

**The University of Texas at El Paso**  
**Spring 2024**

Choreography

DANC 4301

Professor: Neri Torres

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Office hours: T, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm by appointment – Office A450, Fox Fine Arts

Class Meets: MW 1:30 pm – 2:50 pm – Fox Fine Arts - 452

*“Reading, conversation, environment, culture, heroes, mentors, nature – all are lottery tickets for creativity. Scratch away at them and you’ll find out how big a prize you’ve won.”*

— Twyla Tharp, *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life.*

### **Description**

This is a course related to the creation of dance works of any genre based on the exploration of a variety of compositional approaches. The students will immerse in movement research, interdisciplinary, inter-cultural and site specific projects, collaboration, and choreographic analysis elucidating the connection between content and form to develop their own creative vision.

### **Objectives**

- 1- Enable students to forge meaningful interdisciplinary collaborations.
- 2- Support students to acquire the knowledge necessary to understand, appreciate and recreate the aesthetic basis of dance-making in their movement choices.
- 3- Facilitate the exploration of stylistic techniques, intuition and the use of diverse stimuli in the creative process.

### **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate, understand and discuss the process of interdisciplinary collaborations.
2. Research and dissect the work of selected choreographers through a written and embodied analysis exploring how ideas are transformed and generated in dance.
3. Develop a deeper understanding of the concept of relations in dance.
4. Create short dance studies and a group interdisciplinary collaborative piece (for the UNESCO World Poetry Day Commemoration).

### **Method of Delivery**

Students will explore the creation of movement through brainstorming ideas, seminars, lectures by guest artists, studio work, video viewing discussions, as well as independent and cooperative study through research and video recording. Additionally, they will engage in journaling, creating short pieces and a group choreography

### **Accommodations Policy**

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, or email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

### **Scholastic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

### **Course Drop Policy**

According to UTEP Catalog, "At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of "W" will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline." See the Attendance policy above. Therefore, if I find that, due to non-performance in the course, you are at risk of failing, I will drop you from the course. I will provide 24 hours advance notice via email. Because every student's circumstance is unique, we encourage students to be as open and honest as possible when encountering unexpected challenges (job schedule change, family issues, etc, as well as to **communicate in advance** potential issues that could affect their commitment to class. **E-mail me as soon as an issue comes up**, this is the only way you can get help and possible accommodations while minimizing the impact on your academic progress. While every situation

will be assessed by the instructor, the more a student is responsible to communicate in a clear and effective way, the easier it will be to find a positive solution.

### **Incomplete Progress Work**

Assignment of the grade I is made only in exceptional circumstances and requires the instructor to submit a form online indicating work to be completed and relevant due dates (not to exceed one calendar year). A copy of this form will be sent to the instructor, the student, Records, and the advising lead. In no case may repetition of the course be assigned as work to be completed. If the work has not been completed by the end of the specified time, the grade **I** will be changed to an **F**. A student may not enroll in a course in which he or she has an unresolved grade of **I**. A student may not graduate with an incomplete on his or her record. If a student wishes to graduate and if the course is not needed for a degree requirement, the incomplete will convert to an F, regardless of whether a year has elapsed from the date the incomplete was assigned.

**Course Resources:** Where you can go for assistance

### **Technology Resources**

Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus. You can contact Help Desk via email, [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu), by phone 747-5257.

**IMPORTANT:** If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The Help Desk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

### **Academic Resources**

- UTEP Library: Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

### **Individual Resources**

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.
- UTEP Title IX (Anti-Sexual Harassment and Anti-Sexual Violence) Office: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix>
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- Need more dance in your life? Join the UTEP student organization DESERT DANCE. E-mail [desertdanceutep@gmail.com](mailto:desertdanceutep@gmail.com)

### **Absence Policy**

In a course that meets twice a week, a student is allowed a maximum of 4 absences in an entire semester, 2 of which require no justification and result in no penalty. A student can use these absences based on personal necessity. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> absences will result in a drop of ½ a letter grade each in the student's overall grade. At the 5<sup>th</sup> absence, regardless of the student's current course standing or grade, the student will automatically fail the course.

