MUSC/PERF 326: Dance and Identity in the United States

Fall, 2013
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TR 9:35 – 10:50 am
Office hours: T 11 am – 12:30 pm, R 12:15 – 1:30 pm, or by appointment
LAAH 211

Catalog description: Credit 3. Analysis of dance events as complex sites of social action; examines dances performed by diverse groups of people; considers such issues as identity, community, diversity, gender, and representation in the United States.

Prerequisites: Junior or senior classification

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will analyze U.S. dance events as both works of the imagination and as social action, using dance studies theories of identity, community, diversity, gender, and representation.
- Students will be able to identify and discuss examples of key individuals’ and companies’ contributions to dance in the United States.
- Students will successfully complete CITI training to ensure ethical conduct of fieldwork.
- Students will produce an ethnographic account of dance and identity on the TAMU campus or in the surrounding community.
- Students will compare and contrast the ways diverse groups of Americans use dance to articulate collective and individual identity.

Course key questions and presumptions: Materials for this course invite us to examine and productively complicate the seeming self-evidence of the catalog description. What are “dance events” and where do we find them? How do diverse constructions of “dance,” “identity,” and the “United States” cohere or collide on stage, on the page and the screen, in the archive, in everyday routines of practice? When we move, or encounter bodies moving, in any of these locations, what frames and preconceptions also come into view? How does dance “represent” key issues of public life and how do we “represent” dance as it does so? How does dance “work” for those who engage it, and what kinds of work does dance do?

This course presumes an intersectional approach to identity. “Intersectionality” was first used by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to address the converging modalities of discrimination and oppression in African American women’s experiences. It demands that we consider multiple overlapping demographic and societal boundaries and hierarchies positioning dancers and spectators in the works we examine. These include,
but are not limited to, age, class, ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, physicality abilities or lack of same, race, and sexuality, as well as spatial and temporal contexts.

Required Readings

All required readings and viewings for this course are available through TAMU E-Learning and Media Matrix, or online at the urls given on the syllabus. These are listed under the class period in which they will be discussed; “for discussion” indicates the materials should be prepared for that particular class day. In addition to the required materials listed, students are expected to adhere to the style guide of their choice: APA, Chicago Style, or MLA

Assignments and Grading

Note: Assignment descriptions, including objectives and evaluation rubrics, will be distributed during the first week of class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probe 1: Dance, Identity, Community</td>
<td>35 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldwork Proposal*</td>
<td>20 points*</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Includes CITI training certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performed Fieldnote</td>
<td>30 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance Ethnography</td>
<td>50 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probe 2: Dance and/as Critical Conversation**</td>
<td>30 points**</td>
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<tr>
<td>**group project</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200 points</td>
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200 - 180 points: A. You have consistently gone above and beyond simply meeting the class requirements. You have added both extra effort and originality to all assignments with virtually no problems. Your written and oral presentations have been stylistically and grammatically correct, with detailed analyses and appropriate bibliography that reflects considerable independent research. Your participation has evidenced systematic engagement with the course readings. The class learned something valuable from you.

179 – 159 points: B. While you have exceeded expectations on some assignments, there have been a few significant errors, or a number of smaller or recurring ones. Analyses may have been less detailed; written and oral presentations may not demonstrate the level of polish commensurate with “A” work. Participation may have been inconsistent or not substantial, bibliographies may have demonstrated less than thorough searches, or arguments or examples may have lacked needed nuance. This is solid work that has the potential to improve.
158 – 138 points: C. A “C” is average work. You have done what was expected of a student in this course: no more, no less.

137 – 127: D. You have done less than expected of a student in this course. There may have been multiple errors in multiple assignments, neglect of opportunities to improve, missed assignments, or problems with consistency over the course of the term.

126 - 0: F. You have not completed sufficient work to pass this course.

**What Does "Class Participation" Mean?**

Class participation is respectful of different points of view, is specific, and advances the larger intellectual project of this class. Attendance also affects class participation. **It will not be possible to secure full participation credit with more than two unexcused absences.** (This does not mean, by the way, that simply showing up for every class insures full credit.) An excused absence is accompanied by Texas A&M University Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form available at [http://attendance.tamu.edu](http://attendance.tamu.edu) presented immediately upon your return to class, even if the illness or injury results in an absence of less than three days.

Questions about what constitutes an excused absence should be directed to TAMU Student Rule 7: [http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07)

Students are responsible for securing any information missed due to absences or lateness. **Repeated tardiness is not acceptable and will be considered as the equivalent of absences if they occur regularly (more than twice) or cause the student to miss more than 20 minutes of class.**

**Written Assignment Requirements**

Grammar and writing style are components of grades for all written assignments, excluding in-class quizzes or exams. Written assignments must include appropriate documentation (APA, Chicago, or MLA) of all sources used. Point deductions will be made for grammar, writing style, and documentation errors in each evaluation category affected. Assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of the specified class period. **No late assignments are accepted without documentation of a clear and compelling emergency.**

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit [http://disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu).
**Academic integrity statement.** Academic honesty is of great importance to all students at TAMU. In this and all classes, you must follow the Aggie Honor Code.

