maximum of two movement analysis sessions. In accordance with the mechanical requirements for all HASS-D courses, there will be no fewer than three research/writing assignments that add up to a minimum of 20 pages. There will also be a midterm and a final exam, which will count for 15 and 20 percent respectively toward the final grade. The midterm consists of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions and will cover from the beginning to mid-course. The final will be similar in format, focusing on the material from the second half of the course.

Objectives
Through writing and discussions, students will
- demonstrate a basic understanding of dance as a social, cultural, historical, and artistic phenomenon,
- demonstrate an understanding of selected types of dance and their function as a mode of human interaction in world and American society,
- demonstrate a critical-thinking approach to dance and culture that reflects contemporary perspectives on issues of gender and individual expression.

Required Reading and Materials


Additional handouts on dance theory, feminist theory, and gender relations will be distributed by the instructor and/or placed on Stellar through the library.

**Course Requirements**
1) Students will bring notebooks to all classes. Attendance and copious note taking are absolutely crucial for the successful completion of this course. More than three absences can affect your grade.
2) The reading requirement entails approximately 50 pages and 1 hour of in-class viewing weekly.
3) Participation in class discussions, quizzes and short writing assignments (from viewing video and performances) count for 20 % of the final grade (see below). This part also includes pop quizzes that focus on the reading and topics discussed in class.
4) The three research writing assignments will be 5-7 pages in length, focusing on the broad themes of the course. These papers account for 15% each or 45% of the final grade. All papers must adhere to the writing format and citation guidelines of MIT.
5) The course requires attendance to two concerts dance performances (TBA).

**Projected Topics for Think Papers (subject to modification)**
- Paper #1: Dance history, culture, and gender issues in classical dance (details to be announced)
- Paper #2: Feminism and politics in modern dance
- Paper #3: Cultural Fusion and Autobiography in Concert Dance (a group project)

**Assessment Criteria and Grading System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, quizzes, homework, and Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>A 100-93  C 76-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Papers</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>A- 92-90  C- 71-70</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>B+ 89-87  D+ 69-67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>B 86-82  D 66-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>B- 81-80  D- 61-60</td>
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<td>C+ 79-77  F 59-0</td>
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**Extra Credit** (optional) up to 10 points added to the lowest-graded research paper. Extra Credit is a substantial project that is meant to bolster your grade if you feel you need it. It includes a five to 7 min. summary presentation to the class. It does NOT REPLACE A TEST OR PAPER.

**Instructor’s Bio: Carl Paris** holds an M.A. in Dance and Dance in Higher Education and a Ph.D. in Dance Studies and Cultural Theory. Dr. Paris was on the faculty in the Dance Education Program, New York University from 1999-2002. He taught Dance Theory and Composition at Long Island University, Brooklyn (2005). More recently, he taught courses in African American History and Race and Ethnicity in American Culture at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Dr. Paris has performed with the dance companies of Olatunji African Dance, Eleo Pomare, Martha Graham, and Alvin Ailey. He has been a guest teacher and choreographer at CalArts, the Alvin Ailey Repertory Company, the Fiorella La Guardia High School of the Performing Arts, and the Martha Graham School. Dr. Paris taught, choreographed, and gave lectures in Spain (and throughout Europe) for 17 years. In 1995, he received the nationally recognized Dance Association of Madrid Award. His critical reviews and essays on dance history have appeared in several dance publications.
COURSE OUTLINE, Spring 2009

Important:
1. Please Note: Minor components of the course (i.e., topics, quizzes, videos, or sessions with guest teachers) are subject to change. Students will be notified well in advance.
2. Students must complete all reading assignments prior to the class for which it is indicated.

Week 1  Introductions/Dance as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon

   Tues, Feb 3  - Getting to know each other.
   - Discuss course outline and requirements.
   - What is Dance? How we will approach dance as a mode of inquiry.

