

**Sam Houston State University**  
**Department of Theatre and Dance**  
**Dance Program – Spring 2008**  
**DNC 472W.01 (3 Credit Hours) -- Dance Criticism & Analysis**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Instructor:** Jennifer Pontius  
**Class Meeting Time:** Monday 6-9 pm  
**Class Meeting Location:** Academic Building III, conference room  
**Instructor Office:** AB III, Room 245  
**Instructor Phone:** 936-294-1300  
**Instructor Office Hours:** By appointment and see schedule on door  
**Instructor Email:** [dnc\\_jkp@shsu.edu](mailto:dnc_jkp@shsu.edu) [pontius@shsu.edu](mailto:pontius@shsu.edu)

**Textbook**

Nadel, Myron Howard, and Marc Raymond Strauss. The Dance Experience: Insights into History, Culture and Creativity. Princeton Book Company, 2003.

I did not order the textbook through the college bookstores. It can be ordered from [www.dancehorizons.com](http://www.dancehorizons.com). and should be available through Amazon and other online sources. Please order as soon as possible, as shipping times can vary substantially. In the meantime, you might wish to see if a student who took the class last semester would let you borrow their book. You will be responsible for material assigned in the book, even though we won't spend a lot of class time with explicit references to the text. Besides, it is an interesting and useful resource that will support your dance library.

**Course Description**

Students will view and discuss outstanding examples of choreography from many genres of dance, read the works of major dance critics, and further develop the tools needed to critically analyze choreography. Emphasis is on writing informed, insightful analyses of the form, content, and effectiveness of choreographic works. Oral communication will also be emphasized.

This course is a senior level, writing enhanced course. Students are expected to have a substantial foundation in dance, and will need to have well developed writing skills. If you need extra help, I recommend becoming acquainted with the campus writing center.

**Course Objectives**

- to develop skills in rational and verbal reflection on the art form of dance
- to refine skills in observing dance, formulating impressions, defining opinions, and communicating those thoughts orally and in writing
- to prepare the student in the role of potential teacher, coach, or peer, developing skill in providing insightful and useful criticism to guide the choreographic process of others
- to prepare the student intellectually to champion the art form within the broader context of a rational/verbal culture

--to expose students to a wide selection of dance works, in service of appreciation, education, and, hopefully, stimulation as performers and choreographers. I.e., to celebrate this dance form that we share.

### **Attendance Policy**

Because much of the course content depends on in-class viewings of videos and discussions, absences will affect the student's grade. I will not be taking a formal roll, and the class participation portion of the grade (see below) is not the only element of grading. However, the more classes you miss, the more information you miss, and thus your resources for writing will be diminished proportionally. I will *not* typically be able to make special arrangements for you to view materials viewed in class.

Make up opportunities are at the instructor's discretion. A prompt contact by phone or email is appropriate and necessary for make up purposes. Doing so increases the likelihood that your petition for an excuse may be judged acceptable.

### **Assignments, Exams: Based on a total of 1000 points**

#### **1. Class participation: 300 points max.**

Students will be expected to contribute their observations and ideas regularly. For each class, you will receive the following credit:

0 points: did not attend or was obviously not present beyond being a body occupying a chair

5-10 points: appeared to be paying attention, did not offer any feedback, or gave minimal contributions

10-20 points: volunteered some commentary

20-30 points: offered pertinent observations, insights, etc.

The full 30 points earned for each class meeting would, indeed, exceed the 300 maximum points allowed (30 x 10 class meetings=300). My assumption is that anyone who earns more than 300 point who also writes with insight and clarity does not require the additional points, and those who are better at oral communication than the written form will get a boost that helps but does not override the written imperative of the course design.

#### **2. Out of class written critiques: 400 points, or 100 points each for 4 papers**

Papers will likely be: descriptive; evaluative; interpretive; and a review of a dance concert using modes studied in the course. More information will be provided as the semester progresses. Papers will be evaluated based on appropriate application of the assigned critical focus, clarity of language, and quality of grammatical and structural form. Papers with excessive format errors (spelling, typos, title format, grammatical errors, etc.) will be returned un-graded to be revised. Pages must be stapled together by the student prior to submission. I will *not* accept multiple page papers that are not stapled (upper left hand corner, diagonal, please). Papers initially submitted late will not be accepted, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor (due to student's illness, family emergency, or other legitimate excuse).

## **2. Mid term Exam: 100 points**

An in-class writing assignment will be given, covering material studied in the textbook, discussed in class, and requiring reference to choreographic works studied in class. Essays will be graded based on understanding and application of the concepts studied. Although some latitude for a few errors (punctuation, spelling, grammar, syntax, etc.) will be granted, essays should be written with care to the form.

## **3. Final Exam: 200 points**

Another writing assignment that will be done within the period published for final exams. You will have the exam directions and time to prepare your exam well in advance. It will be open book, and you will be allowed to bring a page of notes, which you will turn in with your exam.

## **Grading**

I am a straightforward grader, with percentages as follows: 90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, below 69%=F. I tend to grade the out of class assignments more stringently for formal content (grammar, spelling, typos, etc), and I tend to give more opportunities for re-writing the first paper than subsequent ones.

Many of us have not had, or not taken, opportunities to practice writing well. Your first draft is probably not going to do it, if you want a good grade (unless you are a very good writer indeed). I will reiterate later, but will start out right now by urging you to give yourself time to write, reflect, amend and edit, and even have another person read the paper for you, since we often see what we intended to write rather than what we actually wrote.

## **Course Outline**

I will have a course outline for you soon. Please be advised that it will be somewhat malleable, as we tend to find ourselves spending more time on some things than initially planned (due to student interest), and thus less time on other areas. You will, however, write four out of class papers, a mid term and a final. Guaranteed. No additional papers. Guaranteed.

## **University Policies:**

You may find online a more detailed description of the following policies. These guidelines will also provide you with a link to the specific university policy or procedure: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

## **Academic Honesty:**

Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

## **Classroom Rules of Conduct:**

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any

electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

**Student Absences on Religious Holy Days:**

Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

**Students with Disabilities Policy:**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

**Visitors in the Classroom:**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.