

The Ohio State University
 Dance H367.01
 GEC #1: Writing Course, 2nd Level

Department of Dance
 UG (GEC) 5 cr hours
 Honors and Scholars

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M/W 2:30-4; also by appt.

"... works of art are a form of address, directed at you, their audience. Like most forms of address, they demand a response."

Henry M Sayre
Writing about Art, 3rd ed.

"The aim of criticism is the re-education of the perception of the work of art; it is an auxiliary in the process, a difficult process, of learning to see and hear."

John Dewey
Art as Experience

"Writing isn't typing: it's thinking on paper."

Marcia B. Siegel

I. Course Description:

Dance H367.01 provides an opportunity to view, discuss, read, think and write about contemporary dance and its history through the study and practice of criticism. The course offers a forum for enhancing critical thinking and analytical skills, and for developing a vocabulary with which to address a fundamentally non-verbal art form. The work of the course consists of dance viewings, readings, discussion, and a wide variety of expository and persuasive writing projects, both exploratory and formal. Artists and works viewed are introduced in chronologies that emphasize the historical development of contemporary dance. The particular demands of tracking an ephemeral, moving artform through time and space, and translating those experiences into written texts, constitute a rigorous Honors/Scholars experience. The specific work of the course requires a high degree of engagement, a tolerance for ambiguity and diversity of opinions, and an established level of writing expertise.

II. GEC Rationale and Objectives:

GEC Category # 1: Writing and Related Skills, 2nd level. The task of engaging in written and oral expression about an artform that is essentially non-verbal requires keen observation skills, the ability to sift through the remembered sensory information of a performance event and organize it in an effective manner, and the ability to transform sensory data into clear and persuasive prose. In developing such skills, students will also be expected to locate and analyze published critical texts from a variety of sources.

III. Course Objectives:

Desired student outcomes on successful completion of the course:

- an understanding and appreciation for the nature and practice of dance criticism.
- an enhanced ability to actively and accurately observe, describe and interpret dance: its movement, its structural components, its meanings and its contextual associations.
- the ability to formulate connections between the observation of dance and one's lived experience.
- enhanced ability to clearly and persuasively discuss and write about diverse forms of dance.
- the informed ability to read, analyze and discuss published critical writings about dance.
- the ability to retrieve and analyze published texts of dance criticism from multiple sources.
- increased understanding of one's own position within a community of learners with a diversity of informed views.
- the ability to establish and articulate personal criteria for evaluating dance.
- increased understanding, through the practice of writing, of the art form of dance.
- the ability to explain how dances express and reflect social and cultural issues

IV. Course Content and Procedures:

1. The basic format of the course is writing and discussion based on readings, viewings and presented class material.
2. Students will attend selected performances for class discussion and writing assignments.
3. Students will actively participate in class discussions about assigned readings and dance viewings.
4. Students will complete all in-class and homework assignments.
5. Students will write three formal papers, varying in length between 600 – 1200 words.
6. Students will take two exams: a midterm and a final.
7. Students will participate in studio exercises designed to sharpen skills of observation and articulation.

V. Requirements and Evaluation:

1. Three formal papers will be assigned during the quarter. Guidelines for each of these will be given as they are assigned. ***It is particularly important that all paper deadlines be observed (including drafts).*** Failure to do so will result in a grade lowered by half a letter for each missed deadline; more importantly, such delays interfere with the mutual enterprise of creating a responsive classroom community. Papers turned in late, for whatever reason, will be graded but will not receive detailed feedback.
2. Formal papers *must* be revised at least once, but may be revised as often as desired, within established deadlines.
3. Brief written assignments will be a regular feature of the course. These may occur during class, or may be required for homework.
4. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced unless otherwise noted. ***It is extremely important that each paper and each draft be dated and numbered. Both a hard copy and an electronic copy of formal assignments are required.***

5. Exams: two exams will be administered during the progress of the course, a midterm and a final. The exams will consist of short answer and essay questions designed to assess the integration of course concepts, readings, vocabulary, viewings and discussion.

6. Grades for the course will be determined as follows:

15%	regular and prompt attendance; preparation and <i>active</i> class participation; on-time completion of class assignments
20%	Paper # 1: a short aesthetic autobiography: drafts 1 & 2
5%	Midterm exam
20%	Paper # 2: a descriptive paper: drafts 1 & 2
20%	Paper # 3: an interpretive paper: drafts 1 & 2
10%	All other written assignments
10%	Final exam

Prompt and regular attendance is crucial; more than two absences or late arrivals will lower the final grade by one half letter grade for each additional absence.

Academic Misconduct: All students should be aware that plagiarism, or any other kind of academic dishonesty, is a serious offense and can result in penalties, including failure in the course and dismissal from the University. All work in this course **must be your own**, and dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Academic Misconduct (rule 3335-31-02) is defined as “any activity which tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution, or subvert the educational process.” Please refer to rule 3335-31-02 in the student code of conduct for examples of academic misconduct.

Disability and Special Needs: We rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodation and developing accommodation strategies. Anyone feeling that he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately, at the beginning of the course, to discuss these needs. To register a documented disability, please call the Office of Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue at 292-3307; or 292-0901 TDD or at www.ods.ohio-state.edu.

VI. Grading Scale

In order to be eligible for a passing grade, all course requirements must be completed.

Grade Equivalents:

Percentage	Letter
94-100	A
90-93	A-
86-89	B+

83-85	B
80-82	B-
76-79	C+
73-75	C
70-72	C-
66-69	D+
60-65	D
0-59	E

VII. Required Texts:

Siegel, Marcia B. The Tail of the Dragon: New Dance, 1976 – 1982. Durham: Duke UP, 1991.

