DANCE MAJOR

MAJOR DESCRIPTION

The Dance Department at Wesleyan is a contemporary program with a global perspective. The program embraces classical forms from Bharata Natyam, Ghanaian, ballet, Javanese, and vernacular forms of jazz, hip hop, and Eastern European social dances, to experimental practices that fuse tradition and experimentation into new, contemporary forms.

Our mission is to cultivate artistry. The curriculum centers on the creative act – imagining, making, and doing. Our program is interdisciplinary, embodied, collaborative, and physically and intellectually rigorous; it aims to foster personal and social transformation.

The curriculum, faculty research, and pedagogy all center on the relationships between theory and practice, embodied learning, and the potential dance-making has to be a catalyst for social change. Within that rigorous context, students encounter a diversity of approaches to making, practicing, and analyzing dance in an intimate learning atmosphere.

The emphasis of the major is on creating original scholarship, be it choreographic or written, that views dance within a specific cultural context, interrogates cultural assumptions, and is informed by a critical and reflective perspective.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

• Successful completion of two gateway courses.
• An admissions interview with the Prospective Major Advisor, Katja Kolcio.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

(revised Spring 2019): Total Credits: 10.5 (Project) or 11.5 (Thesis)

Two Gateway Courses:

One Dance Technique
One Introductory Survey Course: 1 Credit

Options include:

• FYS Dancing Bodies DANC103
• FYS Global Contemporary Dance DANC104F1
• Introduction to Dance: Moving Practices for Artmaking and Creative Research DANC211
• Composition Across the Arts DANC212

Two Credits in Dance Composition: Choreography Workshop

• Dance Composition: Choreography Workshop DANC250 (to be taken freshman, sophomore, or junior years)

Dance Tech Lab DANC105 .5 Credit
Dance Techniques (four additional classes) 2 Credits

total 5 courses @ .5 credits each

Two Advanced Dance Performance Practice .5 or .75 Credit
2 classes @ .25 or .5 credits each

Two Credits in Advanced Research in Dance 2 Credits

At least one of these two credits must be a hybrid methodology course with substantial written component.

• Making Dances 1 – Solo Work DANC249
• Dance Composition: Choreography Workshop DANC250
• Site Specific Choreography DANC371
• Dance History DANC375
• The Artist in the Community: Civic Engagement and Art Making DANC376

Perspectives in Dance DANC377 including:

• Perspectives in Dance: Research Methods
• Perspectives in Dance: Auto-Ethnography
• Perspectives in Dance: Bollywood: An Ethnography of Dance and Film
• Perspectives in Dance: Dancing the African Diaspora
• Perspectives in Dance: Bodies and Earth
• Perspectives in Dance: Queering the Dance
• Dance as Activism DANC379

One Elective 1 Credit

• Dancing Bodies DANC103
• Delicious Movements DANC244
• Anatomy and Kinesiology DANC301
• Dance Teaching Workshop DANC341
• Improvisational Forms DANC354
• Space Design for Performance DANC359
• Repertory and Performance DANC378
• Dance and Technology DANC380

Any Advanced Research course can be counted as an elective after the 2-credit research requirement is met.

Senior Research: Either Project or Thesis 1 or 2 Credits

Project – One 1-credit tutorial (spring or fall semester)
Thesis – Two 1-credit tutorials (fall and spring semesters)

Total Credits: 10.5 (Project) or 11.5 (Thesis)

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

The major is designed to provide broad and deep exposure to the discipline of dance as a critical, embodied, reflexive, and socially engaged research method. The department conceives of dance performance broadly, embracing traditionally staged performances and site-based works as well as mediated and interdisciplinary performative modes. Students take courses in choreography, improvisation, pedagogy, research methods, dance ethnography, history, and dance techniques as well as unique interdisciplinary courses that integrate varied modes of learning. The curriculum focuses on providing students with the skills to develop new knowledge and produce original research expressed through performance, writing, and their vital intertwining into new hybrid forms.
1. Majors will develop keen intercultural competence. One of the fundamental tenets of the major is that the analysis of dance through practice and observation is central to the study of cultures and is a vital aspect of exploration in cross-cultural inquiry. Students should develop a proficiency in the understanding of dance in its cultural manifestations, leading them beyond knowledge of a culture or an appreciation of diversity to an understanding and celebration of difference.

2. Majors will develop an awareness of the ways in which dance structures and is structured by culture. This includes a thoughtful understanding of the problematics of spectatorship and the role of the artist in society; as well as issues of embodiment, difference, and performativity.

3. Majors will develop an understanding of the basic principles of dance-making through creative process work including choreography, improvisation, and public enactments. They will acquire the ability to develop an idea or research question through the elements of dance performance such as: the skillful exploration and application of movement vocabulary; choreographic form; and the consideration of framing devices. They will develop the ability to structure original ideas and to create powerful original work.

4. Majors will develop an intercultural understanding of the elements of physical expression and performance artistry and will attain and/or maintain intermediate (or above) technical proficiency, based on sound kinesiological principles. They will develop these skills in at least two of the following techniques: modern/contemporary, Bharata Natyam, West African, ballet, black vernacular forms/hip hop, and South East Asian dance forms (when available).

5. Majors will develop strong reflective and critical awareness of the research methodologies available in dance studies articulated in written, choreographic, and performative forms.

6. Majors will develop the ability to work collaboratively to complete complex tasks through engagement with all elements of performance production, including technical theater, scenographic design, and publicity.

HONORS

Dance majors who wish to be candidates for departmental honors must complete senior research in the form of a thesis. Projects are not eligible for the award of honors. The student’s proposed research design will be revised and finalized in consultation with the student’s prospective tutor and should reflect the special interests and talents of the individual student. The award of honors or high honors is based on the scope and excellence of the thesis and on the student’s creative work.

To receive the award of honors, a thesis must follow these guidelines:

- The honors thesis typically consists of approximately 20 minutes of group choreography (usually two 10-minute dances) and an 80- to 100-page research paper situating the choreography within an aesthetic and historical context.
- It must involve enough work to warrant two credits.

Each honors candidate is required to make a commitment to candidacy in advance. The student must file a written statement of his or her intention to stand for departmental honors with both the department and the Honors College. The department will nominate candidates for departmental honors to the Honors College. Nominations will occur only if it appears reasonably certain that the candidate’s work will be completed on time and in the desired form. The department in cooperation with the Honors College will arrange suitable mid-April deadlines for performances and the submission of theses.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

All majors complete a capstone experience, either a one-semester senior project or a two-semester senior thesis.