

DANC 2301 CEL* - Improvisation

Fall 2023

MW 3:00 – 4:20 PM

FOX M201

(Please note that whenever possible, we will have class outdoors)

Instructor: S. Paola López Ramírez

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 am – 11:30 am or by appointment.

This syllabus is subject to change, I will notify you promptly if the changes will affect assignments in any way.

Course Description:

Movement improvisation is a broad art form that has a rich and complex history. In the contemporary dance world in the past decades, being able to improvise has become a required skill for any aspiring artist in the field. Whether you use it as a tool for making dances, a performance form, a cultural practice, a tool for resistance, or “just” for the joy of moving, delving into the rigor of physical improvisation will open a wondrous journey into awareness, self-discovery, and creativity. We will deeply investigate our body, how it moves and how it relates to others and the environment. Given the relational and democratic nature of the practice, we will also spend time discussing and practicing the ethical implications of improvisation as engaged citizen-artists both in the classroom and in community settings.

**The “CEL” designation for this course stands for “Community Engagement & Leadership” and is part of a new certificate program in the College of Liberal Arts. The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students’ understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders. Accordingly, course assignments and assessments are developed in line with the CEL Program mission in Liberal Arts, as well as within the broader framework and mission of UTEP’s “Edge Advantages” goals.*

CEL work for this course:

The CEL component for this class will be using ecological conservation work as embodied research. We will partner with [Rio Bosque Wetlands Park](#)— a 372-acre ecological restoration project of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo valley ecosystem, where you will spend time doing conservation work 3 times during the semester. We will use our discoveries to refine our embodied research in the classroom and we will work towards a performance, giving you a hands-on experience of how improvisation and performance-making can be used to engage social and environmental issues.

Course Topics:

This course is divided into 3 main sections that will guide the focus of our work throughout the semester. *The dates given below are approximate* and they might change as the course progresses.

Section 1: Solo body (8/28 – 9/25)

We will begin by listening to our body and acknowledging all the information it stores (dance related and otherwise). From here, we will begin a diligent investigation of our instrument taking one element at a time to diversify our movement palette. Prepare to be excited, bored, surprised, and exhausted.

Section 2: Ensemble work (9/27 – 10/25)

Learning about our body through our relationships is fundamental to embodied practice. Ensemble improvisation is an extraordinary way to deepen understanding of our movement tendencies and desires. We will work on building together, developing deep listening and increasing our awareness of compositional form. A big component of this section will be learning to work with and create improvisational scores for performance.

Section 3: Site-specific explorations (10/30 – 11/29)

Site-specific dance offers a platform for us to investigate and honor the connection between our body and the spaces we move through. We will explore how our body responds to constructed space and natural landscape through performance scores and will create individual scores for our class performance.

Throughout the semester we will weave in discussions through our embodied practice of the ethical implications of improvisation and our responsibilities as body-based artists in our communities.

Course Objectives:

- √ To develop new movement language as we become aware of our own tendencies and preferences
- √ To expand our conception of aesthetics in dance
- √ To develop sensitivity and intelligence when improvising in an ensemble
- √ To increase our kinesthetic awareness and our understanding of interconnection to others and our environment
- √ To learn about improvisation as performance practice through embodied experience and research of practitioners in the field
- √ To increase social justice and social responsibility awareness, specifically as body-based artists
- √ To articulate and practice the team-building skills of improvisation

Assignments and Grading Criteria:

- Participation (270 points, 10 points per class): To succeed in this course you must, above all, show up and practice. Improvisation is a diligent research form that requires absolute physical, emotional, and spiritual focus. If you come and do the work each class, you will be awarded all 10 points. Please refer to the attendance policy below for further information.
- Journal (50 points): You are required to bring a notebook/journal to class every day to have as your companion during the semester. You will need it for multiple assignments and reflection in and outside class. You will turn it in on **December 11th**.
- Mandatory Departmental Performances (60 points total, 30 points each): The Department of Theatre and Dance requires that each student enrolled in a dance class attends 2 shows of the departmental season within the semester. You will need to sign-in after the performance using the QR code provided at the venue and upload to blackboard a one to two-minute improvisation responding to the show. Please refer to the **Mandatory Departmental Performances** at the end of the syllabus to see performance dates and ticket information. Responses are **due on November 1st and December 13th**
- Community workdays at Rio Bosque Wetlands Park (150 points total, 50 points each): As part of the CEL component of this course, you will attend 3 community workdays at the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park to use conservation work as embodied research. These **will be on Saturday mornings: September 16th, October 21st and November 18th**. These are MANDATORY. If you have a conflict with any of these dates, please let me know **ASAP**.
- Reflections from community workdays (120 points total, 30 points each): For each community workday I will give you a prompt to guide you through our conservation work during the day. Based on your experience at the park, you will then do a 5-minute free-write and turn it in to me in class the following Monday on: **September 18th, October 23rd, and November 20th**.
- Research project - MIDTERM (100 points): You will research about the life, work and practice of a known practitioner in the movement improvisation field. This will entail at least the following:
 - Reading their biography
 - Looking over their website and other materials online such as podcasts, journal or magazine articles, performance reviews, and interviews
 - Watching at least one full-length recorded performance of their work (look for one at least 20 minutes long)

You will then write a 5 to 7-page paper sharing what you learned, and making

reference to all the material you found. You can choose a practitioner of your choice, or otherwise, your instructor will share a list of names you can choose from.
Due in class on October 16th.

