

Dance Improvisation (2 Credits)

DAA 4930

Monday/Wednesday 12:50 –2:20

INSTRUCTOR: Nita Little 352-273-0522 nlittle@arts.ufl.edu or nitalittle@mac.com

Offices: Nadine McGuire Theatre & Dance Pavilion 2nd floor

Office Hours: TBA (posted on dance board or faculty offices)

SoTD Office Phone: 352-273-0500 Main Office

*Email Policy: Use ONLY your **UFL.EDU** email account for e-mail correspondence related to class. Please include your name & class in the subject line or within the body of all correspondence.

Syllabi are posted at CFA website under: *Student & Parents:* <http://arts.ufl.edu/syllabi/>

Equipment Requirement:

- Knee Pads - cotton or gel. No heavy athletic knee pads.

Course Description:

The skills of dance improvisation are an ***essential*** practice in today's dance world. Most dancers in professional companies are asked to engage in improvisational exercises as an aspect of choreographic development, but also **as a performance practice**. Improvisation as it is taught within the context of technique classes and even choreography classes is not sufficient to train the skills of immediate time choreography which include ensemble relational skills, score development, movement sourcing, audience relations, speaking and moving, solo to ensemble, relationships with music, sound, metered and non-metered time, as well as spatial practices that give the dance a new understanding of their significance. One of the most important skills that dance improvisation offers the performing artist is that of articulating his/her presence in performance. It is in each moment of being that this skill is practiced and it is critically tied to the performer's physical/environmental attention and their ability to concentrate on multiple levels of awareness.

This course is for performers and is available to dancers and actors **beyond the beginning level within their form: dance, physical theater, dramatic theater**. The course will focus on the physical, although depending upon the make-up of the class, we will engage in verbal and sound relationships in certain instances.

Course objectives:

- Solo to ensemble improvisational skills
- Movement sourcing and the development of creative abilities
- Varied scales of awareness, action, and creative practices
- Score production and the foundations of form and content
- Partnering and Contact Improvisation

- Performance Skills including the articulation of presence.
- Relational skills
- Engaging with metered and non-metered music, sound and other factors of time
- Spatial decision making
- Speaking and moving
- Creative audience relations
- Creative Research Practices An understanding of and ability to move with physical inquiry
- Heightened sensory and somatic abilities
- An ability to interact with physical sensitivity
- Physical skills including weight control in giving and receiving weight, rolling, falling, sliding, and inversions.
- A beginning understanding and integration of the body as a mind.
- An ability to move responsively in pathways of flow with one's partner.
- An informed ability to discuss some underlying theories of dance improvisation.

Teaching Philosophy:

It is my purpose as a teacher to engage with my students in the following ways:

- Impart joy, information, and ongoing inquiry into the physical bodymind in motion.
- Guide students into multiple levels of physical experience of their bodymind in motion and at rest.
- Help students develop multiple means of thinking within the actions of physical experiencing.
- Develop respect for and understanding of creativity within interpersonal physical relationships.

In dance Improvisation the teacher is understood to be someone who guides and structures the learning. Learning is hands-on. However, through their physical immersion in the dance the student is given great responsibility to set the pace and level of their own learning. In other words, the student is his or her own physical/mental authority. Each determines their own physical and mental capacities as they participate in this intimate and physically demanding dance form.

Requirements:

Assignments:

Review the calendar (please note that it is open to change). All assignments and due dates are noted.

- **Physical or online journals are to be maintained.** These are to be maintained for each class. Entries should be 100 - 150 words. They may be informal in style and may contain personal viewpoints or experiences. However, they also need to contain some relationship to our practice and speak to the reading, the viewing, and the principles and ideas expressed in class. Blogs should not tell me what we did in class unless it is pertinent to your discussion, in which case what we did is important.

- **Bi-weekly readings and viewing** will be due and discussed. The progress of our readings will be assigned in class from our texts.
- **Oral class Responses** will be assigned to individuals, alternating on a weekly basis. These will outline materials from your readings or focus on a specific reading (your choice). You will be expected to interface these with the underlying principles and other materials introduced in class.
- **Written Assignments: Two short papers** (300 -500 words) will be due on Monday February 15 and Monday April 11. Papers are to be submitted in hard copy. Subjects will be discussed in class.
- **Class Demonstrations:** we will dance for one another.
- **Attendance:** see attendance policy.

Final Exam: Since exam week is often the most physically stressful it is not conducive to positive physical action and safety. Therefore, the exam for this class will be on the last day of class (April 20, 2016), rather than on its scheduled exam time.

Texts:

COMPOSING WHILE DANCING: AN IMPROVISER'S HANDBOOK, Melinda Buckwalter (2010) University of Wisconsin Press

LANDSCAPE OF THE NOW, Kent de Spain (2010) Oxford University Press.

