

HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COURSE SYLLABUS
DANCE IMPROVISATION
FALL, 2008
DANC-150
3 Semester Hours

Instructor Information:
Renée Brozic Barger
Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 8-9:15
HVPA 210B
Email: rbarger@howardcc.edu
Mailbox: HVPA 220
410.772.4089

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Guided exploration in the elements of dance for the creative development of personal movement repertoire, spontaneous group interaction, and choreographic and movement observation skills. Exploration of movement through spontaneous problem solving. The course is designed to evoke the student's creative individuality and sense of ensemble.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. *NATURAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE:* To understand the importance of natural physical response to whatever stimulus is presented. To sense physically, sentiently, personally, the neuromuscular logic of the body, as well as the specific quirks, strengths and weaknesses of your own body. To disregard preconceived notions of what dance/motion/movement "should" be like according to your intellectual sense of logic or form.
2. *SENSING MOVEMENT DEVELOPMENT:* To develop the skill of following the direction of a position and/or a movement--sensing where it needs to go--the kind of energy, texture, dimension, shape, tempo, rhythm, focus that it requests you to follow.
3. *RESPONSE TO MULTIPLE STIMULI:* To develop the skill of relating your motion to an "object" -- be it a sound, a prop, another person, an image, an idea, a gesture, a character, a word, a poem -- whatever. To involve yourself deeply in the object and allow yourself to respond to it kinesthetically.
4. *RISK-TAKING ABILITY:* To develop the confidence in movement to take risks, to follow where you feel you need to go without worrying what you might look like.
5. *PARTNER/GROUP SKILLS:* To sense the motion of another person or group, to communicate motionally, without any need for verbal cues. To know where you are going together.
6. *PERFORMANCE POISE:* To develop the ability to maintain the improvisational process while performing in front of an audience.
7. *CONCENTRATION AND PERSISTENCE:* To directly focus on the problem at hand, while ignoring external distractions. To stick to the problem. To develop the fortitude and stamina to work through an obstacle rather than backing away from the challenge.
8. *MOVEMENT INVENTION:* To develop the skill of creating movement appropriate to the situation. To be motionally inventive.

COURSE PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

Classes will start and end promptly. Tardiness and early departure can be disruptive to the improvisation process and should be avoided.

The improvisation process requires continual involvement, and missed classes cannot be made up. Therefore, attendance is extremely important. Two absences will be allowed during the semester without affecting your grade. Each additional absence will lower your final grade.

Students should dress in comfortable dance attire that leaves the foot bare. You may also want to bring along additional clothing to help you stay warm during discussions and viewings. If you have not attended technique class just prior to this course, please protect yourself by giving yourself a warm-up.

READING/WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Each student is required to keep an improvisation journal for the duration of the course. In some instances, topics and/or questions will be assigned for journal entries. The journal should also be used to record your ideas and feelings regarding your creative work. I will collect the journals four times during the semester and return them with comments and suggestions for improvement. Failure to submit an acceptable journal will lower your final grade by 0.5 GPA.

Reading and writing assignments may be given to broaden the student's concepts of the improvisational process and to assist the student in clarifying his/her ideas regarding movement preferences, invention and areas for improvement. Assignments will be brief and will either be distributed in class, put on the website, or placed on reserve in the Music and Dance Library. Brief writing/journal assignments will be specified in class and may include such requirements as:

- Response to an improvisation experience;
- Response to observing improvisations of others;
- Critique of your own movement invention strengths and weaknesses.

VIDEO

Class may be videotaped periodically to enable students to view their work for self-assessment purposes.

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated on the degree to which they meet course objectives. The instructor will provide written and oral assessments of student work periodically throughout the semester. Oral feedback will be provided by classmates. Students are encouraged to schedule an appointment at any time during the semester to discuss their progress.

