**Dancing Histories/Writing Dance Syllabus**

Course number: BMC.ARTD.B225.001/Fall 2020

Synchronous meeting times: Wed/Sat, 2:40-4:00 pm (EST): Taylor Hall E and Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth June Bergman

Email: [ejbergman@brynmawr.edu](mailto:ejbergman@brynmawr.edu)

Open door hours: Fridays 11–1 pm on Zoom and by appointment

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**Course Overview:**

*Dancing Histories/Writing Dance* is a 200-level undergraduate course with three overlapping aims: 1) to learn about concert dance histories through historical sources, scholarship, and embodiment, 2) to understand the processes of historiography, and 3) to prepare students to undertake their own historical research and scholarship. The course engages both Inquiry into the Past and Critical Interpretation.

The courseis designed to illustrate how our understanding of the past is dynamic and evolving rather than fixed and static. Through critical engagement with concert dance history’s canons, values, and ideological premises, *Dancing Histories/Writing Dance* emphasizes how history is written, questioned, and rewritten.

Throughout the semester, we will explore a range of concert/art dance genres as they emerged across Europe, the United States, and Japan; these particular sites exemplify how concert dance draws from both Western and non-Western dance forms and aesthetics, often pointing to larger paradigms of sociocultural and political inequity. Moving from 16th century court ballet through 20th century jazz, modern, and postmodern dance to international “contemporary” stages, assigned readings will enable recognition of how dance scholars have employed national and transnational frameworks to write, and revise, dance histories. Students will develop a strong methodological framework that will allow them to grasp the significance of source material, the effects of cultural competence and critical bias, and the ways in which the writing of history is a creative, political, and ideological process.

When relevant, we will engage in movement activities to support and enrich our grasp of historical material. Students are equipped with the tools necessary to undertake their own historical investigations, develop archival skills and generate a bibliography, an abstract, and write a research paper that investigates a specific work of dance, situating the dance under investigation within sociocultural and historical contexts.

In this writing-attentive course, students will write a research paper that incorporates a variety of primary and secondary material and interprets the dancing in context by way of vividly descriptive and/or poetic writing. They will strengthen their writing via rigorous instructor and peer feedback, multiple drafts, and attention to organization and style.

**Course Objectives** (Students will be able to):

* Conduct historical research via archives, libraries, and their own bodies
* Describe choreography vividly and understand description as interpretation
* Situate dances within broader historical, sociocultural, and political contexts
* Understand the ideological paradigms inherent in historical claims

**Statement about Flexibility regarding Deadlines and Care-centered Pedagogy:**

I am committed to creating and supporting a classroom community that is inclusive, equitable, and conducive to learning for all students, as well as sensitive to the unique and unpredictable challenges we will all encounter this term. Course activities and assignments are meant to help you gain and demonstrate understanding of key course content in ways that are flexible and personally meaningful.

If you are unable to attend class or complete an assignment by the due date, I ask that whenever possible you let me know ahead of time and work with me to determine when you will complete the work (from class or assigned). In this situation there will be no grade penalty for late work. If it is not possible for you to request extra time beforehand, I ask that you maintain communication with me as much as possible so that we can work together to determine a good course of action. I ask those of you who need more than a one-week extension to talk with both your Dean and me to arrive at a practical and workable plan for completing the work.

**Course Materials**

All assigned readings, podcasts, and videos have been made accessible and are available on Moodle.

**Disability and Access Services**

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Director of Access Services, Deb Alder, or email her at [dalder@brynmawr.edu](mailto:dalder@brynmawr.edu) to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>)

Any student who has a disability-related need to record this class first must speak with the Director of Access Services and to me, the instructor. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