- Class performance - FINAL (150 points, 75 points each): During the last week of class (Dec 4th – 8th) we will do two improvised performances during our class times at two different locations of our choice. You **MUST** attend these two classes to get these points, there will be no other way of making them up.
- Final paper reflection (100 points): At the end of the semester, you will write a 4 to 5-page paper reflecting on your journey in the class. In this paper, you must include:
 - Your progress with your solo body practice (how did it evolve throughout the semester?)
 - Discoveries you made through ensemble work (how did working with others help you find more information about yourself?)
 - What was challenging about site-specific practice
 - Reflections about the conservation work as embodied research
 - Make clear connections or correlations you found between the conservation work and the studio practice
 - **Due on December 11th.**

Total possible points: 1000

A= 100-90% (900-1000)

B= 89-80% (800-899)

C= 79-70% (700-799)

D= 69-60% (600-699)

F= 59% and below (599 <)

Attendance 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 3rd and 4th absences will result in a drop of ½ a letter grade each in the student's overall grade. At the 5th 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.

MANDATORY Departmental Performances:

The Department of Theatre and Dance requires that each student enrolled in a dance class attends 2 shows of the departmental season within the semester. Please find below the dates, times and ticket, information for the two shows you are REQUIRED to attend this semester.

posdata (or what I wish I said)

Created by Georgina Escobar in collaboration with Kim McKean

Directed by Rebecca Frost Mayer

June Sadowski Kruszewski Studio Theatre, UTEP:
October 19, 20, 21 at 7:30 PM & October 22 at 2:00 PM

Paradox Gallery (3915 Rosa Avenue, El Paso, Texas):
October 26 at 7:30 PM

La Fe Culture and Technology Center (721 S. Ochoa, El Paso, Texas):
October 27 at 7:30 PM

Andres High School (5400 Sun Valley Drive, El Paso, Texas):
October 28 at 2:30 PM

Rio Vista Community Center (901 N Rio Vista Rd, Socorro, Texas):
October 29 at 2:30 PM

TICKET PRICES:

Adults: \$18;

UTEP Faculty/Staff, Seniors: \$15

Military, Groups (10+), Alumni (with card), Non-UTEP Students: \$15;

UTEP Students (with a valid ID), Children (ages 4-12): \$12

Metamorphoses by Mary Zimmerman

Directed by Jay Stratton

Choreographed by Melissa Melpignano

Wise Family Theatre, UTEP

December 1, 2, 8, & 9 at 7:30 PM
December 3 & 10 at 2:00 PM

TICKET PRICES:

Adults: \$18;

UTEP Faculty/Staff, Seniors: \$15

Military, Groups (10+), Alumni (with card), Non-UTEP Students: \$15;

UTEP Students (with a valid ID), Children (ages 4-12): \$12

***** If you cannot afford a ticket*****

there are ushering opportunities for departmental performances. Students can sign up to usher all departmental productions via the Theatre and Dance Audience Development office.

Ushering opportunities open one month before opening night. Ushers will see the production for free and must commit to the full time they are needed. If an usher doesn't show up or leaves early, they will not receive credit for seeing the show and will not be allowed to usher for future events.

- Usher sign-up link
for Posdata: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16eJ50efcSvtKPWQRCYJSirc8bhp0rlhHP6n85OT1RwQ/edit?usp=sharing>
- Usher sign-up link
for Metamorphoses: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HZ4l5HdTVbrMJ0y9ddGDWwc4UdNGZC2SUXzXtKg7NWk/edit?usp=sharing>

Also check your emails for **Tickets in Kind** opportunities. Tickets in Kind are free tickets for students, donated by audience members and faculty.

Important Dates

September 16th – Community workday @ Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

September 18th – Reflection from community workday DUE

Midterm research projects assigned

October 16th – Midterm research papers due

October 18th - No Class

October 19th - *posdata (or what I wish I said)* opens

October 21st – Community workday @ Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

October 23rd – Reflection from community workday DUE

October 29th - *posdata (or what I wish I said)* LAST performance

November 1st – Improvised response to *posdata (or what I wish I said)* DUE on blackboard

November 18th – Community workday @ Rio Bosque Wetlands Park

November 20th – Reflection from community workday DUE

December 1st – *Metamorphoses* opens

December 4th & 6th – Final performances during class time

December 10th – *Metamorphoses* LAST performance

December 11th – Journals DUE in instructor's office

Final paper reflection DUE in instructor's office

December 13th – Improvised response to *Metamorphoses* DUE on blackboard

Extra Credit Opportunities:

I really encourage students to get out and get more dance experiences. Because of this, I do not cap extra credit and you are welcome to attend as many extra events as you want. Below are some options, but if you are attending other events that are related in some way to our course, check with me ahead of time to get approval to get extra credit. All extra credit events are worth 5 points unless otherwise noted.

- For events hosted by the Dinner Theater

check: <https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/udt/index.html>.

- Campus Museums

Visit the current exhibits at the [Rubin Center for the Visual Arts](#) and the [Centennial Museum](#) and/or attend any of their events throughout the semester

****PLEASE NOTE**** that in order to get credit, you must submit a 300-word written response for each event you attend by December 11th

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](#).

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 [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Student 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.
- [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.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [Military Student Success Center](#): UTEP welcomes military-affiliated students to its degree programs, and the Military Student Success Center and its dedicated staff (many of whom are veterans and students themselves) are here to help personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.