Course Description and Objectives:
This signature course asserts that dance by and for African Americans is an especially rich site for the examination of politics of race, gender, sexuality, class, and power in relation to evolving social and historical contexts in the United States. Taking an interdisciplinary approach that juxtaposes critical readings in Dance, Performance and African American Studies with viewing of videos of dance and experiential activities, this course provides an introductory theoretical and methodological grounding in Afrocentric performance scholarship. Through an examination of the historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts in which dance for the stage created by artists of African descent living in America have evolved since the Harlem Renaissance, we will explore the ways the concept of “Blackness” has been embodied, challenged and intersected with the development and evolution of U.S. concert dance since the turn of the 20th century.

Upon completion of this course students the successful student should:

• Have an introductory knowledge of and an appreciation for African and African Diasporic dance forms as expressions of African cultural throughout the Diaspora.
• Have a familiarity with some historical context of the relationship and cultural tensions between Africanist Aesthetics and European Aesthetics.
• Have cultivated an intellectual curiosity about and an intellectual/cultural sophistication when discussing issues of race and racism in relationship to dance.
• Have broadened cultural understanding of dance as an art form and a site for social change.
Course Schedule:
**This schedule is dependent upon our rate of progress and will inevitably change**

- Unless otherwise stated readings and videos can be found on Blackboard
- NOTE: Please read the due dates for readings and videos carefully. It is critical that you do the readings and video viewing on schedule so that you can fully participate in class conversations and successfully complete assignments.

Week 1, January 14-18: Race
Required Reading:
- “From Slave Ships to Center Stage” by Zita Allen
- “From Minstrel Show to Concert Stage” by Zita Allen
- Introductions, Review Syllabus, Course Requirements and Assignments
- In class viewing of Ethnic Notions by Marlon Riggs

DUE Friday, 1/18: Response to Ethnic Notions Study Guide Questions (Written responses due)

Reminder: BOOK TICKET TO SEE LION KING AT BASS CONCERT HALL

Week 2, January 21-25: Privilege and Appropriation
***NO CLASS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 21 AND FRIDAY, JANUARY 25***
Deadline to see the Lion King is Sunday, January 27
Required Reading:
- “Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance” by Deidre Sklar: [http://acceleratedmotion.wesleyan.edu/primary_sources/texts/ecologiesofbeauty/five_promises.pdf](http://acceleratedmotion.wesleyan.edu/primary_sources/texts/ecologiesofbeauty/five_promises.pdf)

Required Video Viewing
- *Ostrich Dance* (1932) by Asadata Dafora

DUE Friday, January 25 by 2pm: Reading Response to “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Week 3, January 28-February 1: Early Black Dance History: The New Negro
Required Reading:
- “Early Influences on Black Concert Dance” (Chapter 1 of *African American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* by John Perpener III)
- “Race as Community” Readings (Focus on Hughes’ “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”)

Required Video Viewing
- “Barrelhouse Blues” (1938) by Katherine Dunham
- “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (1944) by Pearl Primus

First Presentations on Friday, February 1: Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus

DUE Wednesday, January 30th: Review of The Lion King

Week 4, February 4-8: The Politics and Aesthetics of Black Dance
***NO CLASS ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8***
Required Reading:
- “Towards a Black Aesthetic” by Hoyt Fuller
- “The Black Arts Movement” by Larry Neal
- “African American Dance-Philosophy, Aesthetics, and “Beauty” by Thomas Defrantz

Required Video Viewing:
- “Rainbow ‘Round My Shoulder” by Donald McKayle
- “Junkie” by Eleo Pomare
Week 5, February 11-15: The Poetics and Legacy of Alvin Ailey
Required Reading:
- New York Times Obituary for Alvin Ailey by Jennifer Dunning
- “Revelations 1962” by Thomas DeFrantz
Required Video Viewing:
- Revelations by Alvin Ailey
- DUE Monday, February 18: Reading Response to “Revelations 1962” by Thomas DeFrantz

Week 6, February 18-22: Embodying History
Required Reading:
- “Embodying History” by Ann Cooper-Albright
- “Subversive Dancing” by Ananya Chatterjea
Required Video Viewing:
- Vespers by Ulysses Dove
- Batty Moves by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar
Presentations on WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20: Bill T. Jones and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar
ATTEND: SHARON BRIDGFORTH’S “RIVER/SEE” WORKSHOP SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD, 8PM
- DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22: REVISION OF LION KING REVIEW