**Aggie Honor Code**

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do."

Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System [. . .]. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the Texas A&M community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System. For more information, see [http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu)

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**Schedule of Topics and Major Assignments**

**Unit 1: Complicating the Keywords: Intersections of "Dance," "Identity," and "United States"**

**Week 1**

**August 27** Course Introduction

**August 29** What do we talk about when we talk about dance?

For discussion:


**Week 2**

**September 3** Dance, identity, community – How does this work?

For discussion:


**September 5** Dance, identity, community – Technologies of community

For discussion:
TAMU Media Matrix: Selected Thriller “How to” examples and flash mobs; selected Jackson State U Prancing J-Settes videos; J-Setter competition (Detroit) video

**Week 3**

**September 10**

What do we talk about when we talk about dance and identity?

For discussion:

http://vimeo.com/6936710

**September 12**

What do we talk about when we talk about dance and identity and/as/in the U.S.?

For discussion:


**Week 4**

**September 17**

Presentations - Probe 1

**September 19**

Presentations - Probe 1

**Unit 2: Researching Dance and Identity in the U.S.**

**Week 5**

**September 25**

Who Owns Dance?

For discussion:


**September 26**

Dance Ethnography – How Tos: The Ethics of Research
Week 6
October 1 Dance Ethnography – How Tos: Research Practices
For discussion:
CITI Training Certificate Due Today.

October 3 Dance Ethnography and/as Identity: Zora Neale Hurston on Stage and in the Archive
For discussion:

Fieldwork proposal due today.

Week 7
October 8 Traces of dance in archives: Bella Lewitzky, dance reconstruction, and activist identities
For discussion:
Blackboard folder: Selected writings of, and press clippings about, Bella Lewitzky, Bella Lewitzky Papers, University of Southern California
Blackboard folder: Excerpts from Bella Lewitzky’s FBI File “Bella Lewitzky: Dance – A Motion Space Time Art Form,” http://sma.sciarc.edu/subclip/0381_lewitzky_bella-03-09-88-clip_2354/

“Reconstructing the Beloved”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlnTyKX-UX4

October 10 Representing dancing selves and communities
For discussion:

Week 8
October 15 Making Writing Move/Moving Writing
Studio Session: Class meets in LAAH 110.
Unit 3: Dance as “American” Identity

October 17  Manly Dancing and “Other” Bodies
For discussion:

Week 9
October 22  Dancing Modernity
For discussion:

Media Matrix: Appalachian Spring

“Glimpses of Isadora Duncan”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NPbn5pdViE

“The Emperor Jones” [Limón company]:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xeMV3gDM1KI&list=UUozY4d2eCVG8yxRh3lZ-I2A&index=1

“Pearl Primus: Anthropologist, Dancer, and Pioneer”:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGgQrljLORZ0

“1948 Eddie Condon Floor Show - Conga Drums”:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?annotation_id=annotation_96082&feature=iv&src_v_id=PGgQrljLORZ0&v=rxJGugk9IK8

October 24  “Official African American Culture”
For discussion:

Media Matrix: Revelations and The Lark Ascending

Artburst, “Interview: Kyle Abraham and His Radio Show”:
http://artburstmiami.com/2012/03/29/interview-kyle-abraham-and-his-radio-show/

KST Moves: “Kyle Abraham’s Radio Show Work in Progress” [excerpted]:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lkz2ktzRyWU

Abraham in Motion: “The Radio Show” [excerpted]:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhHHzxAOc3U

Week 10
October 29  Fieldnote Presentations

October 31  Fieldnote Presentations
Week 11

**November 5**  Producing Hawaiia-ness in Performance
For discussion:

2012 Merrie Monarch Festival - Wahine of Halau Hula 'O Hokulani - Hula Auana
- "Nene'u": [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dH42J0S2sQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dH42J0S2sQ)
  - Halau I Ka Wekiu - Merrie Monarch 2012 (Kane Auana):
    [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDgs1E2T1Vk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDgs1E2T1Vk)

**November 7**  Tēp and Race
For discussion:

Media Matrix: *Juba! Masters of Tap & Percussive Dance*  
*Talking Feet: Solo Southern Dance: Buck, Flatfoot and Tap*


Dance Ethnography due.

*Unit 4: Course Synthesis: The Work of Dance Front Stage and Back Stage*

**Week 12**

**November 12**  The Making of Martha Graham
For discussion:
Blackboard folder: Graham reviews
Media Matrix: *Martha Graham in Performance*

**November 14**  (Re-)located Traditions – Indian Dance

**Studio Session:** Class meets in LAAH 110.
For discussion:
**Week 13**

**November 19**  
At Home in Ballet

For discussion:


**November 21**  
Presentations – Probe 2

**Week 14**

**November 26**  
Presentations – Probe 2

**November 28**  
No class today. Campus closed.

**Redefined Week**

**December 3**  
Course Conclusion; take home final distributed

**December 7  12:30 – 2 pm**  
(Final Exam Schedule): **Final Exam Due!**