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Fall 9-1-2018

### DANC 220A.01: Creative Practice I

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#### Recommended Citation

Eggert, Heidi Jones and Bradley Browning, Nicole, "DANC 220A.01: Creative Practice I" (2018). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 8943.

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**Creative Practice I: Dance Generation**  
**University of Montana Tuesday/Thursday 9am-10:50am PARTV 005**

**Autumn 2018**  
University of Montana  
School of Theatre & Dance

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*“When I first began choreographing, I never thought of it as choreography but as expressing feelings. Though every piece is different, they are all trying to get at certain things that are difficult to put into words. In the work, everything belongs to everything else - the music, the set, the movement and whatever is said.” [Pina Bausch](#)*

*“Creativity for me is something that is absolutely critical. I think it’s something you can teach. And, I think you find out things about your own personal physical signature, your own cognitive habits and you can use that as a point of departure to misbehave beautifully.” [Wayne McGregor](#)*

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Through the practice of improvisation, movement generation, choreographic design, reflection and evaluation – students will learn methods to compose dance and develop individual creative processes.

**Required Materials** – bring to each class meeting

- Your imagination
- Required Text: The Intimate Act of Choreography by Blom and Chaplin
- Recommended Text for all dance makers: The Art of Making Dances by the great Doris Humphrey
- Schedule of readings, improvisations, studies, films will be arranged as the course progresses and according to the student’s development and needs
- Journal
- Digital video camera to record all studies completed throughout the semester

## **Objectives**

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Explore various improvisations structures and compositional principles to invent new and personal movement vocabulary.
2. Demonstrate command of traditional choreographic tools such as: phrasing, space, time, quality, form, content development, sound implementation, production, design, performance and evaluation.
3. Discover a personal method and creative process to shape material derived from improvisational work into structured and choreographic studies.
4. Develop an understanding of the vital importance of intent within one’s creative work, and to employ thematic material to support one’s intent.
5. Develop a constructive method to deliver and receive feedback.

## **Methods**

A dance practicum course grounded in play, structured improvisations, lecture, discussion, reflection, text and film resources to serve as a point of inspiration from which one’s creative practice can emerge. The following criteria will enable objectives to be met: completion of assigned readings, viewing of assigned films, participation in discussion, improvisation and choreographic studies, self – peer evaluation, and archiving creative process and product in both journal and film format throughout the semester.

**Course Content (may include but is not limited to...)**

**I. Essentials**

- a. Isolating intention or stimulus
- b. Implementing content to support intent: composition provides the artist a chance to express an idea
- c. Simplifying: every movement should tell
- d. Invention

**II. Phrase**

- a. Methods of creation of a dance phrase or structure
- b. High point

**III. Space**

- a. Level
- b. Direction, dimension, plane
- c. Pathway, floor patterns
- d. Line (curved, straight, angular, symmetrical, asymmetrical)
- e. Positive and Negative space
- f. Stage Space
- g. Environment (Dynamic space, Symbolic space, Site-Specific)

**IV. Time**

- a. Phrasing
- b. Breath
- c. Momentum (acceleration/deceleration)
- d. Accent
- e. Stillness

**V. Energy**

- a. Tension: Loose/Taught
- b. Force: Strong/Gentle
- c. Movement Qualities

**VI. Sound**

- a. Music
- b. Words
- c. Environmental

**VII. Production Elements**

- a. Costume
- b. Props
- c. Film
- d. Set design
- e. Collaboration

**VIII. Form**

- a. The container for the work
- b. Transition
- c. Sequence
- d. Compositional Structures and Devices

**IX. Creative Intention**

- a. How do Body, Space, Time, Movement Quality, Production Elements, and Form support your intention?

**X. Performance**

## Course Requirements:

**1. Daily Studio Work: Improvisation, Play, Movement Research: (20%)** Each student will participate in improvisational and choreographic structures as assigned.

**2. Daily Research, Discussion, Critique: (20%)** Directed improvisations and creative works will be discussed, reflected upon and evaluated during weekly classes. To develop a discriminating eye, students will deliver and receive feedback in a constructive manner that goes beyond subjective responses such as, "I liked it." Students must thoughtfully construct their feedback and be able to justify their critique both in class and in on-line forums.

**3. Daily Journal: (5%)** As students begin the creative process, they must maintain a journal. In this journal, students are expected to record research for dance making, ideas relative to creative process, important notes about the tools, exercises, skills, concepts used to create choreography, the structure of choreographic studies (the notation used to record the form), feedback, criticism, notes for improvement, questions as well as topics that arise through discussion and assigned readings. Students are expected to **bring the journal to each class session**. It is likely that students will receive feedback and engage in on-line dialogue through Moodle. These on-line materials may culminate in a document that students include in the required journal, or as an online link that is also available for review at the culmination of the semester. The physical journal will be submitted for grade during the last class session. Be consistent on a class-by-class basis.

**4. Daily Digital Filming (5%)** Students are required to have a digital camera available for class throughout the semester. The video log, as a tool, enables students to archive their work and reflect upon and learn from past exercises. Students are expected to bring the personal camera to each class session, **with the battery charged and an appropriate amount of memory available**, otherwise, work will not be recorded. **If the student plays music for a showing or study from the video recording device, they must be prepared to play music from an alternate source to ensure film documentation of the work can take place.** At the conclusion of the semester, students are required to submit a finalized video log/reel of **all work completed throughout the term**. Be consistent: upload, edit, label your projects throughout the semester.