*Exceptions:*

- In the event of international bridge closures, exceptions may be made and make-up work may be assigned.
- In case of an injury or extended illness, it is the student's responsibility to meet with his or her instructor to discuss possible solutions for course continuation or to consider dropping the class.
- In the event of highly unusual or extenuating circumstances, a student may petition the course instructor and department chair for permission to continue in a course.
- In case of injury, a student who is able to be present in the studio may observe class and complete alternative and equivalent assignments to be negotiated with the instructor.

### **Subject Matter**

The performing arts have a power to stir strong emotions, and dance specifically has the characteristic to break your personal/cultural space. Note that occasionally, there at times that you will have to physically interact with a classmate where body contact might be exchanged. If you have concerns about any movement, physical touch or any specific subject that might not feel comfortable, please see me as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations. I expect mutual respect in all our discussions and verbal exchanges—including any that may occur outside of class—to be conducted in a respectful and professional matter.

### **Assignments**

- Complete all assignments weekly by Sunday, 11:59 pm for each module.
- Submit assignments in Microsoft word in English using excellent grammar. Proof-read and line edit your work. You are a college student who is writing professional quality work.
- You are asked to write in narrative format throughout this course. Minimize the use of bullet points.
- Identify all written assignments with the following heading: your Name, Module Number and Assignment Title.
- Use 12 point Times New Roman font, and 1.5 for written work.
- Students should cite references and sources appropriately using MLA format.  
<https://libguides.utep.edu/mlastyle>

### **Video technology and access**

- Some assignments require students to videotape themselves
- Use your smartphone and then upload the video to a YouTube account.
- If you have questions about uploading video clips to YouTube, the following link provides directions:  
<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/57407?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DAndroid>
- Make sure you read all course material in advance, so you know your assignment

deadlines. Be responsible for your learning.

### **Written Assignments:**

Writing assignments will be specified to submit on Blackboard and may include such requirements as:

- Reading summaries: You are responsible to read all course articles (6 in total, available on Blackboard or otherwise indicated) **before coming to class**. Submit a summary of the main argument and relevant points (no less than one page or 3 paragraphs depending on the length of the article) and make sure you formulate one question stemming from your reading and respond to a classmate's. **Summaries are always due on Sunday by midnight.**  
**Note:** Points will be deducted from participation if reading is not done by the due date.
- Written analysis and presentation of your research and creative process (interviews, videos and journals consulted, movement motifs, music, structure, spatial structure and dynamics).
- Self-reflection based on your own choreographic studies and process
- Journaling
- Feedback to a classmate's choreographic study.

### **Showings:**

Note that there are specific deadline to complete your group piece as it will be showcased at Dinner Theatre on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024. There are also specified deadlines for the additional three other dance studies (see course timeline and take note). All will receive peer feedback.

Final dance composition trio MUST be shown with the full cast on the due date  
No less than 3 minutes long.

**Note:** All elements pertaining the final dance composition should be considered and designed (not only the dance, but the visual aspect, the sound and stage presentation, should be presented in a proposal form)

### **It is your responsibility to know the due dates!**

*Always be humble when dealing with feedback and most importantly **always look for it!** It makes room for breakthroughs...*

Students are encouraged to read additional books on dance composition or articles in books and journals related to this class and watch other choreographers' pieces to further enhance your knowledge (See recommended readings below)

### **Requirements:**

Your **journal/notebook** should be with you every class (record material discussed in class and personal thoughts and reflections on the creative process, 3 to 4 entry sentences minimum per week) **Due on Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Rubrics:** All rubrics can be found in Blackboard

### **Method of Evaluation**

Group composition -in collaboration with other discipline	100pts
2 short dance studies	60 pts
Final Project piece (trio)	100 pts
Summaries (6 x 16 pts each)	96 pts
Presentations (2 x 20 pts each)	40
Journal	10pts
Attendance - Possible pts	100 pts
<i><u>Total Possible Points</u></i>	506

### **Grading scale:**

A = 405 +  
B = 400 – 355  
C = 350 – 304  
D = 299 – 253  
F = 252 – 0

Syllabus subject to change

## **COURSE TIMELINE**

### ***Week 1 – 1/17***

- Discuss syllabus and important dates  
**Brainstorming for the group composition – guest artist poet David Emperor.**
- The importance of questioning through the choreographic process: What, How,