Week 7, February 25- March 1: Criticizing ‘Criticism’
Required Reading:
- “What Critics Do” by Joan Acocella
- “Discussing the Undiscussable” by Arlene Croce
Required Video Viewing:
- Bill T. Jones/Still Here (interview with Bill Moyers)
- DUE Monday, February 25: Reading Response to “Subversive Dancing” by Ananya Chatterjea using Bridgforth’s “River/See” as case study

Week 8, March 4-8: Multiculturalism and the American Dream
***NO CLASS FRIDAY, MARCH 8***
Required Reading:
- “Dance and Theater in a Multicultural Context: Who Stole the Soul, Who Takes the “Rap,” or Free to be You and Me?” from Diving the Africanist Presence in American Performance by Brenda Dixon Gottschald
- “The Black Beat Made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power” by Thomas DeFrantz
In-Class Video Viewing:
- Rize

Week 9, March 11-15: SPRING BREAK
- Work on Response Revisions

Required Reading:
- “Tradition and The Individual Talent” by Suzan-Lori Parks
Required Video Viewing:
- “The Realest MC” by Kyle Abraham

Week 11, March 25-28: So... So You Think You Can Dance...
Required Reading:
- “Hey, We’re from Canada, but We’re Diverse Right? Neoliberalism, Multiculturalism, and Identity on So You Think You Can Dance Canada” by Jade Boyd
UGS 302 #64160 So You Think That’s Black Dance?

**Week 12, April 1-5: Postering and Creative Response Workshops**

**Week 13, April 8-12: Performing Blackness**
ATTEND WARFIELD CENTER’S PERFORMING BLACKNESS SERIES: TAR, APRIL 12 AND 13 (INCLUDING PRE- AND POST-SHOW DISCUSSIONS)

**Week 14, April 15-19: Final Presentations begin on Friday, April 19**
DUE Monday, April 15: Review of TAR

**Week 15, April 22-26: Final Presentations Continue**

**Week 16, April 28- May 3: Final Presentations and Wrap-up**

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**Course Method**

Over the course of the semester we will be asking ourselves:

- **What is African American (also known as Black) Dance?** What does it look like? Who defines it?
- **Must the African American choreographer make aesthetic/artistic adjustments when choreographing works targeted for ‘White’, rather than ‘Black’, audiences?** Must s/he accept a marginal position within the larger field of dance if s/he does not?
- **How does performance and traditional criticism of Black Dance on the Euro/American concert stage reinforce or undermine normative ideas about race, gender, beauty?**
- **How can movement practices taking inspiration from the African Diaspora be universal and thereby empower bodies and counter societal norms?**

Our goal is not to come away with an understanding of the concept of African American and African Diasporic dance on the stage as a concept that reinforces static notions of race and identity but rather as a fluid and variable paradigm for approaching African American and African Diasporic Dance (as artist, audience, or critic) with an eye to the possible and/or preferable relationships between social justice, racial politics and aesthetic choices.

The course will consist of readings, video and live performance viewing assignments, in-class discussion and presentations, regular writing assignments, and presentations. Graded assignments include 5 reading/video response papers, two critical reviews—one of from “The Lion King” and the other from The John L. Warfield Center’s “Performing Blackness Series”, a short presentation of one of your reviews and a final presentation dealing with (and/or in) Black Aesthetics, to be designed in consultation with the instructor. We will meet three times a week: typically, our sessions will consist of one day of lecture, one day of seminar-style discussion and a day of synthesis and review. The goal is to broaden our knowledge of dance in general and the socio-historical contexts that have informed and been informed by African American dance in particular.
Participation

- Spoken participation in this class is essential, both to maintain a high level of discussion and to encourage you to practice your spoken communication skills. You should try to contribute to the discussion every day with thoughtful comments. Be fully present – no text messaging, no notepassing, no sidebar conversations.
- Work to listen well and to respond graciously and generously (which, of course, doesn’t mean necessarily agreeing with) other students' ideas. We want our conversations to be lively, committed, and productively contentious.
- Participation grades will be given five times during the semester. Each grade will be up to 4 points on your final grade, for a total of 20 points, or 20%.
  - “4” means that you have consistently come to class and participated fully and thoughtfully in conversation, without dominating, and that you have submitted all work in a timely manner.
  - “3” means that you have come to class and occasionally participated fully, but more often remained attentive to the goings-on and that you have submitted all work in a timely manner. In short, you are keeping up with work, but remaining on the sidelines at times.
  - “2” means that you appear to be consistently listening, but you are not always contributing to the conversation and/or you have occasionally turned in late work.
  - “1” means that you are appearing in class, but you are not prepared to work or to listen and/or you have, more often than not, turned in late work. I share these grades throughout the semester so that you can follow your progress. If you find yourself receiving a low grade, use the information as an opportunity to talk about your progress and our expectations.