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| **Day** | **Topic** | **In-class Activities and Assignments** |
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| **Wednesday, September 9** | Introductions and Foundations: What is Historiography? | **In-class activities:**  Syllabus/Course Overview  Introductions/Discussion (Board 1)  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Manning, Susan. “Dance History.” *The Bloomsbury Companion to Dance Studies,* edited by Sherill Dodds, Bloomsbury, 2019, pp. 303–326. |
| **Saturday, September 12** | Whose Dance Histories? | **In-class activities:**  Exploration of how dance histories are created: what are the conditions and forces that influence who is included or excluded? (Focus: American vaudeville and The Whitman Sisters)  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Layson, June. “Dance History Source Materials.” *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*,3rd ed, edited by Jens Giersdorf and Yutian Wong, Routledge, 2018, pp. 19–28. |
| **Wednesday, September 16** | Crafting a Research Project: Research Methods and Library Resources | **In-class activities:**  Guest: Arleen Zimmerle, subject librarian  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Multiple authors. “Part II: Jazz Dance History.” *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches*, edited by Lindsay Guarino and Wendy Oliver, University of Florida Press, 2014, pp. 33–71.  **Listen:** “The Roots of Jazz Dance.” *Pillow Voices: Dance Through Time.* Podcast, 21 min. Jacob’s Pillow, October 26, 2019. |
| **Saturday, September 19** | Jazz Dance Histories: Roots and Branches | **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Movement Exploration/Discussion (Board 2)  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Anderson, Jack. “Dance at the Royal Courts” AND “The Professionalization of Ballet.” *Ballet &**Modern Dance: A Concise History, 2nd Ed*, by Anderson, Dance Horizons, 1992, pp. 31–44 and 51–67. |
| **Wednesday, September 23** | Pre-20th Century European Ballet: Royal Courts of Italy and France | **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Movement Exploration/Discussion  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Banes, Sally. “The Romantic Ballet” AND “The Russian Imperial Ballet.” *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, by Banes, Routledge, 1998, pp.12–64. |
| **Saturday, September 26** | Pre-20th Century European Ballet: Romantic and Imperial Ballet | **In-class activities:**  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Duncan, Isadora. “The Dance of the Future.” *Dance as a Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance History from 1581 to the Present*, edited by Selma Jean Cohen, Dance Horizons, 1992, pp. 123–129.  **View:** “What Do You Dance?”, Part I, *Free to Dance* documentary (approx. 45 min) |
| **Wednesday, September 30** | Birth of “The Dance”: Foremothers, White Feminism, and Class | * **TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**   **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Viewing/Primary Source Engagement/ Discussion (Board 3)  **Prepare for next class: \*ONE READING PER GROUP**  **Listen:** “The Life and Work of La Meri.” *Pillow Voices: Dance Through Time.* Podcast, 19:02. Jacob’s Pillow, March 21, 2020.  **Read either:**  \*Srinivasan, Priya. “Archival Her-Stories: St. Denis and the Nachwalis of Coney Island.” *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transational Labor*, by Srinivasan, Temple UP, 2012, pp. 67–82.  \*Shea Murphy, Jacqueline. “Authentic Themes: Modern Dancers and American Indians in the 1920s and 1930s.” *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories*, by Jacqueline Shea Murphy, UP of Minnesota, 2007, pp. 111–147. |
| **Saturday, October 3** |  | **Virtual guest visit** from dance historian and choreographer, Catherine Gallant, of Dances by Isadora  **\*Lecture-workshop\* held in Dance Studio** |
| **Wednesday, October 7** | Early Modern Dance: “Pioneers”, Gender, and Cultural Appropriation | **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Viewing/Discussion (Board 4)  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Hodson, Millicent. “Searching for Nijinsky’s *Sacre*.” *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures*, edited by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, Wesleyan UP, 2001, pp. 17–29.  **View:** *Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes* (30 minutes) |
| **Saturday, October 10** | “Modernism”: International Modernism in Ballet | **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Viewing/Movement exercise: Reconstruction  ~~Discussion (Board 5):~~ cancelled  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Wigman, Mary [1933]. “The Philosophy of Modern Dance.” *Dance as a Theatre Art: Source Readings in Dance History from 1581 to the Present*, edited by Selma Jean Cohen, Dance Horizons, 1992, 149–153.  **Read:** Manning, Susan, and Melissa Benson. “Interrupted Continuities: Modern Dance in Germany.” *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures*, edited by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, Wesleyan UP, 2001, pp. 218–227. |
