We will discover the nature of our particular genius when we stop trying to conform to our own or to other peoples’ models, learn to be ourselves, and allow our natural channel to open.
- Shakti Gawain

Something will shine through the body if you give it a chance.
- Suzanne Vega

Course Catalog Description:

This course is an introduction into improvisation and the elements of dance composition. Students develop creative invention, spontaneity, confidence in self-expression, concentration, and movement range and possibilities.

Course Overview and Content:

The first half of this course creatively investigates improvisation. We will “test” improvisation as a practice in self-expression, social and communal engagement, choreographic immediacy, and performance presence. This class is a journey in which all participants, including myself, will find a greater sense of one’s inimitability and vitality within many contexts. The distinctiveness within all of us will be encouraged to radiate and permeate our surroundings as we free ourselves from assumptions, challenging the way we view/experience dance itself.

Offered in a laboratory environment where a sense of community is fostered, class will serve as a house for creative experimentalism, artistic risk-taking, and research based assignments that provide a historical framework for current improvisational practices. Projects will include, but are not limited to: solo and group improvisations/scores, creating and performing short-studies, and self-reflections in the form of journal-making and group discussions.

Goals and Objectives:

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

• Expand one’s self-awareness, presence, and artistic voice.

• Gain familiarity with improvisation as a practice in self-expression, a tool for choreography, a principle for performance, and as a way of deepening one’s self/societal knowledge.

• Broaden one’s perceptions of comfort, familiarity, internal timing, and directed intention.
• Find individual and group connectedness through the development of honesty, personal risk-taking, and vulnerability.

• Discuss thoughts, beliefs, and creative findings with greater comfort and confidence.

• Collaborate with space/location, sound, and one’s peers.

Requirements and Grading Criteria:

Class Participation and Attendance (40% of grade):

Your effort and willingness to fully participate (physically, verbally, creatively, and communally) in class is vital. It is your responsibility to deeply invest in each process, and to approach this with respect for one’s self, fellow classmates, and the instructor. Along with physicalizing movement, we will be putting our thoughts, beliefs, and findings into the space for discussion. Come to class with a readiness to engage and contribute, committing to a continued investment in the artistic journey of one’s self and of all participants. You will get out of class what you invest into it.

Most of the course work is done in class, therefore, attendance is imperative. If you are more than 10 minutes late to class, you are not permitted to dance. In this case, you may opt to observe. School of Dance policy considers 2 observations (with notes) as 1 absence.

Lateness and leaving early are considered partial absences. Please inform me if you need to leave class early. Without prior communication, and permission, you will receive one absence automatically. School of Dance policy allows for 2 absences over the entire semester. If you have more than 2 absences, your grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade per absence (i.e. from A to A-) if unexcused. Make-up classes are not offered for this course.

No cell phone use during class. Please turn cell phones off before class begins. Infringement of this policy will count as an absence.

Dance attire:
Please wear dance attire that allows the movement and body to be seen. Knee pads are suggested for this class.

Contact Disclaimer:
In order to better understand one’s body and its movement potential, I frequently offer feedback and/or guidance through touch. Physical contact with fellow classmates will also be an essential learning device in our movement studies. If you are uncomfortable in any way or have any injuries I should be made aware of, don’t hesitate to discuss this with me before or after class. I am also available via email or by appointment.

Inspiration Journal (10% of grade):

You are required to keep a journal during the first half of this course. Journal entries will be specific to our class investigations and should reflect on your creative findings, meanderings, and illuminations. This self-made book may consist of, but is not limited to, found objects, collages, drawings, writing, quotes, and photos. Please see the Journal Handout for further information/requirements regarding journal entries.
Although your entries are personal in nature, I will be collecting journals on our last day of class. Your entries will not be graded. You will receive full credit if entries are complete. At a minimum there should be 2 entries per week. Journals are due in their entirety by October 4th, in class. Journals will not be accepted after this time.

