TH239 Dance Lab: Approaches and Practice

Seminar Leader: Eva Burghardt
Course Times: Thu 15:15-18:15
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Course Description
This course is designed as an ongoing training in contemporary dance and improvisation technique as well as providing space to explore theories and techniques of body-based performance work in a broader sense. The course includes the possibility of individual projects in accordance with prior preparation. In the first half of the semester we will focus on movement and dance-based training, drawing from contemporary dance techniques and bodyworks, such as Release Technique and Body Mind Centering. The practice of presence and body awareness will be the core focus. Adding to this foundational work, we will explore dance improvisation technique, developing and expanding movement vocabulary. Rather than prescribing a specific aesthetic, the aim is to give a framework for individual exploration and expression. Solo and group improvisations will lead to “Instant Compositions,” the spontaneous creation of short pieces of dance. The second half of the semester will shift the focus to composing and choreography. Different layers of composition such as use of space, timing, rhythm, atmosphere, dramaturgy and story will be explored. Students will be encouraged to bring in their own ideas, texts, music etc. and find different performative formats. Students can choose whether they would like to choreograph, or perform, or both. A final presentation of the resulting pieces will be shown at the end of the semester. Throughout, we learn to analyze various aspects of dance and performance. An introduction to dance history, as well as Excursions to dance performances in Berlin, including discussions and a written reflection/essay afterwards, will be an integral part of the course.

Requirements

Attendance
Attendance at all classes is expected. More than two absences in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course.

Assessment
Students will be evaluated based on class participation, discussions, one mid-term essay (ca. 1000 words) and a final project presentation. Please note: While the mid-term essay will be written individually, the final project can be done collaboratively.
Grade Breakdown
- Class participation (60%)
- Mid-term essay (15%)
- Final project presentation (25%)

Schedule

**WEEK 1**
Sep 4
Thursday 15:15-18:30
Course introduction: What is dance? Different approaches and practices towards dance
Physical Warm-Up
Film: Anna Halprin “Breath made visible”

**WEEK 2**
Sep 11
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Dance Improvisation Technique. Time - Space - Effort

**WEEK 3**
Sep 18
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Dance Improvisation Technique. Working with Images. Observing and Describing

**WEEK 4**
Sep 25
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Dance Improvisation Technique. Movement - Sound - Text
Dance Critiques: how to write about dance? Preparation for off-site visit

**WEEK 5**
Oct 02
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Dance Improvisation Technique. Introduction to Contact Improvisation

**WEEK 6**
Oct 09
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Dance Improvisation Technique. Body - Space - Objects

**WEEK 7**
Oct 16
Thursday 15:15-18:15, Deadline for Mid-term Essay
Dance Improvisation Technique. Compositional Tools

*Note:* Oct 23
Fall Break
WEEK 8
Oct 30
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Training
Approaches to Composition and Choreography
Research and development of Final Presentation

WEEK 9
Nov 6
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Training
Research and development of Final Presentation

WEEK 10
Nov 13
Note: no class, off-site visit instead (date to be announced)

WEEK 11
Nov 20
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Training
Solo and/or Group Rehearsals of Final Presentation

WEEK 12
Nov 27
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Training
Solo and/or Group Rehearsals of Final Presentation

WEEK 13
Dec 4
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Training
Preparation, Final Presentations

WEEK 14
Dec 11
Thursday 15:15-18:15
Cool-down, Bodywork
Evaluation and Critique

WEEK 15
Dec 18
Completion Week

Essay Deadlines
Deadline for Mid-term Essay, Oct. 16