| **Wednesday, October 14** | “Modernism”: Modern Dance in Germany | * **CONTEXT COLLAGE AND ABSTRACT DUE**   **In-class activities:**  Lecture/ Viewing/Discussion/Context timeline activity  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Au, Susan. “Truly Modern.” *Ballet and Modern Dance*, 2nd edition, by Au, Thames and Hudson, 2002, pp. 119–131.  **Read:** Graff, Ellen. “The Dance is a Weapon.” *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures*, edited by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, Wesleyan UP, 2001, pp. 315­–322. |
| **Saturday, October 17** | “Modernism”: Modern Dance in the U.S. | **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Viewing/Discussion  **Prepare for next class:**  **Listen:** “A Study of José Limón: Artist and Immigrant.” *Pillow Voices: Dance Through Time.* Podcast, 15:30. Jacob’s Pillow, May 18, 2020.  **Read:** Burt, Ramsay. “Men, Modernism, and American Modern Dance.” *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacles, Sexualities*, by Burt, Routledge, 1995, pp. 99–129. |
| **Wednesday, October 21** | “Modernism”: Mid-Century Modern Dance in the U.S. | **In-class activities:**  Descriptive Writing Exercise (Alvin Ailey’s *Cry*, 1971)  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Hill, Constance Valis. “Katherine Dunham’s *Southland*: Protest in the Face of Oppression.” *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance*, edited by Thomas F. DeFrantz, Wisconsin UP, 2004, pp. 289–316.  **View:** “What Do You Dance?” Part 2 as well as “Steps of the Gods” Part I AND Part II, *Free To Dance* (approx. 1 hour) |
| **Saturday, October 24** | “Dancing Politics and Protest”: Black Dance Traditions | **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Viewing/Discussion  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Hill, Constance Valis. 2009. “From Bharata Natyam to Bop: Jack Cole’s ‘Modern’ Jazz Dance.” *Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy, Sham, Shake: A Social Dance Reader*, edited by Julie Malnig, Uni. of Ill. Press, 2009, pp. 234–246.  **Read:** Corbett, Sorya. “Katherine Dunham’s Mark on Jazz Dance.” *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches*, edited by Lindsay Guarinno and Wendy Oliver, Uni. Press of Florida, 2014, pp. 89–96. |
| **Wednesday, October 28** | “Modernism and Modern Jazz”: Creating Techniques | * **DESCRIPTIVE WRITING PASSAGE DUE**   **In-class activities:**  Lecture/Viewing/Movement studies: Modern Jazz Techniques/Discussion (Board 6)  **Prepare for next class:**  **Read:** Anderson, Jack. “The Rise of American Ballet.” *Ballet & Modern Dance; A Concise History*, 2nd ed, by Anderson, Dance Horizons, 1992, 139–164.  **Read:** Gottschild, Brenda Dixon. 1996. “Stripping the Emperor: The Africanist Presence in American Concert Dance.” *Moving Histories/Dancing Cultures*, edited by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright, Wesleyan UP, 2001, pp. 332–341. |
| **~~Saturday, October 31~~** | Cancelled in solidarity with the BMC Student Strike | Attendance of Teach-ins encouraged |
| **~~Wednesday, November 4~~** | Cancelled in solidarity with the BMC Student Strike | Attendance of Teach-ins encouraged |
| **~~Saturday, November 7~~** | Cancelled in solidarity with the BMC Student Strike | Attendance of Teach-ins encouraged |
| **Wednesday, November 11** | Holding Space for Discussion | **Optional gathering and discussion related to strike,** with Dr. Lela Aisha Jones |
| **Saturday, November 14** | Holding Space for Discussion | **Optional gathering and discussion related to strike**  Read and reflect through journaling and discussion, responding to the characteristics of white supremacy culture, as compiled by Teka Okum and informed by The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond |
| **Wednesday, November 18** | Holding Space for Discussion | **Optional gathering and discussion related to strike**  Reading and discussion of racism in Dance via the articles:  King, Gregory. “Exclusion is Oppression: From Pedagogy to Performance” in *Dance Magazine*, November 11, 2020.  Marshall, Alex. “Blackface at the Ballet Highlights a Global Divide on Race.” *New York Times*, December 23, 2019. |
| **Saturday, November 21** | \*Students travelling off campus this day\* | **Prepare for next class/asynchronous assignment:**  **View:** Part 3,“Go For What You Know,” *Free to Dance* (1 hour) |
| **Wednesday, December 2** | \*Remote Meeting\* | **In-class activities:**  Discuss documentary *Free to Dance* with review by Brenda Dixon Gottschild (provided in class)  Discuss how to write an abstract and parameters of all revised assignments |
| **Saturday, December 5** | \*Remote Meeting\*  Local Dance Histories:  Katherine Dunham’s Artistic, Activist, and Community-Building Legacy | **Due**: Descriptive Writing Feedback on Peer’s post  **For Extra Credit:** Read and briefly reflect (250 word response, emailed to me) Osumare, Halifu. “The Fierce Freedom of the Souls: Activism of African Dance in the Oakland the Bay Area,” 2019.  **In-class activities:**  Viewing and discussion of *Living St. Louis: Katherine Dunham*, KETC, 2007. (25 minutes) |
| **Wednesday, December 9** | \*Remote Research Share\* | **In-class activities:**  Research Project Presentations.  7–10 minutes each.  **🡪 DUE Wednesday, December 16:**  **-Revised Descriptive Writing Passage**  **-Abstract, with Bibliography** |