Grading and Attendance

- Grades are calculated according to the percentages below.
- I expect you to read all assignments closely and to participate actively in our discussions, whether about reading materials, the politics and practices of teaching, or our practical exercise sessions. Learning how to offer constructive feedback and learning how to gracefully accept criticism will be an important component of the course.
- This class uses the +/- system.
- Quite simply, grades are assessed as follows (note that +/- grades indicating shadings of the criteria offered for full letter grades):
  - **An “A” course grade** means that the student has not missed any classes and has arrived promptly each day, prepared to participate in the session’s discussions. An “A” means that a large amount of diligence and initiative has gone into your writing, thinking, and teaching demonstrations this semester. Your responses are well-written and pose useful questions for yourself and the class to ponder; your in-class presentations are substantive and concise; your participation in class discussions is thoughtful, succinct, and moves the conversation forward; in the progress of researching and thinking about dramaturgy, you’ve clearly expanded your knowledge and your skills.
  - **A “B” grade** means that you’ve missed several classes or come late several times; that you don’t participate as consistently or productively in session discussions; that you don’t seem to have observations to make about the reading; that your responses seem written hurriedly, without a lot of thought; that your presentations and papers are slapdash; and that you still haven’t risen to the challenge of this course.
  - **A “C” grade** means that you’ve missed many classes and/or consistently come late; that you don’t appear to have read the discussion assignments; that your approach to your presentations and written assignments is laconic and disorganized; that you don’t appear motivated to do well; and that mastering the skills of the course is not a top priority for you.
  - **A “D” grade** means you have barely done any of the work, missed classes regularly, and generally disengaged from the course content and process.
  - **An “F” grade** means you have not only barely done the work, missed classes regularly and generally disengaged from the course content and process, but you have also made the choice to actively undermined any constructive attempts to salvage your grade.
COURSE GRADING:

- Reading Response Papers (5, best 4 @ 10% each) 40%
- Revised Response Paper (1 @ 5%) 5%
- Reviews (2 @ 10% each) 20%
- Revised Review (1 @ 5%) 5%
- Presentations (2 @ 5% each) 10%
- Participation 20%

Attendance and Tardiness:

- Attendance is Mandatory. You will be expected to be in attendance at all classes. Tardiness will not be tolerated. If you are not in attendance when the roll is taken, you will be marked “ABSENT.”
- Students are allowed two (2) absences for the semester. Each absence beyond two (2) will affect the Final Course Grade as indicated below. Absences for presentations can never be excused.
- Each absence above two will result in the reduction of the final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. A final grade of A would become a B if the student had missed three classes beyond the permitted two. A final grade of B+ would become a B- with two classes missed over the permitted two.
- Absences of eight or more will result in automatic failure of the course with a final grade of F regardless of the quality of the course work.
- In the event of a medical emergency: contact the instructor and submit written support from the attending physician. (UT Health Center sign-in records are NOT acceptable).

Written Assignments

All of the course writing assignments are designed to encourage students to think critically and creatively about dance in general and to serve as a departure point for group discussions and individual consultations.

1. 5 Reading Response Papers: The five response papers will be in conversation with one (1) of the week’s assigned readings (that is, you do not have to write about all readings in weeks where there are multiple assignments) and will be in accordance with the week’s writing prompt which will be posted on the course’s Blackboard site. Of the five papers, the one with the lowest grade will be dropped, and four will count for your final grade. All five must be completed, however. One of these papers will be reviewed for a separate grade. The paper to be revised will be chosen in conversation with the instructor. Please use the “Reading Response Template” on Blackboard as a guide to create effective response papers.

2. Two critical review essays: One on The Lion King due on Monday, January 28 and the second on TAR due on Monday, April 15. One of these will also form the basis of one of your two presentations.