**5. Showings: (45%)** Students are required to show and comment on work throughout the semester. Students are expected to acquire and apply creative approaches, improvisational skills and compositional skills throughout the semester. Therefore, work should become more sophisticated as the semester progresses.

Creative work will range in terms of intention, use of accompaniment and performance site. **Each work must be individually titled and regarded as a complete entity in and of itself.** There is a fundamental expectation in this course that students will approach each of the assignments as an inventor- an explorer who is generating her or his own approach to creativity. Both group and solo studies are required throughout the semester. Students will be graded according to:

1. Effort to fulfill the requirements of each study;
2. Effort to communicate through complete thoughts. Just as sentences have a beginning – middle – end, so does creative work;
3. Effort to rise to the challenge of the studies. As they sequentially grow in their complexity – so should the approach;
4. Ability to thoughtfully articulate intent;
5. Inventiveness. Change it. Make it one's own. Completely trash it. Start anew. Students have total license to create in this class.
6. Development of one's own creative process. Students will be exposed to multiple ways by which artists approach the generation of new work. The ultimate goal of this class is for the student to begin to recognize how she or he is inspired to research and create dance.

**NOTE: STUDENTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO "MAKE UP" SHOWINGS THEY MISS DUE TO ABSENCE. PLEASE DO NOT ASK.**

The goal of the final project is to provide an opportunity for the dance artist to exhibit the tools they have learned throughout the semester. Secondly, this project provides the chance for the artist to decide what their intention and approach for the final work will be.

***Dance on Location (10% of grade):*** Sat, Sept 29 & Sun, Sept 30 12noon shows  
with a dress rehearsal the evening of Fri, Sept 28

***Final showing (10% of grade):*** during Fall Studio Works performance:  
the evening of Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, with a dress rehearsal the evening of Thursday,  
December 6<sup>th</sup>

***Post process/performance wrap up:*** Wednesday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> 10:10am – 12:10pm in 005

6. **Concert Attendance (5%):** As a burgeoning creative artist, it is your responsibility to attend as many artistic events as possible to further develop your aesthetic preferences. Therefore, you are required to provide proof of attendance to five dance concerts.

\*Include the programs from each event (with notes documenting your response) in your journal.

Students are required to write **one critical response** to a required concert during the semester. **See details and guidelines on Moodle.**

#### **Required Concerts include:**

- A. **Choose One** by Colorado-based dancers, Lauren Beale and Brooke McNamara, presented by Bare Bait Dance, September 14-15 8PM, September 15 @2PM and September 16 @ 6PM Open Space, tickets at the door, \$15
- B. **UM Dancers on Location: A Site-Specific Dance Concert**  
September 29-30, 2018 @ 12noon, Mansfield Library Mall,  
FREE (donations graciously accepted)
- C. **Dance Up Close:** November 1-3 @ 7:30PM, November 3 @ 2PM  
Masquer Theatre, Tickets available at the UM Arts Box Office in the PARTV \$16 or less
- D. **Springboard** by Bare Bait Dance, November 9-10 @8PM, November 11<sup>th</sup> @ 6PM,  
November 16-17<sup>th</sup> @8PM, November 18<sup>th</sup> @6PM Open Space, tickets at the door, \$15
- E. **Studio Works:** Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup> program I at 6:30pm; program II at 8:30pm;  
Open Space, Tickets \$5 *at the door*

**Attendance Policy\*** One absence is permitted for the term. After one absence, student's grade will drop one-third letter grade (B -> B-, B- -> C+).

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#### **Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php>

#### **All syllabi for Theatre & Dance courses imply the understanding:**

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/umarts/theatredance/About/handbook.php>.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.

Due to safety considerations, at **no** point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student **without our consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

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**NO street shoes are allowed in the dance studio at any time, even carried in-hand.** Anyone entering the studio must remove their street shoes **BEFORE** entering and leave them outside the studio. The only shoes permitted in studios are those that have been purchased for the exclusive use of dance in dance studios (with the exclusion of tap shoes, hard-shoe clogs, and flamenco shoes. These should never be worn on Marley floors).

Individuals concerned about theft should rent a locker for their shoes and other belongings.

**NO** food or drinks (except water in closed bottles) are permitted in the dance studios or theatres.

**LOCKER RENTALS** are available for ALL students in the dance classes. We recommend that you do not leave personal belongings unattended in the dressing rooms, hallways, or dance studios, as **THEFTS FREQUENTLY OCCUR**. Lockers may be rented for \$10.00/SEMESTER, OR \$15/TWO SEMESTERS.

Lockers are available for assignment following the School of Theatre & Dance Major's Meeting on Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup> (approximately 6:30PM), or on Friday August 31<sup>st</sup> with School of Theatre & Dance Work Study Student in PARTV 197 from 1-5PM. To acquire a locker after this date, please speak with your instructor or Administrative Associate III Erin McDaniel ([erin.mcdaniel@umontana.edu](mailto:erin.mcdaniel@umontana.edu); PARTV lobby, near the box office).

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**From the EO/AA Office:**

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <https://www.umt.edu/dss/>.

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I (name) \_\_\_\_\_ have read the syllabus on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ and understood the information presented about this course. My signature documents an agreement to adhere to these policies.