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| **Course Assignments \_REVISED** | **Percentage of Final Grade** | **Due Date** |
| 1. PARTICIPATION: in-class discussion and   discussion boards | 20% total | **See schedule/Moodle** |
| II. Research Project | 75% (total) |  |
| 1. Bibliography (Moodle) | 15% | Due Wed, September 30 |
| 2. Context Collage (Slideshow or Video) | 20% | Due Wed, October 14 |
| 3. Descriptive Writing Passage (Moodle) | 15% | Due Sat, December 5 |
| 4. Abstract (1-2 pages) | 15% | Due Wed, December 16 |
| 6. Presentations | 15% | During class Wed, Dec 9 |
| 7. Extra Credit Opportunity (250 word reflection/email) | Will be added to participation grade | Due Wed, December 16 |

**I. Participation – 25%**

***It is expected that all students will participate fully.*** Full participation includes thoughtful contributions to in-class discussions/discussion boards and participation in movement exercises as well as a peer-review/feedback activity. Engaged participation from everyone is essential for creating a community that learns together.

All students are expected to be active readers, listeners, viewers, and researchers. Please consume assigned material thoughtfully (take notes, look up words and references you don’t know, reflect, etc.). On several occasions (as noted on the course schedule), different readings will be assigned to particular groups. This means everyone will be responsible for relaying the main points of their reading/viewing to those who were not assigned the same material. This is a pedagogical strategy designed to distribute the responsibility of learning; specific readings have been paired to highlight how our knowledge and understanding of the past is not fixed or static but continues to evolve and be transformed.

**Synchronous Discussions and Asynchronous Discussion Boards:** I will offer specific prompts to generate “synchronous” discussion that will also be used as prompts for the eight (8) discussion board posts, so it is advised to take notes on in-class discussion. Student can choose to either write or audio/video record their brief discussion board posts. Written discussion board posts should be between 125–175 words; video/audio recording should be no longer than 3 minutes. Comments (written and spoken) on other posts are encouraged.

Lastly, please note when movement studies will be part of our in-class activities; if remotely joining the class, please try to join from a place that permits full-bodied movement.