Helpful Hints for Writing Your Critical Review Essays: There are many ways to write criticism well, depending on the audience, the purpose of the criticism, and the vision and goals of the critic. The following formula will usually help you produce a good and readable piece of criticism:

- telling readers enough about a work to help them understand what interests you about it;
- drawing readers’ attention to particular Africanist aspects of a work that they might otherwise miss;
- placing a work in relation to historical or cultural trends of the period when the work was created/ performed. After that, it’s practice, familiarity and insight!

3. Your Final project will consist of a ‘creative response’ presentation and a poster session on the class focus. The poster is a visual form that you supplement with a verbal presentation. The ‘creative response’ could be a short presentation (using movement and/or text), visual art (installation, collage, video), creative/movement activity, etc. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage you to respond to the theoretical content of the course creatively, artistically, and physically (I particularly encourage you to experiment with performance). The presentation should not last long (6-8 minutes), and each member of the group you should also include a 4-page, double-spaced creative analysis and explanation of your ‘creative response’. You will not be evaluated on compositional or performance skill, but on your creative engagement with the week’s materials. Your presentation and paper should address what themes you are investigating and demonstrate substantive research; both the presentation and the analytic paper should...
clearly articulate how you perceive the piece working within a Black Aesthetic. Further guidelines will be distributed.

Only writing assignments completed and turned in on time are eligible to receive full credit (pending evaluation of their quality).

- Late papers (after the start of class on the due date) will lose half a grade for everyday it is late. After 5 days (including weekends and holidays) I will not accept any late writing. LATE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS WILL HAVE A SERIOUS IMPACT ON YOUR GRADE. PLEASE PLAN AHEAD. On Blackboard please read “Writing Assignments” for specific guidelines and instructions for Response Papers and Critical Concert Review Papers.

Questions to guide your reading:
· What is/are the author’s overall claim(s)? And how does the author make the argument?
· What is the author's evidence and what methods does s/he use to analyze the evidence?
· Within what theoretical school or disciplines is s/he working? Can you see connections to dance? Differences?
· What ideas about race, spectatorship, or performance are presented?
· How does this writer describe, analysis, and interpret performance? How does s/he use description as evidence?
· Are their writing passages that are particularly evocative, rich, useful? Are there others that are less successful? How so?
· What new insights about race, spectatorship, or performance/creative production are offered by this writer?

Questions to guide your viewing:
Who is dancing/performing? What kinds of bodies, training, physicalities do you see?
What does the movement look like? What qualities of motion do you observe? Describe how the dancing/performing.
Describe the sound on stage. Is it a particular genre of music? How do the performers seem to be interacting with it?
Are their particular moments, scenes, performers, interactions that stand out for you (impact you, intrigue you, excite you, anger you, etc.)?
Do men/women perform the movements in the same way or do they seem to be intentionally move differently? Identify specific instances and descriptively analyze.
How do dancers relate to or touch each other?
What is the context in which the performance takes place?
How do performers interact with the audience? What role, if any, does the audience play?
Does the performance suggest particular narratives, themes, or meanings related to race, gender, sexuality, power, bodies?
Does race or ethnicity figure centrally into the performance/piece?
Discuss any reviews of the work you may have read prior to or after the performance. Do you agree with the critic?
Course Policies and Policies of the University of Texas

• **Students engaged in non-class activities (texting, surfing the internet, sleeping, etc.) during class time will receive a deduction in their overall grade for the course.**

• **Students will observe the University of Texas Honor Code:** The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

• **All papers must be typed, double-spaced and stapled.** Use standard margins on all sides of the paper, use a standard font size (no larger than 12 pt.), number your pages and use a standard format for the bibliography.

• **Vigorous respectful discussion should characterize our classroom interactions.** All opinions are welcome, and all opinions are subject to challenge. This discussion is critical to a successful experience in the class. This is the space for applying theory and challenging our assumptions. Such discussion may necessitate a spontaneous modification in the course schedule.

• **Students plagiarizing** papers will be reported to UGS for academic sanctions. If you are suspected of cheating, you will not receive a grade for the questionable paper.

• **Grade disputes** must be initiated within seven calendar days from the receipt of the grades. After that time, disputes will not be considered.

• **Documented Disability Statement:** The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice), 232-2937 (video phone), or consult their website at [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/index.php](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/index.php).

• **Use of Blackboard in Class:** In this class we use Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with passwordprotected access at [http://courses.utexas.edu](http://courses.utexas.edu)—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to receive assignments. You can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8AM to 5PM, so plan accordingly.