Why? – lecture/presentation

**Week 2 – 1/22**

- Inter-disciplinary Collaborations  
**Reading:** Schupp, Karen, Teaching Collaborative Skills through Dance Isolating the Parts to Strengthen the Whole.  
**Time to plan group piece**
- Dancing and talking, Dancing to talking  
**Reading:** Turney, Eleanor, Lost in Translation: Does Dancing to Words Work? 2011.  
Bill T Jones' word process  
**Time to work on group piece**

**Week 3 – 1/29**

- Guest artist: Tawanda Chabikwa, Collaborations with dancers across styles and cultures. The Africanist aesthetic.  
**Assignment:** Contact an artist (painter, musician, actor, videographer, fellow dancer) to collaborate – form a partnership - in your final solo piece. Share your experience in Blackboard. **Due Wednesday, Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>**  
**Time to work on group piece**

**Week 4 – 2/5**

- Guest Artist Presentation: Niurca Marquez, independent artist, researcher and author - <https://www.niurcamarquez.com>  
**Dance Study #1:** Create a movement reaction inspired by the presentation of one of the guest choreographers. Write a reflection about the experiences and generate your movement from it (40 to 60 seconds long- no more!). **Due, Wed. Feb.11<sup>th</sup>** (upload to Blackboard by midnight and provide feedback to a classmate).  
**Time to work on group piece**

**Week 5 – 2/12**

- **Time to work on group piece**
- **Showings:** 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of group piece, **Feb. Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup>**. Feedback.  
**Dance Study #1 – due** upload to Black board and provide feedback to a classmate

**Week 6 – 2/19**

- Site Specific Choreography  
**Readings:** Kath, Taylor, The Power of Environment as a Tool for Inspiration\_ Engaging Students Through In-Studio Vs Site-Specific Choreography, (2019). Master's Theses, pp 10 – 17.  
**Dance Study #2** – Create a site-specific movement response with a classmate (no less than 60 seconds). After presenting the study in class, upload video to Blackboard. Journal research questions emanating from the process and write a one page reflection to present in class. **Due, Wed., March 4<sup>th</sup> –Midterm**  
**Time to work on group piece**

**Week 7 – 2/26**

- **Time to work on group piece**

**Week 8 – 3/4**

**Midterm –**

- **Dance Study #2 due** (Present research questions for process on Dance Study #2. Upload to Blackboard by midnight)
- **Showings:** Final of group piece, **Wed., March 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>** (two days) Peer feedback.
- **Wed. Run through of group piece**

**Week 3/11 – Spring Break**

**Week 10 – 3/18**

- **Dress rehearsals of group piece**
- **Performance, Friday, Feb. 22, 7:00 pm @ Dinner Theatre**

**Week 11 – 3/25**

- Dance: Practice as Research
- Video Screening and Reading: In class
- Video Screening; Improvisation Technologies: William Forsythe
- **Dance Study #3** – Create a final trio (no less than 3 minutes) based on a current topic in your community, your culture, another style or a personal journey you want to call attention to. Your research must include at least three sources (consultation of videos, articles or books) and an interview(s) or practice session with someone who knows any of the dances or knows about the topic that you might use for your project. **Document and journal your process** (from questionnaire, interviews, videos, photos, etc.) and write a reflection (**two-page -1.5 Times New Roman**) **to present 5 minutes version in class before dancing.** Upload video and paper to Backboard. **Due, Wed. May 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Time to plan your final piece**

**Week 12 – 4/1**

- Exploring Music Relations:  
**Reading:** Craene, Paul, Introduction to the Dance-Music Collaboration Expert Meeting, 2018.
- **Time to work on your final piece**

**Week 13 – 4/8**

- Dancing with Props  
**Reading:** The Magical Object – from Buckwalter, Melinda. Composing While Dancing: An Improviser's Companion (before coming to class on Monday)
- **Time to work on your final piece**

**Week 14 – 4/15**

- **Time to work on final piece**
- **Showings:** Second draft. Feedback. **Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>**



