

The University of Vermont

HCOL 185K D1: Dance in Minstrelsy & Hip-Hop

Classroom: UHTN Multipurpose

Tues/Thurs 10:05-11:20 am

Professor Paul Besaw

Fall 2018

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday, 10:00 am-Noon (and by appointment)

DESCRIPTION

An in-depth study of Africanist aesthetics as they relate to the development of popular dance forms embedded in American entertainment, including how those aesthetics simultaneously conflicted and fused with Europeanist ideals. The course will closely examine dance inside the legacy of American blackface minstrelsy and, utilizing the UVM Center for Digital Initiatives' *Kake Walk at UVM* collection, see its tradition in UVM history. The course will also delve into dance within hip-hop culture, including its historical connections, commercial development, and global appeal. Students will read and write extensively in this course, as well as view seminal dance films related to the course content. In-class discussion and activities (including some dance experiences each week) will be extremely important aspects to the class. A major research paper/performance will serve as a way to explore dance research methodologies and provide students with the opportunity to expand their knowledge in a course-related topic.

TOPICS

- Africanist Aesthetics in Dance
- Blackface Minstrelsy in America (Dance Specific)
- UVM Kake Walk
- Hip Hop History in America (Dance Specific)
- Institutionalization of Popular Entertainment in America
- Europeanist/Africanist Fusions and Collisions at Work in Minstrelsy & Hip Hop
- Hip Hop, Globalization, and the "Intercultural Body"

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will gain:

1. Understanding of Africanist aesthetics dance principles and scholarship.
2. Understanding of the strong influence of Africanist ideals on popular American dance and entertainment.
3. Fundamental and crucial knowledge about Minstrelsy and its complicated beginnings, development, popularity, and, most importantly, its long legacy in American entertainment.
5. Understanding of the UVM Kake Walk tradition as part of the blackface minstrelsy legacy.
6. Fundamental knowledge about Hip-Hop and its complicated beginnings, development, popularity, and its global distribution.
7. Understanding of issues of power and artistic appropriation for economic gain.
8. Understanding of issues of race, ethnicity, privilege, prejudice, stereotypes, and activism in the context of American dance history.
9. Understanding of ALL of the above in the context of dance, where these ideas are mapped out and revealed by bodies in motion.
10. Skills in seeing, writing, and talking about dance with increasing ease and aptitude.
11. Insight into dance research and the relationship between research and creative practice.

REQUIRED READING (Available via Blackboard):

A variety of essays and book chapters will be assigned, including, but not limited to, readings from the following texts–

African Art in Motion: Icon and Art in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White by Robert Farris Thompson
Moving History/Dancing Cultures. Edited by Ann Dils & Ann Cooper Albright.
Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African-American Culture by Katrina Hazzard-Gordon
Black Dance: From 1619 to Today by Lynne Fauley Emery
Darkest America: Black Minstrelsy from Slavery to Hip-Hop by Yuval Taylor and Jake Austen
Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy. Edited by Stephen Johnson
The Black Dancing Body: Geography from Coon to Cool by Brenda Dixon Gottschild
Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts by Brenda Dixon Gottschild
The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves by Halifu Osumare
Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism by Sally Banes
Rethinking Dance History. Edited by Alexandra Carter.
The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. Edited by Alexandra Carter

Additional research assignments from the UVM Center for Digital Initiatives' *Kake Walk at UVM* collection.
Additional readings from *The Atlantic*, *Dance Research Journal*, *Dance Magazine*, and other journals.

REQUIRED FILMS (On Reserve at Media Resources):

Bamboozled (2000). Directed by Spike Lee
Style Wars (1983). Directed by Tony Silver
Rize (2005). Directed by David LaChapelle
Shake the Dust (2014). Directed by Adam Sjöberg

ATTENDANCE & BEHAVIOR

Attendance: Expected and necessary in order to fully understand and appreciate the class material. Very important, the reading will begin and supplement class discussion, so students must be prepared. Ideas for and success in the writing assignments can only be achieved if students attend class regularly and actively engage in class videos, lectures, and discussion. Students must come dressed appropriately for participation in movement activities (a weekly time for these will be established early in the semester).

Two allowed absences: *Every absence after two will result in a deduction of 10 points from the final grade.* No excused absences (manage your allowed two very well!) Attendance policy begins on **first** day of class! Lateness and early departure will be noted. Every three latenesses and/or early departures will count as a full absence. ***Planned absences due to religious observance should be submitted in writing by the end of the second week of classes. In those cases, students will be allowed to make up any missed work.***

Electronic Devices: Students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices before class begins. Anyone wishing to use an electronic device during class must first ask permission from the instructor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ESSAYS (200 Points)

Two 4-page essays will be assigned and function as the midterm and final major assessment tools. The essay requirements, distributed separately, will contain at least two essay choices and will be related to course content/reading/discussions/video. Essays MUST use and cite assigned course reading to support student arguments and insights.

Essay #1 Due Date: Tuesday, October 16

Essay #2 Due Date: Thursday, December 13 (Final Exam)

2. RESEARCH PROJECT: Paper or Performance (150 Points)

Students must choose between a 13-15 page research paper on a specific topic or a creative research choreography/performance project (length/scope to be determined in consultation with the professor). Either choice must be integrally related to course content. In some cases, students may choose some combination of paper and performance (see instructor). Students must conceive and propose a topic or project, outlining initial research and goals for the final product. "Professor Consultations" will provide in-process feedback on paper drafts or creative works-in-progress. See guidelines (distributed separately).