Connor, Lynne. Spreading the Gospel of Modern Dance: Newspaper Dance Criticism in the United States 1850 - 1934. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.

Lunsford, Andrea, and Walter Creed. The St. Martin's Handbook, 5th ed. Bedford: St. Martin's Press, 2004.

In addition to these texts, the following, packet of readings from a variety of sources has been compiled for the course and is available for purchase at Grade A Notes, 22 E. 17th Ave. Alternatively, the collection can be accessed via the Dance/Music Library, where it is maintained on course reserve. Students will also be expected to familiarize themselves with other sources of dance criticism, published concurrently with the course timeline, and to search for and obtain examples from a variety of sources throughout the quarter of study.

VIII. Topical Outline:

Week 1

Introduction to the course:

What is dance?

The Role/s of criticism

Introduction to Paper #1: An Aesthetic Autobiography

Paper Due: #1/Draft 1

Readings Due: Denby, "Dancers, Buildings and People in the Streets," 548-556; Kirby, "Criticism: Four Faults," 59-68; Acocella, "Imagining Dance," 7-8; 10-11; Banes, "On Your Fingertips," 16-24.

viewing exercise: *Lamentation* (1930): Martha Graham

Week 2

The Critical Activity of Description

A visit to the studio

Working with a draft

Choreography for the Page: Commonalties in Dance Composition and Dance Criticism

Readings Due: Jowitz, "Beyond Description: Writing Beneath the Surface," 2-7; Banes, "Criticism as Ethnography," 16-24; Connor, ch. 1

viewing exercise: *Strange Hero* (1948) Daniel Nagrin

Week 3

Descriptive Tools

Lexicon

Verbs: The Heart of the Matter

The Uses of Association

Paper Due: #1/Draft 2:

Writing stories: Reflective Engagement with Paper #1

Readings Due: Siegel, "Using Lexicons for Performance Research," 205-216; Copeland, "Between Description and Deconstruction," 98-107; Connor, ch.2.**viewing exercise:** *Lyric Suite* (1954) Anna Sokolow**Week 4**

Specific Strategies

Unloaded Language

Re-Considering Audience

Issues of Voice

Paper Due: #2/Draft 1**Readings Due:** Stöckemann, Patricia. "Communicating Movement," 19-20; Jowitt, "A Private View of Criticism," 204-209; Dixon Gottschild, "Some Thoughts on Choreographing History," 167 – 178.**viewing exercise:** *Antic Meet* (1958) Merce Cunningham**Week 5**

Worlds of Dance: Writing 'the Other'

Midterm ExamIntroduction to Paper #2: Focus on Description**Readings Due:** Jowitt, Siegel, et al., "Coming to Grips with the 'Other:' A Discussion among Writers," 181-195; Murgiyanto, "Seeing and Writing about World Dance: An Insider's View," 3, 7, and 8; Sklar, "Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance," 4 and 9.**viewing exercise:** excerpts from *Dancing 8: dances of the Pacific Rim*.**Week 6**

The Critical Activity of Interpretation

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Information

The Intentional Fallacy

Paper Due: #2/Draft 2:

Writing Stories: Reflective Engagement with Paper #2

Readings Due: Sontag, "Against Interpretation," 3 -14; Barrett, "Principles of Interpretation," 71-78; Lavender, "Making and Un-Making: Intentions, Criticism, and the Choreographic Process" 335 –357; Connor, ch 3.**viewing exercise:** *Trio A* (1965) Yvonne Rainer**Week 7**

Criticism and Audience

The Community of Interpreters

Criticism as "Enlightened Cherishing"

Artifacts of Memory: Criticism as History

Introduction to Paper #3: Interpreting Dance**Readings Due:** Barrett, "On Interpreting Dance: "Stuart Pimsler's *Sentry*," 100 -107; Howard, "Why is Dance Criticism Necessary?" 1; Brandstetter, "Choreography as a Cenotaph: The Memory of Movement," 102-132.**viewing exercise:** *Watermotor* (1978)

Week 8

Criticism and Aesthetics

The Temporal Arts

Dance and Temporality

The Multi-Sensory Nature of Dance

Paper Due: #3/Draft 1:

Readings Due: Walker, "Thinking Strategies for Interpretation," 69-91; Siegel, "Education of a Dance Critic: The Bonsai and the Lumberjack," 16-21; Siegel, "Critical Practice in the Age of Spin" 1; 5-8; Connor, ch 4.

viewing exercise: *Untitled March Dance* (1982) Bill T Jones

Week 9

Other Critical Activities

Contextualization and Inverse Contextualization

Evaluative Writing

Guest Critic: Jay Weitz of Columbus Alive

Readings Due: Acocella, "What's Good About Bad Reviews?" 35-37; Terry, "Walter Terry Interviews John Martin"; Feck, "Inverse Contextualization: Writing from the Inside Out" 36-39; 66; 68-69.

viewing exercise: *Jealousy* (1985) Mark Morris

Week 10

The Politics of Criticism

Criticism and the Current Climate:

Criticism and Censorship

Summary and Conclusions

Paper Due: #3/Draft 2:

Writing Stories: Reflective Engagement with Paper #2

Readings Due: Siegel, "Decomposing Sugarplums and Robot Mice," 58 – 62; "Not/There: Croce, Criticism and the Culture Wars," 14-20; Croce, "Discussing the Undiscussable," 54-60; Zimmer, "Dance Critics' Forum Examines Declining Dance Coverage in Newspapers," 40-42; McClennan, "Study Looks at How/How Much Arts are Covered."

viewing exercise: excerpts from *Igor and Svetlana* (1999)

Finals Week**Final Exam**

Selected Bibliography

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