Short Studies (20% of grade):

Two short studies worth 10% each:

1. Individual Exploration – Tapping the Source
2. Group Improvisation – Five Elements

Final Project (20% of grade):

This student-led and student-designed improvisational score, will be a culmination of discoveries made throughout our seven weeks together. From fascinations, intrigues and even questions, students will collaborate in small groups, creating a 3-5 min score that will be performed by students other than the creators. The final project is open in nature, not limited to movement alone, and it can occur in various spaces/settings throughout the MCD. Site-specific locations outside of Rm. 240 must be approved prior to showing. The origination of the created score can be sourced from journal entries, class material, and group discussions. Students should be prepared to discuss specific elements of their score and its structure, the collaborative process, and their reactions after viewing their score performed.

Final Reflection (10% of grade):

A reflective essay: 2-3 pages in length, Times font, double spaced, 12pt. font. Discuss your process during the creation and performance of your final project. Questions to consider: What challenges did you face during this process? Have you come to any new understandings or have you been changed in anyway? What assignments or studies from class most aided or inspired you? Why? How did you respond when viewing your score performed? How did you negotiate collaboration? Due: October 20th by 5pm, electronic copy. Email reflection to: molly.heller@utah.edu

Grading Criteria:
Both instructors for this course will collectively determine your grade.

A Consistently excellent quality of work and superior effort, far exceeding course requirements. Full, consistent investment in one’s artistic journey with an in-depth demonstration and understanding of the process.
B Good, well done, distinctly above average work and effort and exceeding course requirements.
C Average, moderately well done in work and effort; successfully completing the requirements of the course.
D Below average, insufficient effort and below average quality of work. A lack of understanding, investment, and investigation into the creative process will result in a substandard grade (D+ or lower).
E Not an acceptable level of work and effort to receive credit for accomplishment.
**Suggested Reading Material:**


There is no required reading material for this course. However, I do encourage you to read! Read about art, life and politics. Read comic books or graphic novels. Read magazines or philosophy. Read for pleasure. Read to find inspiration. Reading is food for the creative soul, and it will further your art making. Need further reading suggestions? Talk to me.

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**UNIVERSITY POLICIES:**

**POLICY 6-100:** Students are expected to take courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation. Accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted. The University recognizes that students’ sincerely-held core beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors. The University assumes no obligation to ensure that all students are able to complete any major. It is the student’s obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the students sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a content accommodation from the instructor. Though the University provides, through this policy, a process by which a student may make such a request, the policy does not oblig the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing, and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department Chair or, in the case of a single-department college, to the office of the Dean. The student’s request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student’s beliefs.

**FACULTY AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code (Policy 6-400), spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations (Policy 6-316), it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

Faculty...must strive in the classroom to maintain a climate conducive to thinking and learning. (6-316)

Defining Plagiarism: Plagiarism means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one’s own, without attribution, any other individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression. (Policy 6-400, Student Code)

**ADA STATEMENT:**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given
to the Center for Disability Services, 12 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in the course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT:**
All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, and I will do so, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

**CENTER FOR WELLNESS & UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER:**
Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness; www.wellness.utah.edu; 801-581-7776; and the University Counseling Center: http://counselingcenter.utah.edu, 801-581-6826.

**ADDRESSING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:**
Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677 (COPS).

**THE WRITING CENTER:**
If writing is difficult for you, if you are new to college and don’t yet feel quite able to meet college writing expectations, or if you simply would like to improve your writing, I encourage you to visit the Writing Center: www.writingcenter.utah.edu. 587-9122.

**SYLLABUS CHANGE NOTICE:** This syllabus is a working document and is subject to change based on the needs of the class and instructors. Students will be informed of all changes made to the syllabus.

**UNIVERSITY REGISTRATION INFORMATION:**
Classes begin: Monday, August 21
Last day to add classes without permission code: Friday, August 25
Last day to drop (delete) classes: Friday, September 1
Tuition payment due: Friday, September 1
Last day to withdraw from term length classes: Friday, October 20
Deadline for reduction of credit to Dean’s office: Thursday, November 30
Last day to reverse CR/NC option: Friday, December 1
Classes end: Thursday, December 7
Final exam period: December 11-15

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