



**DANC 181a: Contemporary Dance**  
**Section 22370**  
**Spring 2020**  
**2 Units**  
**Day: Tues/Thurs**  
**Time: 9:00-10:20 am**  
**Location: KDC 105**  
**Instructor: Jennifer Lott**  
**Office: KDC 224**  
**Office Hours: email for appointment**  
**Contact Info: lottj@usc.edu**

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce modern dance fundamentals at a beginning level. Classroom exercises and materials will be informed by historical pioneers of modern dance as well as more contemporary choreographers and practitioners. Exercises will build strength, flexibility, and stamina, as well as sharpen the student's awareness of body, movement and physical environment. Particular attention will be paid to: integration, clarity, relationship(s) to gravity, precision, focus, phrasing, the development of healthy range of motion, and the purposeful application of effort. Somatic approaches will be introduced in order to enrich the experience of conscious embodiment. Improvisational and compositional strategies will be integrated to further expand notions of "technique."

### **Learning Objectives**

- Practice and memorize beginning-level contemporary dance warm-up and phrase material.
- Demonstrate, through exams and class work, an introductory-level understanding of the history and evolution of seminal modern and contemporary dance practices
- Formulate discussion questions, and participate in group discussion related to modern and contemporary dance
- Develop an understanding of the basic tenets of choreography, improvisation, and performance
- Execute a written response paper reflecting on achievements and challenges in the class
- Execute a written analysis of a USC Kaufman or professional dance performance

### **Course Notes**

As this is an embodied studio course, regular attendance and physical participation in class are mandatory. Students will be permitted 2 absences during the semester. Beginning with the 3rd absence, total grade will fall 1 percentage point per class missed.

*Additional absences may be excused for extraordinary circumstances **only** (i.e. contagious illness, hospitalization, death in family, etc.) at the instructor's discretion. Students seeking excused absences should contact Professor Lott via email, as far in advance as possible.*

Please refer to syllabus for assignment deadlines. Late assignments will not be accepted.

### **Proper Attire for Technique Class**

No shoes required. Socks may be worn for warm-up, and may be removed for phrase work. Any clothing that does not restrict the student's range of movement (or the instructor's ability to observe movement) is acceptable; along these lines, long pants are strongly suggested to facilitate floor work. For floor work, knee pads are also acceptable.

## Required Readings, Watch List and Supplementary Materials

Bremser, Martha, and Lorna Sanders. *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers*. Routledge, 2011

Lepecki, Andre. *Dance: Documents of Contemporary Art*. 2012.

Additional readings & YouTube viewings will also be posted on Blackboard. Students should be prepared to discuss these videos in class.

## Description and Assessment of Assignments

### Mid-semester Self-evaluation

Students will write a thoughtful, detailed reflection on their experience of the course – regarding what happens within class time, as well as how dance practice might affect activities or physical awareness outside of class. Address challenges, areas of improvement, questions, and insights. Video of mid-term class will be posted for reference. You may relate our work in the class to experiences that you've had prior, but please also reflect on how course material might challenge you to think about aspects of movement/performance/embodiment in new ways. Finally, please refer meaningfully to at least one of the required readings for the course. 2-3 pages; a more in-depth rubric for the paper will be posted on the course Blackboard page. **Due via Turnitin: 11:59pm on Thursday, March 12 (end of Week #9, before Spring Recess).**

### Concert Report

Students will write a short paper (2-3 pages) offering original comments on the content and format of a live dance performance given by USC Kaufman BFA Students in the course of the semester. The paper may be turned in at any point in the semester, but no later than the due date. Proof of attendance in the form of a ticket stub and/or program must be included with the Concert Report paper, in the form of photo or PDF embedded into your document. A rubric for your Concert Report will be posted on Blackboard.

Please refer to the Kaufman School website for performance dates, times, and venues.

Reservations are recommended. Visit <https://kaufman.usc.edu/> to reserve your seat. Reservations go live a few weeks before performance date.

**Due via Turnitin on date of last class, Thursday, April 30 by 11:59pm.**

### Performance Opportunity: The Elective Experience: Friday, May 1, 6:30 & 8pm (*subject to change*)

At the end of the semester, you are invited to perform in The Elective Experience, a concert of works by all of the elective classes at the Kaufman School. Our class will present one work on the program, using material we work on during class time. I encourage you to invite your friends and family to this free concert, and to make their reservations early! The Elective Experience is very popular.

**Mandatory for all written assignments:** Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, default character spacing, proper citations (citation guide included in the rubric). Submit via Turnitin in accordance with the above formatting guidelines.

### Mid-Term and Final Exam

During exam sessions, students will be evaluated on small-group performances of previously practiced technical exercises, short phrases, and improvisational structures. A written final exam will also be given (multiple choice, matching, short answer, short essay). No full or partial make-up exams will be offered.

