

Draft syllabus – Subject to change
HR 3012 Dancing Cultures: Art, Body, and Performance
Semester 1: AY 2026-2027

Course Code: HR 3012
Course Title: Dancing Cultures: Art, Body, and Performance
Meeting: Mon 9:30 am-12:20 pm
Pre-Requisites: Nil
No of Aus: 3
Contact Hours: 39 hours

Course Coordinator: Ziying Cui, PhD
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Office Location: HSS 6th floor Research Room & ADM Dance Studio
Office Hours: In-person and Zoom online appointments by email.

Course Aims

In *Dancing Cultures*, we seek to examine how dance practice forms an important expression of our cultural landscape and, in return, how dance maintains, negotiates, and challenges the social, political, historical, and economic frameworks through which it exists.

We approach this course from the perspective that all forms of dance are worthy of academic inquiry. In this course, you will be introduced to the concept of ‘culture’ and exposed to a broad range of dance practices in different cultures across concert, traditional, and popular styles by the instructor and guest artists. Through both studio and lecture learning, you will develop cultural perspectives that can be employed as a lens through which to examine dance.

You will also learn how to engage with scholarship on a variety of dance cultures, and practice skills in a range of research methods developed within cultural studies, such as screen media analysis, interviewing techniques, and ethnographic fieldwork. From this, you will design your own research project that asks you to examine a dance practice of your choice, and will culminate in a research essay that builds on some of the earlier written assignments.

Intended Learning Outcomes

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

1. Understand the concept of ‘culture’ and apply this to a range of dance practices.
2. Demonstrate how dancing bodies are shaped by and responsive to social, political, historical, and economic contexts.
3. Develop critical reading skills through engaging with scholarly publications that examine dance as a cultural practice.
4. Demonstrate analytical essay writing skills through designing a research project on a selected dance culture.

Course Content

Students will learn how to engage with scholarship on a variety of dance cultures, and practice skills in a range of research methods developed within cultural studies, such as screen media analysis, interviewing techniques, and ethnographic fieldwork. From this, students will design their own research project that asks them to examine a dance practice of their choice, and will culminate in a research essay that builds on some of the earlier written assignments.

Weekly Schedule of Learning Activities

Week/Session	Topics/Themes	ILO	Readings	Delivery Mode	Activities
Module 1 Introduction: Dance, Culture, and Embodied Knowledge					
1	Course introduction; What is culture? Cultural studies and dance cultures	1, 3	Desmond (1997)	In-person	Introduction, class discussion, movement autobiography
2	Description versus interpretation; body, action, space, time, rhythm, energy, and relationships	1, 2, 3	Oh, Chuyun (2022) Dodds, S. (2011)	In-person	Mini-lecture, instructor-led movement literacy lab, library source tutorial, locating sources practice, and class discussion
3	Culturally coded technique; how movement is transmitted; who defines “correct” dancing; authenticity and appropriation	1, 2	Blanco Borelli, M (2014) Monroe, Raquel. (2011)	In-person	Mini-lecture, comparative learning lab, class discussion, and video watch/analysis
Module 2 Dancing Difference: Identity, Power and Circulation					
4	Gendered movement conventions; femininity and masculinity; spectatorship; leadership, following, intimacy, and consen	2, 3, 4	Desmond, Jane. (1999) Ovalle, Priscilla Peña (2011)	In-person	Guest workshop 1: social or partner dance, watch/analysis, class discussion