- An "A" student demonstrates complete proficiency in all 8 objectives.
- A "B/A" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 7 objectives.
- A "B" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 6 objectives.
- A "C/B" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 5 objectives.
- A "C" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 4 objectives.
- A "D/C" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 3 objectives.
- A "D" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 2 objectives.
- An "F" student demonstrates complete proficiency in 1 objective only, or fails to fulfill the requirements of the course regardless of his/her improvisational skills.

Evaluation: (SEE GRADING STANDARDS)

• Grading:

- Criteria for evaluation is mastery of major topics as demonstrated through:
- Daily active participation (proficiency in objectives) 80%
 - Journal 10%
 - Self Assessment 10%

Grading is based upon the total accumulation of points 0-1000.

Daily Active Participation / Attendance will be evaluated at 80% (800 points) of your total grade.

Since emphasis is placed on Daily Active Participation, it is imperative that the student come to class on time and prepared by having practiced material learned in class. A point system will be used for attendance. Students will be evaluated on participation in daily discussion, movement explorations and proficiency in objectives.

****Note, just showing up for class does not mean that the student will necessarily be awarded all Daily Active Participation points. The student must be prepared, participate fully, and be engaged in the material.****

Students arriving late, leaving early, or observing, will be eligible for only half-participation.

****Please note that the Attendance / Daily Active Participation grade of 800 points is applied toward the student's total grade of 1000 points.**

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT IMPROVISATION...

From *The Intimate Act of Choreography*: "Dance improvisation fuses creation with execution. The dancer simultaneously originates and performs movement without preplanning The improvising spirit allows itself to be carried along, ready to indulge in (and take advantage of) whatever visions present themselves; ready too, to follow the 'road less taken.'"

From *Dance Improvisation*: "Structured improvisation is a mixture of conscious choice and spontaneous reaction. It includes periods of sustained concentration and moments of unreproducible magic. By responding to each other's imagination, intelligence, style, and energy, the dancers find themselves breaking through the patterns of thinking and moving that have limited them."

From *New Dance: Approaches to Nonliteral Choreography*: "Dance improvisation is a complex process of responding to a specific stimulus. Since the stimulus cannot remain pure (it is almost immediately transformed by past knowledge and experience and feelings), the individual's response to it is necessarily complex -- charged with feelings and associations that are largely subconscious. The same stimulus is therefore unlikely to yield the same response in the same individual receiving it under different circumstances."

The improvisational process requires you to be present physically, mentally and emotionally, to be open and honest with yourself, and your classmates, sometimes confronting difficult or painful truths. To make movement that is truly your own, that says what you want to say, is always challenging, sometimes frightening, and simply exhilarating.

COURSE OUTLINE
DANC-150
Dance Improvisation
3 Semester Hours

HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Description

This course will introduce spontaneous movement to the students' creative process. Students will gain knowledge of basic Laban and Bartenieff movement vocabulary and understand their own physical habits and individual responses to improvisation exercises. All students will work together to explore themes and abstract movement which will be incorporated into class performances of group work. This course will also focus on dancers' interpretive skills in facial and body expression.

Prerequisite or Co-requisite: DANC-181 or DANC-186 or DANC-192 (3 hours weekly)

Overall Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Define basic Laban and Bartenieff movement concepts
2. Incorporate these concepts into improvisation of themes
3. Apply new knowledge towards creating choreography
4. Analyze physical habits of self
5. Analyze physical habits of other students
6. Demonstrate mastery of improvisation skills in group work
7. Choreograph short phrases of dance based on improvisation exercises

Major Topics

- I. Laban and Bartenieff terminology
- II. Basic music analysis for improvisation
- III. Character development
- IV. Thematic movement invention
- V. Current improvisation-based movement companies

Course Requirements

Grading/exams: Grading procedures will be determined by the individual faculty. Demonstration of course objectives through in-class dance presentations will determine the final grades.

Other Course Information

This course is required for the Dance Performance major and serves as an Arts & Sciences, Fine Arts and Humanities elective. Participation is required to master course objectives.