

Don Wright Faculty of Music

Barbara Sarma / bsarma2@uwo.ca
Office hours: by appointment
Studio: 17 Alumni Hall, 661-2111 Ext. 88396

BEGINNING DANCE COMPOSITION & PRODUCTION DANCE 3371A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Individual creative movement exploration and problem-solving using the elements of dance to express ideas, feelings and/or images in the finished product of a dance composition. Half course. 2 hour lecture, 2 hour lab, prerequisite is Dance 2270a and/or Dance 2274b or permission of the Faculty'.

COURSE CONTENT

Dance composition concerns itself with the elements of dance, therefore time, space, motion, shape and the exploration of ways in which these elements can be segregated and manipulated to become expressive acts for communication of ideas, feelings and/or images. The purposes of this course are firstly to increase the student's understanding of human movement and expression on a non-verbal level, secondly to study and to explore the processes of creativity, thereby making it possible for them to articulate on a non-verbal level.

The sources from which the instructor has drawn her content for the topics are from the course readings and secondly, the instructor's background of study with choreographers and as a choreographer.

The following material will be covered at a rate of approximately one per class session. Where the student compositions indicate that the topic is not yet understood, it will be repeated. Where the student compositions indicate the topic is easily accessible, some of the composition problems will be skipped. The progression can apply to the individual student and/or to the class as a whole.

Discussion topics:

- a. Introduction and discussion of course outline. What is composition and what is not?
- b. The elements of dance: time, space, motion, shape. Evaluation of a dance composition.
- c. What is improvisation and how is it used. Improvisational problems
- d. Building the composition
- e. The movement phrase; thematic material; Theme; Movement Theme; Theme & Variation.

List of Possible Compositional Problems

1. Compositions based on "time":
 - a) rhythm problems
 - in place
 - locomotor sequences
 - b) discussion of how to use time

Specific compositions based on time will not be assigned because it is an element that can usually not be understood and isolated by the beginning student in composition. It will be considered in its relationship to each compositional problem involving motion, space and shape.

2. Compositions based on "Motion" -
 - a) focus on points on the body, movements from point to point
 - b) joint articulation
 - c) movement between the joints
 - d) drawing lines in space with the ends of body parts
 - e) movement around a focal point
 - f) throwing the focus through space
 - g) motion initiated by a body part
 - h) movement qualities / movement dynamics
 - swing suspended sustained
 - vibratory percussive collapse
 - i) complicated sequences of movements
 - i) logical ii) illogical

3. Composition based on "shape":
 - a) still body shapes (angular and curved)
 - b) body shapes in motion (angular and curved)
 - c) negative space shape
 - d) group shape problem
 - e) shape with a prop. e.g. elastic

4. Compositions based on "space":
 - a) direction and level
 - b) high, wide and deep
 - c) manipulation of space
 - d) moving through space - locomotor patterns

5. Compositions based on "A Movement Phrase"

6. Compositions based on "The Use of a Prop or Costume."

7. A discussion of compositions based on "State of Being or Story Line":
 - a) emotional state
 - b) state of being from a poem, picture, sculpture or story

REQUIRED READINGS

- A. Selected Readings to be assigned
- B. Handouts

Students will be given handouts that relate to understanding, developing or criticizing compositions.

COURSE FORMAT

The course may vary somewhat in content and progression because of two unpredictable factors, first the size of the class and second, the movement background of the students in the class.

Early sessions of the class will be devoted to defining and discussing what dance composition is and how the students should approach movement-solving problems. In general, the students will progress through a series of specific compositional problems at the approximate rate of two per week. A very important part of this learning process is allowing the students in the class to observe each other and listen to the evaluation of the compositions, given by the instructor. As the course progresses, the students will be expected to take more responsibility in the evaluation process. Because the medium for problem-solving is movement, evaluation cannot be done strictly by written form. The students are expected to develop an "eye" for judging the merit of composition.

The reading assignments will be discussed in conjunction with the compositional problems as they are assigned and presented. The course does not break down into separate lecture periods and lab periods as might normally be expected.

The class will meet 4 hours per week. Students are expected to do outside work on their compositions. Where possible, studio time will be made available.

It is mandatory to attend classes.

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.

EVALUATION & GRADING

1. Students will be expected to set and present solutions for each compositional problem assigned from list (1 - 6).
2. Students will be expected to participate in the evaluation periods.
3. Students will be expected to read the handouts and specific reading assignments.
4. Each student will be twined with a classmate.
 - a) The process will start with an interview to establish profile the classmates movement/dance background, likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, impressions and etc. This should be summarized in writing. Outline form can be used.
 - b) Each student will be expected to keep an ongoing written evaluation of the classmates creative work in the course. Anecdotal reporting can be used.
 - c) The process with culminate in a final written summary evaluation of the classmates progress made in the course. (No more than 4 type written pages. Due at the end of the course.)
6. Each student will be given two compositional problems as the final evaluation of their work. These will be presented on assigned dates prior to the final class of the term.
 - a) One phrase and variation composition - to be set on another dancer(s)
 - b) One specific composition for each student in consultation with the instructor.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

40% Compositional problems and class work

10% classmate evaluations

15% final written summary evaluation

35% final composition problems:

Phrase & Variation composition	15%	20%
		or
Specific composition	20%	15%

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>

