DANC 107: Writing is Dancing, Dancing is Writing

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This syllabus is subject to change.

Course Description:
"The interpreter, without actually erasing or rewriting the text, is altering it. But he can't admit it. He claims only to be making it intelligible..." (Susan Sontag)

We watch dance and then we write about it. Dance needs writing to be understood and to endure. Or maybe not. Maybe dance needs no help. Then, what do we write? Writing as dance, in dance, of, from, alongside it... As readers, writers, and performers, we will explore established and experimental modes of writing and choreography and look for ways that each form can stretch and challenge the other.

This is a hybrid creative-critical course. It will introduce major themes and questions surrounding the interaction of writing and dance, look at contemporary artworks and texts that illuminate the breadth of engagement between the two forms, and experiment with dance and writing as complementary creative and critical modes.

Examinations and Assignments: Ongoing readings, video/live performance viewing, written reflections, and compositional assignments; three short papers; culminating creative project.

Additional Requirements and/or Comments:
Prior dance experience is not required, but a willingness to move and experiment with unfamiliar material is essential.

Expectations:
This class is dependent on the full and generous participation of all involved. Requirements of the course are on-time completion of all assignments outlined in the syllabus. This includes the completion of 3 short papers by the date specified, journal reflections and/or compositional exercises between each class, viewing of performance live and on video, punctual arrival to class and active participation. **Be prepared each class to respond to readings, viewing, and movement assignments. Everyone will be expected to contribute to discussion in every class. Please also wear clothes comfortable to move in. All classes will include a movement component. You will have the opportunity to revise papers, and additional effort in all areas of class—reflections, performance attendance, compositional assignments, class participation—will be reflected in your grade. Key in all matters is to plan ahead and communicate with me about any difficulties you are having, anticipated conflicts with assignments, deadlines or class attendance. See details below regarding policies for absences, lateness, grading, honor code, etc.
COURSE OVERVIEW

WEEK 1: WRITING FROM THE BODY/ MOVING MEANING (classes 1-4)
Written assignments: Essay 1: reflection on combining movement and language (Tues, 7/10), optional second draft.

WEEK 2: CRITICISM CLINIC/ WRITING ABOUT DANCE (classes 5-9)
Written assignments: Essay 2: performance review (Tues, 7/17), optional second draft.

WEEK 3: INTO PRACTICE/ COMPOSING WITH MOVEMENT AND WORDS (classes 10-14)
Viewing: Ralph Lemon, Yvonne Rainer, Rashaad Newsome, Paula Matthusen, live performances on campus.*
Written assignments: Final project proposal (Friday, 7/20); Essay 3: experimental/ poetic response to performance (Tues, 7/24).

WEEK 4: EXTENSIONS—PERFORMANCE ART, MUSIC, ARTISTS’ TEXTS—AND YOUR VOICE (classes 15-19)
Final assignments: Final performance project showing (Friday, July 27); Final project reflection essay (Tues, 7/31).

*Live performances pending schedule. If not available, videos and participatory exercises will take their place.
CLASS 1 (7/2)
In class: Introduction; review and set course goals with group; syllabus review.
Assignment: Read Susan Sontag and James Baldwin; in journal, write the experience of your favorite way of moving—second by second observation, details, no analysis.

CLASS 2 (7/3)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings and journal assignment; compositional exercise.
Assignment: Read Brenda Dixon Gottschild; Watch Trisha Brown and Storyboard P; create a series of 5 movements that feel like they hold meaning for you, create 5 that feel like they have no meaning; in journal, reflect on this and connect with readings.

CLASS 3 (7/5)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings and journal assignment; focus on dance videos.
*Paper 1 assignment distributed
Assignment: Read Susan Leigh Foster; Perform Vito Acconci’s Following Piece, in journal, reflect on experience and connect with readings.

CLASS 4 (7/6)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings and assignment. Focus on students’ “performance” in public, view Steve Paxton and Ishmael Houston Jones contact improvisation; compositional assignment.
Assignment: Watch street for 10 minutes as performance, in journal reflect on observations and connect with readings. NOTE: Paper 1 due Tuesday (7/10).

CLASS 5 (7/9)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings and assignment, focus on viewing public space as performance, view Lucinda Childs Street Dance.
Assignment: Paper 1 due Tuesday (7/10).

CLASS 6 (7/10)
In class: Intro to Criticism
Assignment: Read Ann Daly, Miguel Gutierrez, Eva Yaa Asantewa; in journal, write a 10-item wish-list for dance criticism.

