

DANCE IMPROVISATION
Dance 2270A

2270A Dance Improvisation. Students will explore improvisation as a process that facilitates the spontaneous response to cues and stimuli for the purpose of opening doorways to their own movement creativity. Topics will consider relaxation, improvisational states, structures for improvisations, participant and leader roles, building group trust, and the progression from spontaneity to form. Half course: 1 hour lecture, 3 hour lab. Prerequisites: permission of the Faculty.

Introduction

Improvisation is a highly sensitized mental state where the dancer, working within specific preset limitations, makes instantaneous movement decisions based on incoming space, time and force data rather than on preconceived movement patterns or plans. The dancer must stay with the set limitations of the improvisation while at the same time allowing the body and mind the freedom to explore new movement ideas and solutions. Ultimately, the dancer should be able to instantly reproduce the movement solutions exactly as they occurred during the improvisation. This movement memory skill is called “recall”.

Students begin to understand the interaction of the mind and the body by working through the process of improvisation. As they begin to recognize, understand and appreciate this complex mental state, the ability to read and discuss information regarding improvisation follows.

Lecture Topics:

1. improvisational states and the states of improvisation: experiential and contextual introduction to movement improvisation
2. opening up the mind and body to allow the creative process to happen
3. from spontaneity to form: understanding the creative process
4. dance improvisation as a tool
5. building a group feeling/trust
6. the role of relaxation and play
7. improvisation as a aid to developing movement and instructional material
8. identification of psychological and sociological aspects that emerge in and from the process

Practical Sessions:

The practical sessions will consist of studio work in movement improvisation. The practical sessions will explore topics and problems presented in the lectures.

This programme of study and exploration will aim to give the student experience in:

- moving with more released movement patterns and an increased movement repertoire
- exploring and discovering different sources to inspire the creation of movement
- exploring and creating structures with which to frame improvisation

Students are expected to participate fully in all practical work and keep a daily journal of their subjective and objective observations, and analysis of their response to each session. Practical evaluation commences from the first day of the course.

Practical sessions will include:

- tuning into yourself – self talk/internal dialogue
- a comparison of structured and free improvisations
- discovering the “improvisational state”
- work on release techniques
- individual and group improvisation techniques including contact improvisation
- developing “recall”

Attendance:

Because of the nature of the course material, students are required to attend all classes. The acceptable exceptions will be an illness that legitimately prevents attendance, or a personal crisis. These events must be proved with documentation. On days when a student does not feel up to physical participation, they should attend class and they will be given an observation assignment.

Dress:

Students should be prepared to work in bare feet, wear layers of soft cotton clothing such as leotards, footless tights, sweat pants, leg warmers, etc., and bring knee pads, a towel and cotton socks to be used when required.

50% - Practical Evaluation will be based on:

The students increased ability, ease, and comfort with the work as expressed through their physical, verbal and collaborative contributions to the class

- quantity of participation (attendance and readiness to work)
- quality of participation (doing, seeing, commenting)
 - increased ability to become and remain involved
 - increased ability to find new/fresh solutions movement problems given
 - ability to work with others as an equal, leader or follower
- apparent overall individual improvement
- completion and quality of specific movement assignments

(Specific details on the above will be provided as the instructor has the opportunity to meet the students and then set assignments appropriate to the backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses within the class.)

Journal, Personal Profile, 3 summaries

Journal 10%

The journal should document the students' mental, physical, and emotional progression through the course. Following each class the student should think back on the experience (s), then briefly describe the task, what happened including how or in what way it affected him or her. The journal should indicate the student's ability to:

- reflect on personal movement experiences during class;
 - observe movement and translate this movement observation into words
 - evaluate the creative environment;
 - observe and identify the elements at work within the improvisation.
 - express his/her relationship to the work and his/her understanding of the work.
- The ability to work creatively should expand beyond this course. Therefore, students are encouraged to also note when they connect concepts and processes used during this course to other areas of university study.

Note: Your journal will provide the information and insights to write your summaries.

[The instructor will ask to see students' journals. A schedule for handing in journals will be set up according to the class list].

Personal Profile (part of your practical evaluation)

To begin the journal students will describe, in written form, specific things about themselves in relation to their perceived body image, movement facility and ability. (These descriptions are also to be typed and handed into the instructor.) This Personal Profile will aid in developing the summary improvisational project. (due on September 22nd)

20% - 2 Summaries (10% each)

Using their journal entries, students will summarize important experiences, changes, and observations from the previous class sessions. The summary is to be no more than 2 typed pages, single spaced. They are due on October 13th and November 12th. (These dates could vary slightly depending on the class progress.)

20% Final Summary Project

This project is meant to help students understand how improvisation can be used as a process to work through issues preventing them from reaching their movement and creative potential.

- isolating problems or blocks
- determining what the issues are
- develop a plan (score)

Towards the end of the term the improvisations will include projects designed to challenge students based on specific challenges determined by both the student and the instructor.

Students are to hand in a final 3 to 4 page summary on December 8th highlighting their experience and observations surrounding the summary improvisational projects and reflections on the course.

Grade Breakdown

50% - Participation
10% - Journal
20% - 2 summaries -10% each
20% - Summary Improvisation Project

Late Assignments:

When written assignments are not handed in on the due date, 1.5 points will be deducted for each day after the due date.

Suggested Reading Sources

- "The Creative Experience", edited by Stanley Rosner & Lawrence E. Abt.
- "The Intimate Act of Choreography", Lynne-Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin.
- "The Moment of Movement", Lynne-Anne Blom and L. Tarin Chaplin.
- "A Sense of Dance", Constance A. Schrader.
- "Contact Quarterly" (journal)
- "Dance Imagery for Technique and Performance", Eric Franklin.

Important information to consider...ponder

Students must turn their cell phones off during class. No pictures or videos can be taken without permission of the instructor and subject (s).

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary pre-requisites."

"Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar)."

"All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([link](#) "University Policy on Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Office Policy in the Western

Academic Calendar). *“Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.”*

University Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: As of May 2008, the University has a new policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness, which states that *“in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student’s overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean’s office.”* Students with special learning needs or circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be made. This policy can be found at <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

“Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.”

University Code of Student Conduct: *“The University seeks to provide an environment of free and creative inquiry within which critical thinking, humane values, and practical skills are cultivated and sustained.”* The University Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>

Instructor’s policy on attendance and late assignments: If you are unable to attend a class, please make every effort to let the instructor know in advance by email (preferably). Full attendance at all classes is expected and medical documentation is required unless you have the instructor’s permission to be absent. Unexplained absences will result in a reduction in your participation grade. Students with medical documentation or an acceptable excuse for an absence will not be penalized. Late written assignments will only be accepted and graded if permission has been granted by the instructor in advance of the deadline.