Assignment: For next class, write a one or two-page introductory think paper (This paper is required and commented on, but not graded.). Ask yourself:
   1. What is dance to me as a socio-cultural and/or artistic mode of expression?
   2. How does dance relate to my intellectual and/or professional goals?
   3. What do I expect from this course?

   - Discuss and hand in the one-page think paper.
   - View video: Ethnic Dance Around the World—an anthropological perspective.
   - Lecture/class discussion of the film--refining our notion of dance:
     What is Dance?
     Why do people dance?
     What factors shape dance?

Assignment: Possibly see Boston Ballet, Choreography by Jiri Kyllian Feb 12-15 (extra credit—one page report: instructor will outline writing)

Week 2  Dance, Culture, and Religion

   - Excerpts from the video Lord of the Dance.
   - Lecture/class discussion.

Assignment: For next class, think through and identify five different ways that dance functions in contemporary western society (include sources). Use internet or library resources. Ask yourself: What is each one’s venue and what social function does it perform? Use no more than three sentences for each one.

   - Lecture/class discussion on the reading

Week 3  Beginnings of Classical Dance Across Cultures

   Tues, Feb 17- Monday’s Class Schedule

   - Dances at court—Africa/Europe, power, politics, and culture.
   - View excerpts of video Dance of the Court.
   - Lecture on classical dances as a foundation for understanding diverse cultural influences in America.
   - Brief Movement Session/Lecture/discussion on dance aesthetics—form and function.
Traditions in Dance . . .  Dr. Paris

- Discuss requirements and research methods for Paper # 1 (five pages, due March 10th) on dance early dance history, culture, and gender. It entails writing on a topic about women in dance in ancient societies of India, Arab, West African, and European Middle Ages. Each student will choose a topic from this selection (more details to be discussed).

**Week 4  Social Dance and Gender Theory**
*Tues, Feb 24-*
2. Read No Turning Back: the History of Feminism and the Future of Women, “Gender and Power” by Estelle Freeman, pp. 17-42 (on reserve at Women’s Research Room and on Stellar).
- Discuss key issues in the reading and relate them to gender issues in social dance

Assignment: For Thurs, hand in abstract or outline for Paper # 1—topic related to issues of dance, gender, power, and social construction.

*Thurs, Feb 26*
- View video Sex and Social Dance.
- Free write and discussion of film and readings.

**Week 5  Classical Dance Theater**
- View video excerpts of classical ballet and baroque dance.
- Lecture/discussion: focus on beginnings of classical ballet and the female dancer, gender, and power in classical European/American theatrical dance.

*Thurs, March 5* - For this class, through internet and/or library research, find two 19th century American male ballet dancers. Write one-page paper on these dancers and their times. Ask yourself: How did their role in ballet reflect a different approach from European ballet. (You will hand in this homework assignment)
- Overview of men in early American classical ballet.
- We will briefly contrast aspects of 19th-century African American dance.
- Discuss progress of papers.

Assignment: Before April 2, see live dance performance (TBA) and write two-page review, focusing on issues of gender in preparation for guest teacher, dance critic Elizabeth Zimmer. The instructor will give further details regarding the criteria.

**Week 6  From Classical Dance to Modern Dance**
*Tues, March 10- Read Dancing, Chapter 7 “Modernizing Dance,” pp. 190-238.*
- View video, The Individual and Tradition
- In-class discussion of film and reading

Assignment: Hand in Research Paper # 1

*Thurs, March 12* - Read Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism From Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey (Foulkes), pp. 1-26.
- Lecture/discussion on key concepts from the reading, including modernism/ modernity, art and dance.

**Week 7  In Their Own Words: On Meaning and Self-Representation by Early Modern Dance Choreographers**
*Tues, March 17-*
1. Read Modern Bodies: Dance and American Modernism From Martha Graham to Alvin Ailey (Foulkes), pp. 26-50.
2. Read personal accounts by Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman and others: *The Vision of Modern Dance* Jean Morrison Brown (Ed.), pp. 3-40.
   - Lecture/discussion of reading.
   - See excerpts of video, *New Dance Group Video*—Modern Dance (dances by second generation modern dance choreographers like Talley Beatty, Donald McKayle, Mary Anthony, Anna Sokolow, Pearl Primus, Charles Weidman, and others)

Assignment: For Thursday, bring in one multiple-choice question and one fill-in-the-blank question from at least five previous readings (one from each reading) that we might use for the midterm.