Students with Disabilities: I encourage students with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury and attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, to talk with me, after class or during my office hour. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance Guide:

- Mindful participation in each class meeting is the only way to meet the objectives of this course.
- Attendance, which is mandatory, means that when you enter the classroom, you are present, alert, and contributing to the progress of the class every second.
- If you are not present when attendance is taken or class begins you are marked absent.
- In the case of extended health issues, refer to the Injury and Illness Policy in the SoTD 2014-15 Handbook (SoTD website) and included in this syllabus.

Dance Absence Policy

- Five (5) or more absences (excused or unexcused) result in automatic failure.
- All undocumented absences are unexcused: each unexcused absence = 5 point deduction. Excused absences may include those related to illness/injury which are documented by a medical

professional. Events related to family emergencies or professional obligations should be discussed

with your instructor. (See *Make-up Policy* for more information on excused absences.)

- For your safety and the focus of the class, you may not join class if it has already started. You are late and counted absent; with instructor permission, you may observe.
- If you should leave class early, 3 points are deducted from your grade.
- If unable to dance but still attend, with instructor permission, you may 'actively' observe for full class credit, onetime. You will complete an assignment as assigned by the instructor due at the end of class.
- UF approved religious days are excused and do not need to be made-up. (Travel time not included.)

You are responsible for material covered during your absence.

- A MEDICAL WITHDRAWAL will not be supported without approved documentation. An Incomplete is only considered by UF Dance in extreme cases and is not available in technique classes.

MAKE-UP POLICY:

Dance – Makeup Policy

- You are responsible for all material covered during any absence.
- There are no makeup options for unexcused absences.
- Absences from Written Exams, Quizzes, Mid-Terms, and/or Finals may only be made up with approved documentation.
- To earn credit (amount of credit determined by the instructor) for an excused absence you must do two things:
 - 1) Immediately after your return to class, turn in approved/legal documentation to instructor. If you need the original documentation, the instructor will accept copies.
 - 2) Make-up the class with an approved assignment submitted on the required date. If the assignment is to attend another class as a make-up, it must be the same technical level, or lower; student must request permission of that instructor.

In the UF Dance Program, three unexcused absences will reduce your grade one-letter grade (i.e., from B to C). Each subsequent unexcused absence lowers your grade by half letter grade (i.e., from C to C-). After five unexcused absences the student may not return to class and result in automatic failure of the course. A student with medical documentation may apply to UF for Medical Withdrawal.

Please consult the following sites for UF's physical and mental health resources:

<http://shcc.ufl.edu/> (Student Health Care Center)

<http://shcc.ufl.edu/forms-records/excuse-notes/> (excuse note policy)

<http://dso.ufl.edu/> (Dean of Students)

UF POLICIES:

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>.

NETIQUETTE: COMMUNICATION COURTESY: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats.
<http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

GETTING HELP:

If applicable: For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

GRADING POLICIES:

1. Continuous Assessment 50 points

Frequent class demonstrations

These following areas are used to assess student progress throughout the semester:

- *Self-awareness—the student demonstrates an ability to retain an awareness of self while integrating their movement into spatial relationships with other persons and groups.*
- *Relational awareness - development of the ability to sense and act within a larger spatial field that includes others.*
- *Serious play and invention - the ability to try new physical and relational possibilities. Creative Risk-taking—student dares to explore new territory.*
- *Overall Improvement—student demonstrates a clear positive progression throughout the semester.*

2. Journal: 20 points

3. Reading and viewing discussions: 10 points.

(Prepare for pop quizzes.)

4. Written Assignments: 10 points

5.. Proof of achieving technical aptitude

Final Evaluations

10 points In Class Wednesday April 20, 2016.

GRADING SCALE:

Total: 100 points

A	93-100 points
A-	90-92
B+	86-89
B	83-85 points
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76 points
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66 points
D-	60-62
E	59 and below

Your overall score may be affected by your attendance record.

*Disclaimer: This syllabus represents current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

Dress Policy:

- Attire suitable for movement
- No oversized clothing
- No gym shorts - knees must be covered
- Hair needs to be confined and out of the dancer's face (no hats)
- No jewelry, including all non-stud earrings, necklaces & watches
- KNEE PADS should be in your dance bag or locker EVERY class
- No chewing gum

Students not in compliance with the above requirements will be considered absent from class or points deducted at instructor's discretion.

Please Note: Our work in the studios is designed to be challenging; physically, intellectually, and emotionally. Dance classes often involve touching. Physical contact may range from simple touch, to correcting alignment and/or relaxation massage. Students may also be asked to experiment with exercises that involve weight exchange. If you have a related medical consideration or touch makes you uncomfortable, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor at the start of the semester.

EACH STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING HER/HIS OWN PROGRESS