

**Marymount Manhattan College**  
**DANCE COMPOSITION 1**  
DANC 351  
Spring 2013  
Tuesday and Thursday  
Section 1/10:00AM-11: 30AM

Professors: JoAnna Mendl Shaw & Allen Fogelsanger  
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Mendl Shaw's Office Hours: by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Composition 1 is required for all dance BA and BFA candidates. This course will introduce students to the fundamental elements of dance composition. We will begin with the moving body, framing movement making as a process of defining highly specified physical tasks. We will explore multiple approaches to generating movement material alternating between sensory, experiential exploration and intellectual sourcing of ideas. We will explore basic structural elements of how movement ideas are arranged and shaped into expressive, coherent movement statements. Looking beyond the dance studio – referencing visual art, written text, politics and podcasts, music, sound – we will constantly place our investigations into larger the contexts of human behavior. We will treat set choreography and improvisation, as choreographic companions that exist on a continuum and to that end will work on decision-making skills in the context of movement logging and choreographic scoring. Classes will be structured around in-class composition and improvisation exercises, discussion and analysis of choreographic homework assignments, readings and viewing seminal works of art on video or in live performance.

The course will The goal of the class is to introduce students to varied methods for deep engagement with movement creation, support the development of a personal artistic voice, both as a creator and performer, and provide a deeper understanding of personal choices within the broader context of art making.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:**

Students will develop a varied set of choreographic skills. They will learn to work inside a creative process both intuitively and intellectually and move with confidence between thinking and sensing. They will practice thinking and talking about their work and work with language to help them discuss articulately their choices. Most importantly they will learn to be accountable for their choices.

**WHAT TO EXPECT IN CLASS:** Class meets twice a week. Each class will begin with an activity that prepares us to explore the compositional assignment of the day and/or the homework assignment. Some classes will begin with a guided improvisation. Other classes will begin with a podcast, a writing or discussion of a performance. Certain classes will focus more on in-class mini studies while other classes will focus more on analyzing and verbalizing the choices made in prepared studies. We will practice giving and receiving feedback and emphasis will be placed on articulating in detail what we see. We will also view works of art live or on video to supplement our own investigations. There will be regular handouts to read. Students will keep a Choreographers Journal with class notes and ongoing self-reflections. Your final project will culminate in a group showing, open to the department, and a 300-word program note to accompany your work.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Apply tools from a compositional tool belt in service of manipulating movement material
- Articulate what is occurring in a dance and be able to analyze what choices a choreographer made and to what (subjective) effect.
- Compare early modern dance's compositional development with contemporary practices
- Analyze and compare forms and/or conventions utilized within works of art that they encounter.
- Arrange (choreograph) a short dance to be presented in the dance composition showing at the end of the term.

**EVALUATION:**

Completion of all compositional assignments and your ability to apply the tools we are studying to those assignments will make up 30% of your grade. Completion of all other related homework assignments (readings, journal entries and attending performances), the quality of your participation and attendance will determine your final grade. That will be evaluated through the following criteria: willingness to take risks, positive engagement with the material, your ability to work as a team creating an atmosphere of trust, and completion of written assignments.

30% Completion of all compositional studies

25% In-class participation (physical work, and oral response to readings)

20% Written assignments

25% Attendance

**CLOTHING:**

Wear comfortable clothes that keep your body warm and relaxed. No dangling jewelry.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** You are allowed 1 excused absence if you call the dance department before 10AM on the day of class with a reasonable explanation. A half letter grade per absence will be deducted from your grade for every absence beyond that one. Absences due to injury or illness or other uncontrollable circumstances, can be made up with additional work if you approach me as soon as an issue arises, and the quality of your participation has been high up until that moment. Otherwise, after the fourth missed class you will fail attendance and after the sixth absence you will fail the course.

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

Students with disabilities (learning, physical or psychological) who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for a course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services or enrolled in the Academic Access Program. With students' permission, faculty members are notified each semester by CONFIDENTIAL email that a student with documented disabilities is in their class and is eligible for accommodations.

If a student has questions regarding the Office of Disability Services or accommodations, please contact Diana Nash, Director of Academic Access & Disability Services, Room 706i, 7<sup>th</sup> floor Main Building, [dnash@mmm.edu](mailto:dnash@mmm.edu) or 212-774-0724.

**MATERIALS:**

The course will contain excerpts from books and articles as well as audio/visual material. These will be given to you as handouts.

**Performances to see live:**

TBD