5	Dance as national representation; minority identity; heritage-making; “traditional” versus contemporary performance; possible cases from Chinese, Malay, Indian, or Southeast Asian dance	2, 3, 4	Monteiro, C. (2019) McMains, Juliet. (2018)	In-person	Instructor-led workshop: Chinese classical and ethnic dances, watch/analysis, class discussion
6	Hip-hop and street-dance histories; tourist performance; cultural ownership; professional and unpaid dance labor; access to training and performance spaces	2, 3, 4	Chang, Tingting (2020) Johnson, I. K. (2018)	In-person	Guest workshop 2: hip-pop/street dance.
7	K-pop cover dance, fandom, migration, cultural translation, hybridity, and debates around copying and authenticity	2, 3, 4	George-Graves, N. (2009) Khedar, A. (2014)	In-person	Instructor-led workshop, mini-lecture, video watch/analysis, class discussion
Module 3 Entering the Field: Ethnography, Interview, and Interpretation					
8	Ethnography and Interview Methods (In-class practice)	2, 3, 4	McGarry K. and L. Mannik (2017) Sklar, Deidre (1991)	In-person	Mini-lecture, video watch/analysis, class discussion
9	Practice Interviews and Developing Ethnographic notes (Outside of class practice)	2, 3, 4		In-person (outside of class)	Practice interviews
10	Fieldwork of Dance on Screen	2, 3, 4, 5	Broomfield, Mark (2018) Rose, Victoria, Simon Barrick, and	In-person	Mini-lecture, video watch/analysis, class discussion

			William Bridel (2020)		
11	Identifying Research themes and Essay Preparation	2, 4, 5	Vivanco, Luis A. (2017)	In-person	Intro to popular dance styles and practice
12	Individual tutorials	2, 3, 4	No reading	In-person	Individual meeting
13	Presentation day	4, 5	No reading	In-person	Presentation

Assessment Overview

No.	Component	Weightage	Team /Individual	Rubrics
1	Class participation	10%	Individual	Holistic
2	Article summary	15%	Individual	Holistic
3	Participant interview and fieldwork description	30%	Individual	Analytic [Rubric 1*]
4	10-mins presentation	15%	Team	Analytic [Rubric 2*]
5	Final essay	30%	Individual	Analytic [Rubric 3*]

Assessment Description

1. Class Participation, Weighing 10% ILO 1 [Continuous Assessment]

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, activities, and assignments, attend all classes punctually, and complete all scheduled assignments by due dates. Students are expected to take responsibility for following up with assignments and course-related announcements. Students are expected to participate in all project critiques, class discussions, and activities.

Full participation includes thoughtful contributions to small and large group discussions, attentive listening to others, being active in movement experiences, and responding promptly to e-mails and other correspondence. Everyone should be prepared to fully participate in class discussions. One-word questions or comments are not sufficient and will not receive any credit. Points for class participation may be adjusted at the instructor's discretion based on in-class engagement of the student throughout the semester.

2. Article Summary, Weighing 15%.

You need to select either a scholarly article (from a peer-reviewed journal) or a book chapter (from an academic publication) about your selected dance style. You will need to contextualize the author and summarize the evidence and main arguments of the article.

3. Participant Interview and Fieldwork Description, Weighing 30%.

Drawing on the same dance topic that will be the focus of your final essay, invite a willing person to be interviewed who is either a participant or spectator of the chosen dance example. You will need to prepare 5-8 interview questions related to your dance topic and the person's experiences of engaging with the dance. We will cover how to prepare the questions in class. You will then need to conduct the interview using a recording device, which can easily be done on a smartphone.

4. 10-Mins Presentation, Weighing 15%

Share your research findings with your peers, you will present a brief PPT on the last day of class. You will be asked to deliver a contextualized oral presentation, which includes specific details (e.g., setting, participants, movement, interactions, atmosphere) and uses selected quotes/insights to support key points, demonstrates strong critical engagement by identifying meaningful patterns, tensions, contradictions, or themes, and explaining why they matter for the dance topic, and connects evidence to course concepts (e.g., embodiment, community, identity, spectatorship, social function of dance).

5. Final Essay, Weighing 30%.

You will incorporate some of the earlier draft writing that you developed to produce a final essay on the dance topic that you have focused on throughout the course. For the essay, although you have already selected the dance genre, you need to think about the main argument or focus that you might want to explore in the essay. We will discuss how to best do this in class, and I will have brief tutorials with each student to help brainstorm possible arguments. Students will be asked to submit the final essay focus before commencing writing.