**II. Research Project – 75% total**

Projects are comprised of a multi-step research and writing process designed to provide students with an understanding of the work of dance historians, gain in-depth knowledge about their chosen dance work/event, and hone their writing skills. Each student will choose a choreographed work or significant dance event that occurred between the years 1800–2010\* and intensively research this work/dance event and the time period in which it was produced. Students will build their analysis of their chosen work/event around a particular theme or theoretical framework, connecting the dance and dancing to historical, sociocultural, and political contexts and events; this approach emulates the material will we engage throughout the semester.

\*This time frame is a suggestion, but not a firm requirement.

**Guidelines and Assessment Rubrics** for each assignment are also posted on Moodle. See above statement on flexibility and communication about deadlines.

All written assignments should be correctly formatted in the citational style of your choosing, double-spaced in Arial or Times New Roman 12 pt. font with 1-inch margins.

**Bibliography – 15% Due September 30**

Students will choose a historical choreographic work or dance event (not a dancer or choreographer) that they want to research and analyze further and find at least six supporting sources that document and/or comment on that specific dance. Ideally, bibliographies should include a range of primary and secondary sources and include both written and audiovisual material.

Students will list their bibliographic sources using proper formatting in the citational style of their choosing.

**Context Collage and Abstract 25% Due October 14**

After selecting a choreographic work to research, students will begin to approach the analysis of their chosen dance work/event by creating a digital collection of pertinent materials, highlighting the time period in which their dance/event occurred. Assignments can take the format of digital slideshows (Google Slides, Power Point, or other templates) or video presentations. Neither format should take longer than 5 minutes to view.

Your research collection can contain literary, visual, audiovisual, and embodied information that helps you understand the historical, cultural, social, and political contexts in which the choreographic work/dance event occurred. Student may choose to include *primary* *material* (first-hand accounts, oral histories, critical reviews, audiovisual documentation such as photographs and film/video footage) and/or *secondary* *sources* (biographies, contemporary magazine and newspaper articles, and peer-reviewed/scholarly articles, chapters, or books).

Students may also incorporate *embodiment* as part of their research process; students can choose to visually record your historically grounded movement exploration, pertinent technique study, or choreographic reenactment of elements of the work as a video either within their slide show or video OR write/speak descriptively about their process of embodied research.

**Descriptive Writing – 25% Due Sat. December 5**

Students will focus on writing descriptively about their chosen work, using vivid language, analogies, and poetic images to convey the tone, structure, movement qualities, and overall design of the dance; 500–800 words. As all description is already interpretation, these descriptive passages of writing will reveal how the dance makes meaning as well as what it “looks” like. Your descriptive writing passages are to be posted on the Discussion Board on Moodle and each student will be assigned another students’ excerpt to read and peer-review (guidelines for peer-review will be given). Students will revise their descriptive writing based on this feedback experience for their final papers.

**Research Presentation – 15% In-class Sat. December 5**

Students will share their findings, sources, and the arguments developed in their papers in a presentation of their research project. Slideshows/videos from your **Context Collage** may be used as part of your presentation; you may also include additional commentary and/or insights gained via archival and/or embodied research as well as the process of writing/revising. Each student will have 10–15 minutes for their presentation.

**Abstract – 20% Due Wed. December 16**

An abstract is a “trailer” for a larger written work. Your task is to prepare a 250-500 word (1-2 pages double-spaced) abstract of the final paper you would have written based on your research. Think of it as a proposal or preview of the research topic, main ideas, and your research methods and findings.

Key Elements of an Abstract:

-create a title that indicates the topic

-provide pertinent context and background information

-specify case study and relevant details

-indicate research methods and methodology (use of source material, choreographic analysis, any academic disciplines or theoretical lenses you are drawing on in your scholarly literature)

-include a thesis statement if possible

**Other Policies, Support Services, and Useful Information**

**Correspondence:** Please contact me via email if you have any questions or concerns or to make an appointment. You can expect an answer within a timely manner. Please note I will generally **not** respond to emails before 8 am, after 7 pm, or over the weekend. I am willing to work with anyone experiencing difficulty in completing assignments or participating to their fullest, please do not hesitate to reach out about any issues or concerns as they arise.