**Mid-Term Exam: Thursday, March 5**

**Final Exam: Tuesday, May 12, 8-10am**

**Grading Breakdown**

- 15% Attendance
- 15% Participation (discussions, movement)
- 10% Concert Report
- 20% Mid-semester Self-Evaluation
- 15% Mid-Term Class
- 25% Final Exam (Written exam 15%, Danced portion 10%)

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|-------------------|-------------------|
| A = 95-100 points | C = 75-77 points  |
| A- = 91-94 points | C- = 71-74 points |
| B+ = 88-90 points | D+ = 67-70 points |
| B = 85-87 points  | D = 64-66 points  |
| B- = 81-84 points | D- = 61-63 points |
| C+ = 78-80 points | F = 60 or below   |

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown (subject to change)**

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/ Viewings Due	Other Due Dates
<b><u>Week 1</u></b> Jan 14 Jan 16	Intro to the course, core skills, basic warm-up exercise & phrases, review of the syllabus	Read: <i>50 Contemporary Choreographers</i> , Introduction p. 3-12	
<b><u>Week 2</u></b> Jan 21 Jan 23	Intro to floor work	YouTube #1: Martha Graham, <i>Appalachian Spring</i>	
<b><u>Week 3</u></b> Jan 28 Jan 30	Guest Artist: Shannon Grayson		
<b><u>Week 4</u></b> Feb 4 Feb 6	Martha Graham discussion	YouTube #2: José Limón, <i>The Moor's Pavane</i>	
<b><u>Week 5</u></b> Feb 11 Feb 13	José Limón discussion		
<b><u>Week 6</u></b> Feb 18 Feb 20	Watch & discuss Paul Taylor in class  Possible guest artist	Read: <u>NY Times</u> review of Paul Taylor's <i>Esplanade</i>	

<b>Week 7</b> Feb 25 Feb 27	Continued skill-building	<u>YouTube #3:</u> <u>Merce Cunningham &amp; John Cage</u>  Read: Lepecki; 26-29 (Merce Cunningham & John Cage), 40-43 (Robert Rauschenberg)	
<b>Week 8</b> March 3 March 5	Midterm prep & class		<b>MIDTERM (dance class) March 5</b>
<b>Week 9</b> March 10 March 12	WATCH: Mr. Gaga excerpt in class  Potential guest artist		<b>Mid-semester self-evaluation due March 12</b>
<b>**SPRING RECESS**</b>	*****	*****	
<b>Week 10</b> March 24 March 26	Discussion of postmodernism in dance  Building complexity with warm-up exercises, phrase materials, and large group choreographic improvisations  "Natural" movement, "Small Dance"	<u>YouTube #4:</u> <u>Trisha Brown</u>  Read: Lepecki, 43-47 (Banes); 53-55 (Halprin) 61 (Brown)	
<b>Week 11</b> March 31 April 2	Improvisation, partnering & phrase work	<u>YouTube #6:</u> <u>Contact Improvisation</u>	
<b>Week 12</b> April 7 April 9	Refining phrase work, improvisation & musical explorations	<u>YouTube #7</u> Forsythe Improvisation Technologies	
<b>Week 13</b> April 14 April 16	Continued skill-building; finish group dance		

<b>Week 14</b> April 21 April 23	Continue building complexity with warm-up exercises, phrase materials, and large group choreographic improvisations		
<b>Week 15</b> April 28 April 30	Preparation for Final Exam & Elective Experience		<b>Concert Report due April 30</b>
<b>Friday, May 1</b>	<b>Elective Experience Performance, Large Performance Studio</b>		
<b>FINAL EXAM:</b> <b>Tuesday, May 12, 8-10am</b>	<b>*****FINAL*****</b> <b>Tuesday, May 12, 8-10am</b>		

**Please note**

This class takes place at a university committed to equity for all students, where diversity and inclusion are considered critical to the academic environment. In this classroom, free speech is respected, and civil discourse is expected, with a safe learning environment the priority. We will endeavor to use language that is respectful—sometimes being inquisitive and creative, because language changes all the time—particularly when it comes to differences in age, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, race or socioeconomic status. If you have a preferred gender pronoun that is not being used, please advise the professor.

**Statement on Physical Contact**

As an embodied art form, dancing is a physical and an emotional act. In the process of studying dance, students often experience physical contact with their instructors and peers. Faculty members may use touch to provide proprioceptive and kinesthetic feedback to students; they may use touch to correct alignment, improve technique, and promote healthier movement practices. In some classes, particularly those involving partnering, students’ will experience physical contact with their peers. As developing artists experimenting with modes of expression, students may also experience a variety of emotions in the classroom. As such, it is imperative that the studio-classroom be a safe, inclusive, and respectful space for all students and faculty. Open and honest communication and respectful and considerate interactions are always expected and are a fundamental requirement of studying in the USC Kaufman School of Dance. Unless otherwise articulated to a faculty member or peer, consent to discipline-specific and appropriate touching is assumed. Students always have the right to revoke that consent and should express any discomfort they feel in the classroom to the faculty instructor or Vice Dean immediately. USC Kaufman seeks to nurture compassionate artists who respect the dignity, humanity, and personal embodied experience of all individuals.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to faculty as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through

Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

### Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)