

Contemporary Dance Studio

ARTS 3006 (3 credits)

Czech Republic: Studio Arts - Creative Writing, Contemporary Dance, and Photography

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This class is devoted to studio practice in contemporary dance techniques with an emphasis on contact improvisation, understanding the mind, body and voice for individual and group performance work, and working with sound and light. Students take part in intensive studio sessions, attend contemporary dance and alternative theater performances, keep a fieldwork journal and present their work at a performance in a public venue. They also meet with choreographers, dancers and production specialists to gain insights into the local performance scene and the different ways in which dancers engage or contribute to current social justice and political discourse.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the intensive course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an informed knowledge of the contemporary Czech dance scene;
- Analyze the ways in which contemporary dancers reflect and engage current Czech social and political debates;
- Develop and present a performance for a public venue.

Instructional Methods

The teaching approach of the lecturers is steeped in improvisation, individual and group studio work as well as work with the physical environment of the city itself through observation, documentation and processing. Students are required to keep journals documenting their explorations of place, creative process, and performances or other events attended. The experiential approach allows students to experiment and create in the context of a holistic, immersive and intensive learning experience requiring observation and reflection in the field, independent and group creative work, and presentation and analysis.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English

Required texts: This is a short and intensive studio course with limited readings. Select readings from the books below and web links to performance and artists web sites will be provided.

- Bremser, Martha and Lorna Sanders (Eds.) (2010) with an introduction by Deborah Jowitt. *Fifty Contemporary Choreographers* (2nd edition).
- Návrantová, Jana. (2011) Czech Dance. In, Martina Černa, Vladimír Mikulka, Pavel Štorek (eds) *Czech Theater Guide*. Published by the Institute of Arts & Theater.
- Students are encouraged to review the following websites in advance of arrival:
 - Studio Alta: <https://www.altart.cz/?lang=en>
 - Tanec Praha, Czech Dance Platform <https://tanecpraha.cz/en>
 - Theater Ponec: <https://divadloponec.cz/en>
 - Korespondance Festival. <https://www.korespondance.cz/>

Required Technology: None.

Assessment: The final grades are based upon Fieldwork Journal, Final performance and reflection, timeliness and active participation.

Course Schedule:

Module 1: Orientation & Introduction to contemporary Czech arts & culture (4 days) The orientation & introduction module is devoted to an overview of the contemporary Czech arts and culture today including the visual, literary and performing arts and the ways in which current public discourse in politics and social justice are mirrored and engaged through the arts. A lecture and analysis on contemporary Czech dance and performance venues provides students a survey of select dance collectives, choreographers and alternative dance venues that they will visit.

Module 2: (12 days)

This module comprises daily studio work and journaling and fieldwork experiences in which students are asked to take part in observation exercises, attending at least 5 dance performances and meeting personally with performing artists, producers and other specialists. The module will also include excursion to a regional city such as Brno to visit contemporary dance spaces.

Module 3: (2 days)

Students finalize a work in progress for performance, perform their work in a public venue and take part in an open critique about the process and results and present their journals.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments

Reflective Papers in preparation for intensive studio work (50%)

Five reflective working papers of 2-3 pages each with sketches or other documentation based upon prompts for observing places, people, movement, everyday life that will be presented, discussed and utilized for conceptual movement work in the dance studio.

Field Journal (30%)

A field journal observing, documenting and analyzing at minimum five dance performances and other related cultural events including notes on the formal, conceptual, technical and social or political aspects of the events.

Final Performance (20%)

Preparation of a final group performance based upon the material developed during the studio sessions and reflecting a refinement of the formal and conceptual lessons.

Assessment:

Reflective papers	50%
Field Journal	30%
Final Performance	20%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64%	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will

always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.

- **Personal Technology Use:** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Content Considerations:** Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Classroom recording policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.