Proposal Due: Thursday, October 18

Professor Consultation #1: No later than Thursday, November 8

Professor Consultation #2: Student Discretion

Due Date: Tuesday, December 4 and Thursday, December 6

3. DANCE PERFORMANCE PAPERS (2 Formal Papers and 3 Open Responses/100 Total Points)

The course will include an emphasis on experiencing at least FIVE live dance performances/events. Students must write papers on all dance performances. Students must complete TWO formal paper assignments (distributed separately) attached to specifically required performances. For the other THREE events, chosen from a list of options, students must complete a less formal, open response to the event, addressing major impressions, questions, and/or connections to course content. The two formal papers will be worth 35 points each; the three open responses will be worth another 30 points (10 each). Paper assignments/guidelines will be distributed throughout the semester. Pay special attention to discounted prices!

REQUIRED PERFORMANCES: see handout

Conflicts must be submitted to the instructor by the week two in the semester.

ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCE OPTIONS: see handout

4. PARTICIPATION (50 Total Points)

As a seminar-style course, student engagement and participation is key. Throughout the course, students will take part in a variety of discussions, movement activities/assignments, writing responses to reading assignments, informal presentations, etc. Students will be graded on their overall level of engagement and participation, as well as how they demonstrate overall preparedness and investment in reading assignments. Students will NOT be assessed on dance ability!

GRADING

ESSAY #1	100 pts.	A+	485-500 pts.
ESSAY #2	100 pts.	A	470-484 pts.
PERFORMANCE PAPERS	100 pts.	A-	450-469 pts.
FINAL PAPER or PERFORMANCE	150 pts.	B+	435-449 pts.
<u>PARTICIPATION</u>	<u>50 pts.</u>	B	420-434 pts.
TOTAL	500 PTS	B-	400-419 pts.
		C+	385-399 pts.
		C	370-384 pts.
		C-	350-369 pts.
		D+	335-349 pts.
		D	320-334 pts.
		D-	300-319 pts.
		F	0-299 pts.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

See accompanying course schedule. Assignments due on the day they are listed.

NOTE: Performance paper due dates will be included as specific performance dates become available.

Week One

Reading:

Coates. "My President Was Black"

Viewing:

Childish Gambino. "This is America"

Week Two

Reading:

Thompson. *African Art in Motion*: "Chapter One: African Art and Motion"

Welsh. "Commonalties in African Dance"

Kirton Cayou. "The Origins of Modern Jazz Dance"

Osumare. "'An Aesthetic of the Cool' Revisited"

Viewing:

Vermont Dance Sampler (live performance)

Week Three

Reading:

Dixon Gottschild. "Up from Under: The Africanist Presence"

Dixon Gottschild. "First Premises of an Africanist Aesthetic"

Week Four

Reading:

Hazzard-Gordon. *Jookin'*: "Dancing Under the Lash" pp.3-62

Dixon Gottschild. *Black Dancing Body*, pp. 273-280 (Ring Shout)

Assignment Due:

Vermont Dance Sampler Paper

Week Five

Reading:

Winter. "Juba and American Minstrelsy"

Dixon Gottschild. *Black Dancing Body*, pp. 108-114 (Juba)

Lhamon. "Turning around Jim Crow"

Week Six

Reading:

Taylor and Austen. "Darkest America: How Nineteenth-Century Black Minstrelsy Made Blackface Black"

Dixon Gottschild. "Past Imperfect: Performance, Power, and Politics on the Minstrel Stage"

Viewing:

Lee. *Bamboozled* (film - first viewing)

Spectrum Dance Theater. *Rap on Race* (live performance)

Week Seven

Assignment Due:

UVM CDI *Kake Walk* at UVM Research Presentation

Assignment Due:

Rap On Race Paper

Week Eight

Assignments Due:

Essay #1
Research Project Proposal

Reading:

Banes. "Breaking"

Viewing:

Silver. *Style Wars* (film)

Week Nine

Reading:

Dixon Gottschild. *Black Dancing Body*, pp. 114-120 (James Brown)
Genné. "'Dancin' in the Street'"
Buckland. "Dance and Music Video"
LaBoskey. "Getting Off"
Dixon Gottschild. *Black Dancing Body*, pp. 165-174 (Butt)

Week Ten

Viewing:

LaChapelle. *Rize* (film)

Reading:

Osumare. "Global Breakdancing"

Week Eleven

Reading:

Osumare. "Introduction: Power Moves from the Hip-Hop Nation to the Hip-Hop Globe"

Assignments Due:

Research Project Professor Consultation #1

Week Twelve

Reading:

Osumare. "Phat Beats, Dope Rhymes, and Def Moves: The Africanist Aesthetic Meets the Hip-Hop Globe"

Viewing:

Sjöberg. *Shake the Dust*

Week Thirteen

Thanksgiving Break

Week Fourteen

Viewing:

Lee. *Bamboozled* (film - second viewing)

Reading:

Taylor and Austen. "Easy Duz It: How Black Minstrelsy Bum-Rushed Hip Hop"
Maurice. "From New Deal to No Deal: Blackface Minstrelsy, *Bamboozled*, and Reality Television"
Taylor and Austen. "New Millennium Minstrel Show: How Spike Lee and Tyler Perry Brought the Black Minstrelsy Debate to the Twenty-First Century"

Week Fifteen

Assignments Due:

Final Research Papers/Projects & Class Presentations

Finals Week

Assignments Due:

Essay #2