CLASS 8 (7/11)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings and assignment; share wish-lists; compositional assignment.
Assignment: Read New York Times reviews, Arlene Croce and Bill T Jones; Watch Bill T Jones. In journal, stance on role of critic in relation to readings.

CLASS 9 (7/12)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings, focus on role of critic and review versus critical analysis.
Assignment: Read C Carr and digital publications; Create a short text and movement sequence. Do not create them to go together.
CLASS 10 (7/13)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of readings and assignment, focus on analysis of effective critical writing and differences among publications.
Assignment: Revise movement and text material. NOTE: Paper 2 due on Tuesday (7/17)

CLASS 11 (7/16)
In class: TEXT AND MOVEMENT IN TANDEM 1; share movement/text studies.
Assignment: Paper 2 due on Tuesday (7/17)

CLASS 12 (7/17)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; TEXT AND MOVEMENT IN TANDEM 2
Assignment: Watch Okwui Okpokwasili and Neil Greenberg. In journal, consider these works in relation to each other, including use of text and movement.

CLASS 13 (7/18)
In class: Introduction to SCORES.
Assignment: Read Clarinda MacLow and Jonathan Burrows, plus scores by Tatsumi Hijikata and Yoko Ono. Move continuously for five minutes. In journal, write 1-2 paragraph reflection.

CLASS 14 (7/19)
In class: SCORES 2: Music
Assignment: Read John Cage and Alvin Lucier. Listen to Cage, Lucier, and Mattusen. Create two (2) performance scores, notate in journal.

CLASS 15 (7/20)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; review and discussion of Burrows and movement/writing journal. Share scores.
Assignment: Watch Jeanine Durning. Edit/add to scores. NOTE: Paper 3 due on Tuesday (7/24)

CLASS 16 (7/21)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; discussion of choreographic use of text. Compositional assignment.
Assignment: Paper 3 due on Tuesday (7/24)

CLASS 17 (7/24)
In class: PERFORMANCE ART (bodies and language). Begin discussion and work on final scores and performance works.
Assignment: Read C. Carr on Montano/Hsieh, Abramovic/Ulay, and interview with Pope L. Watch Pope L and Abramovic/Ulay. Perform a single action for five minutes or repeat an action for 5 minutes, write 1-2 paragraph reflection.

CLASS 18 (7/25)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; discussion of readings and videos; workshop final performance ideas in groups.
Assignment: Watch Rashaad Newsome “Shade Compositions” and “Untitled.” Read Yvonne Rainer; watch Yvonne Rainer “Trio A.” Begin work on final movement/text pieces.

CLASS 19 (7/26)
In class: Improvisation warm-up; discussion of readings and videos; workshop final performance pieces.
Assignment: Work on final performance pieces.

CLASS 20 (7/27)
In class: FINAL in-studio SHOWING, open to invited audience.
Assignment: Final reflection essay due Tuesday, July 31 at 5pm

Attendance/ Lateness Policy
Attendance is mandatory. If a class is missed due to illness, a doctor or dean’s note is required to excuse the absence. More than one unexcused absence will result in a lowering of student’s grade by a ½ letter grade. Lateness is a significant disruption to the functioning of class. Repeatedly lateness will result in a lower grade.

Grading
Breakdown of assignments
3 essay assignments: 35%
Class participation, journal, and creative assignments: 40%
Final performance project and paper: 25%
*Attendance at additional performances or outside research will positively impact grade.

Academic Code of Conduct
Statement of Understanding between Professor and Student
In accordance with Wesleyan University’s Honor Code, students must adhere to the high standards of academic integrity outlined in the Student Handbook. By taking this class, students agree that all work submitted is original and that sources are properly documented, and that the work has been created without improper assistance. For more information on university policies with regards to academic conduct and the Honor Code, see:
http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations

Students with Disabilities
It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (preferably before the end of the second week of the semester), so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html. Wesleyan does not offer academic programs specifically for individuals with disabilities. The University is, however, committed to providing services and reasonable accommodations to all students who need and have a legal entitlement to such accommodations, providing the accommodations do not fundamentally alter the nature of an academic course or an institutional policy. The purpose of this guide is to outline Wesleyan’s disabilities services and explain how, under Section 504, the ADA, and the ADAAA of 2008, Wesleyan faculty can best accommodate students with documented disabilities.