

COMBO CLASS | an experiment, facilitated by Laila J. Franklin

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Part dance class, part study group, *COMBO CLASS* is a two-hour weekly practice aimed at bringing together contemporary and experimental movement practitioners to explore theory and scholarship integrated with physical practice in a communal and noninstitutional space. This series extends an invitation to collectively find ways to imaginatively engage theory and build camaraderie through continued, consistent, shared practice and study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The primary theoretical framework of this series is Black Feminist Theory. Within this framework, we acknowledge the effects (and affects) of colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism, fascism, and race, gender, and sex-based inequity as real and interlocking systems of oppression and power. A Black Feminist Theory framework asks us to engage in an intersectional approach, considering the ways that our multiple identities inform the ways we engage with the world around us, and the way the world engages back. This includes systems of power, aesthetic preferences, and interpersonal relationships. Through this lens, we are challenged to think creatively, inclusively, and equitably about the ways we engage with one another, creating space to challenge ourselves to imagine beyond (and demand better) than the current systems of power and authority that we have come to know as a culture and society: ***We are not building a utopia, but rather allowing the past inform a new possible future.***

SUGGESTED FRAMING MATERIAL

Patricia Hill Collins, The Politics of Black Feminist Thought, 19 Pages

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color, 59 Pages

SERIES ENGAGEMENT

With the theoretical framework in mind, the syllabus for this series is a living document. While these materials have been curated with the goals of the series in mind, there is room to add/subtract/shift as the needs and desires of the group present themselves. My ask for participants is to engage with all the scheduled material before attending class. Class time will be used to discuss them. Each reading will have its length listed next to it. In the event that you do not complete the reading (life happens), a brief synopsis will be shared at the start of each class. I want to meet you where you are! Each module will list suggested readings which may relate to the content of the module. Feel empowered to read them, feel empowered to skip them, feel empowered to add them to your library for later! The goal is to build movement frameworks that align closely with the themes and content of the reading that particular week. With this in mind, we will work heavily with improvisation to begin. Some material will be planned, other material will be emergent. ***I encourage participants to prepare for duration, exploration, and delightful discomfort.***

Please bring paper and a writing utensil. Please bring comfy clothes. Please bring your curiosity.

SERIES SCHEDULE

MODULE I. ECHOLOCATING

positioning the practice

This module seeks to collaboratively outline a working framework for engagement: We will imagine how we wish to activate text in/with our bodies, address/introduce strategies for text interpretation, and build guidelines and best practices for safety and egalitarianism in our conversations and discussions. These readings are meant to highlight the ways that theory can show up beyond the traditional classroom or even traditional performance settings, positing possibilities for deeper, more integrated engagement in our everyday movement practices and lives.

October 12

READ: bell hooks, *Theory as a Liberatory Practice*, 12 pages

Sally Banes, *Power and the Dancing Body*, 7 pages

October 19: NO CLASS

October 26

READ: Jack Halberstam, *Low Theory*, 25 pages

SUGGESTED MODULE MATERIAL

READ: Robin Nelson, *Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge*, 13 pages

SanSan Kwan, *When Is Contemporary Dance?*, 16 pages

MODULE II. THE GAZE

unpacking (in)visibility in modern/postmodern/contemporary dance

This module explores (in)visibility and belonging, bringing our attention to longstanding occurrences of othering and outright xenophobia in modern/postmodern/contemporary dance spaces and the world at large. Through a survey of scholarly research, autoethnography, conversations, and performance, these materials invite us to think critically about how we might better conscientiously engage with diversity of voice/practice/body/personhood in our movement *and* witnessing practices.

November 2

READ: Miguel Gutierrez, *Does Abstraction Belong to White People*, 9 pages

Uri McMillan, *Introduction: Performing Objects*, 21 pages

November 9: NO CLASS

November 16

READ: Thomas F. DeFrantz, *I Am Black: (you have to be willing to not know)*, 14 pages

Jasmine E. Johnson, *Solange and Her Dance*, 3 pages

Christopher Rasheem McMillan, *What White Women Gave Me: Dance, Kinship, and a Queer's Paranoia*, 7 pages

LISTEN: The Dance Union Podcast, [Disability In Dance](#), 1 hour 5 min

SUGGESTED MODULE MATERIAL

READ: Paul Scholieri, *An Interesting Experiment in Eugenics*, 77 pages

José Esteban Muñoz, *Performing Disidentifications*, 34 pages

WATCH: [Miguel Gutierrez, This Bridge Called My Ass \(Context Video\) \(2019\)](#), 13 min

[Ishmael Houston Jones and Fred Holland, Untitled Duet or Oo-Ga-La \(1984\)](#), 15 min

[Solange Knowles, When I Get Home \(2019\)](#), 41 min

MODULE III. BEING, IN MOTION

engagement with bodies, engagement with people

The module is interested in the concept of movement as capital, breaking down the relationship between the facilitator/choreographer and participants/dancers, and the transactional nature that can often undergird those interactions. We will explore facets of collaboration and discuss the limitations of contemporary “authorship” models, parsing the challenges of collaborative sourcing and making. We will discuss pervasive ideas of dancers as “bodies” or “objects” vs as people, and explore potential models for more ethical and egalitarian collaboration, functionally and materially.

November 23

READ: Jose L. Reynoso, *Democracy's Body, Neoliberalism's Body: The Ambivalent Search for Egalitarianism Within the Contemporary Post/Modern Dance Tradition*, 20 pages

LISTEN: Dance Union Podcast, [Dancers DO Deserve Better](#), 1 hour 14 min

November 30: NO CLASS

December 7

READ: Daisuke Muto, *Choreography as Meshwork: The Production of Motion and the Vernacular*, 20 pages

SUGGESTED MODULE MATERIAL

READ: Ann Cooper Albright, *Dancing Bodies and the Stories They Tell*, 31 pages

MODULE IV. NEW POSSIBLE FUTURES

where do we go from here

This module seeks to create space for dreaming and imagining for the future of modern/postmodern/contemporary/postcontemporary (?) dance practices. This material invites us to consider tools for carving out spaces of liberation, presently and into our collective futures.

December 14

READ: Alexis Pauline Gumbs, M. E. O'Brien, Tracy Simon, *Imagining Liberatory Futures*, 12 pages

LISTEN: adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy Interview with The Stoa*, 42 min

SUGGESTED MODULE MATERIAL

READ: Christopher-Rasheem McMillan, *Be still and know: Authentic Movement, witness and embodied testimony*, 19 pages

LISTEN: *Are You For Sale Podcast*, [Beg, Borrow, and Steal \(Back\)](#), 1 hour 14 min