**Week 15 – 4/22**

- **Time to work on your final piece**
- **Dress rehearsal**

**Week 16 – 4/29**

- **Final - Dance Study #3 – due Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup>**
- Presentation of personal reflection on creative process discussing research and creative process and influences from choreographers surveyed in class and others – **Wed. May 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Journal due - Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup>** (Drop hard copies in my mail box by Friday at the main office and pick them up from there as well)

**Important Dates:**

- Feb. 14 – Dance Study #1
- March 4 – Midterm (Dance Study #2)
- March 22 – Performance @ Dinner Theatre, 7:00 pm –
- April 11 –Spring Break
- April 29<sup>th</sup> – Finals Week (Dance Study #3 and Research Presentation)
- May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Journal due

**Recommended Readings**

- Bogart, Anne, *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*, Theatre Communications Group, 2004.
- Minto, Sandra Cerny, *Choreography: a basic approach using improvisation*, Human Kinetics, 2007.
- Blom and Chaplin, *The Intimate Act of Choreography*, University of Pittsburg Press, 1982.
- Tharp, Twyla, *The Collaborative Habit: Life Lessons for Working Together*, Simon & Schuster, 2013. P
- Tharp, Twyla, *The Creative Habit: Learn It and Use It for Life*, Simon & Schuster, 2006.
- Humphrey, D, *The Art of Making Dances*. Grove Press / Atlantic Monthly Press, 1962.
- Reeve Justine, *Dance Improvisations: Warm-Ups, Games and Choreographic Tasks*. Human Kinetics. IL: Human Kinetics, 2011.

**Online resources:**

- Dancemagazine.com (online magazine)
- Jaconbpillow.org
- [http://www.contemporary-dance.org/The\\_Dance\\_Thinker-dance-improvisation.html#dominikborucki](http://www.contemporary-dance.org/The_Dance_Thinker-dance-improvisation.html#dominikborucki) On Improvisation – interview
- <http://www.contemporary-dance.org/dance-composition.html> - On Methodologies for Choreography
- <https://www.ndeo.org/Learn/Dance-Education-Research> Reading in class

- <https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/how-to-choreograph-a-dance-when-you-are-stuck/>  
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### **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING DANCES**

Please consider the following when evaluating dances or studies during discussions or in written assignments for this course:

- Did the dance meet the requirements of the specific assignment?
- Was the use of the choreographic elements of time, space and dynamics clear? Interesting? Exciting? Appropriate to the perceived context?
- Is the formal design clear? Do sections emerge in the best order or could they be reordered for more clarity? Did the structure contribute to holding your interest?
- Was the movement theme clear? How have the motifs been used and varied? Was there sufficient use of contrast to avoid monotony? Was there sufficient infusion of the motifs to provide a unified and integrated whole?
- *Was the movement vocabulary inventive?* Was there anything unique about the dance? Were there any "flowers" for you?
- Did the dance have clarity? To what extent were the choreography and/or performance responsible for the clarity or lack of it?
- Did the production elements (sound, costume, set, props, lighting as appropriate) enhance or inhibit the choreographer's ability to make a statement?
- Did the dance touch you, awaken you, startle you, or anger you? Do you think the choreographer intended this response? Would you want to see this dance performed again? What would you change and why?
- Was the dance the right length to accomplish the choreographer's intent? Was there anything extraneous? Was something missing?
- Does this dance/study show growth on the part of the choreographer/performer?
- Are the production elements (lighting, costumes, etc.) supporting and/or enhancing the piece?

### **SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT CHOREOGRAPHY.....**

From **The Art of Making Dances** by Doris Humphrey: "First of all, the potential choreographer should be predominantly extrovert and a keen observer of physical and emotional behavior. . . The dancer's medium is the body . . . I should say that the first mark of the potential choreographer is knowledge of, or at least a great curiosity about, the body--not just his own, but the heterogeneous mixture of bodies which people his environment. . . To compose for himself, he must put a stethoscope to his own heart and listen to those mysterious inner voices which are the guide to originality." (pp20-21)

Also from **The Art of Making Dances**: "A young choreographer should choose something quite simple, which is thoroughly familiar or within the range of his own experience." (p24)

**You are required to attend to one dance event from the following list** (provide proof of attendance)