*Thurs, March 19*—Read personal accounts by Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman and others: *The Vision of Modern Dance* Jean Morrison Brown (Ed.) 40-64.
   - Continue discussion
   - Review for Midterm

Assignment: Discuss assignment for Research Paper # 2—Feminism/gender and politics in modern dance, due, April 14th.

**Week 8 Spring Break (March 22-29)**

**Week 9 - Midterm.**
   *Tues, March 31*—Midterm
   - Also, preparation for class with guest teacher Elizabeth Zimmer.

Assignment: Hand in Abstract for Paper # 2.

**Week 10 “Reading” and Writing Meaning in Movement in Theatrical Dance Writing about Dance**
   *Thurs, April 2*—Read handouts from Elizabeth Zimmer. Also read "Where Movement is the Very Expression of Deep Thought and Emotion" by Carl Paris.
   - Class with Elizabeth Zimmer (guest teacher on dance writing)

**Week 11 Movement Analysis as a Tool For Writing About Dane**
   *Tues, April 7*—(Reading to TBA).
   - Lecture and movement analysis session (using fundamentals of Effort/Shape).
   - *Thurs, April 9*—Discussion, follow up on movement analysis and writing.

**Week 12 1. Men in Modern Dance**
   *Tues, April 14*—Read *Modern Bodies* “Men Must Dance” (Foulkes), pp. 78-103. Read also handout “Simmering Passivity: The Black Male Body in Modern Dance” by Tommy DeFrantz, pp. 107-119.
   - Issues of race and the male body in modern dance.

Assignment: Hand in Paper # 2

2. **Race, Culture, and Identity in African American Dance.**
   a) Read *Modern Bodies*, “Primitive Moderns,” pp. 51-78;
   b) “Coda: The Revelations of Alvin Ailey,” 179-184 by Julia Foulkes; and
   c) Handout “Ethnic and Modern Dance,” pp. 24-25 by Gerald Myers. (Actual reading per person may be adjusted to comply with maximum reading cap per week.)
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Thurs, April 16-
- See video of Alvin Ailey's Revelations
- Lecture/discussion of religion, gender roles and culture in “Black Dance.”

Assignment: 1. Organize for Group Project, Paper # 3—Group Project (students are encouraged to include movement or other type of visual aid). The Group Project is due the week before the final exam.
   2. See 2nd live performance, write a two-page review/summary (TBA).

Week 13 Anything Goes: Postmodernism, Multiculturalism, and Dance in the 21st Century
Tues, April 21- Holiday

Assignment: Research homework in two parts (no more than two pages):
   1. Write a short definition of postmodernism as a historical era.
   2. Write a synthesis of characteristics of postmodernism art (instructor will provide some sources).

   - Lecture/group discussion on postmodernism and modern dance.

Week 14 Anything goes, Part 2
Tues, April 28- Reading Dancing, Chapter 8 “Dancing in One World,” pp. 239-242. Research dance on the internet—blogs, Youtube (details to be announced)
- View video Dancing in One World.
- Discussion—emphasis on self-representation through the expressive body and autobiography in new millenium contemporary dance.

   - Video Wolf Trap/Site specific and alternative dance forms.
   - Deconstructing gender, video of Reggie Wilson’s Jumping the Broom.
   - Continue discussion focus on the body and the transference of culture to the concert stage.

Assignment: All Research Papers due

Week 15 Continued
Tues, May 4-
- Experiential movement exploration session—fusing autobiography and culture

Thurs, May 7- Review for Final, Presentation of Group Projects

Week 16 Final to be Announced
Tues, May 11- Presentation of Group Projects

Thurs, May 14