

## Cultural and Historical Aspects of Dance Theatre (A005286)

**Course size** *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

**Credits 5.0** **Study time 150 h**

**Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027**

null

**Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027**

Van Assche, Annelies

LW17

lecturer-in-charge

D'hollander, Elias

LW17

co-lecturer

**Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027**

null

**crdts**

**offering**

**Teaching languages**

English, Dutch

**Keywords**

Western dance theatre, dance history, archiving dance, contemporary dance, dance analysis, re-enactment and canonization of dance, dance as (im)material heritage

**Position of the course**

This advanced course helps students to acquire an insight into the genesis and developments of Western dance theatre with due notice of the specific cultural-historical context.

Students acquire elementary skills in analyzing the available sources concerning dance theatre in Europe and develop a critical perspective on particular patriarchal, colonial, and Eurocentric discourses in West-European dance theatre.

This course is taught in English. Exchange students may take up this course unit. Dutch-speaking students may conduct the examination and assignment in their mother tongue.

**Contents**

This introductory yet advanced course explores dance history from a cultural-historical perspective, with a particular emphasis on contemporary dance performances and the notion of dance as labor. It introduces key developments in dance history relevant to the Western European context—especially Flanders—while adopting a pedagogical approach that critically questions, rather than reinforces, the traditional canon.

By focusing on contemporary "re-works" that engage with and challenge the Eurocentric canon, the course invites students to reconsider dance historiography through postcolonial, queer, feminist, and other critical lenses. Structured as a chronological overview, the course centers on professionalized theatrical dance, positioning it as a gateway into the study of dance history within this program. This emphasis is complemented by a focus on dance as an artistic profession, viewed through the prism of labor. Although practices such as ritual, social, vernacular, indigenous, and folk dances fall outside the course's primary scope, they are occasionally addressed through stage works that draw inspiration from these forms.

**Initial competences**

- To have successfully completed the course History of modern theatre or to have acquired the necessary skills by other means.
- To have knowledge of the field of European (late) nineteenth and twentieth-

century performing arts, the theatre makers and their manifestos, and their influence on the contemporary field of performing arts.

### Final competences

- 1 To have an insight into the genesis and developments of Western dance theatre with due notice of the specific cultural-historical context.
- 2 To have an elementary visual knowledge with regard to the history of dance theatre.
- 3 To have an understanding of the components of a dance theatre performance and to have built dance analytical skills
- 4 To reflect critically about philosophical and aesthetic issues concerning Western dance theatre.
- 5 To develop a critical perspective on particular patriarchal, colonial, and eurocentric discourses in modern West-European dance theatre.
- 6 Using archives and digital search environments and strategies to conduct historical dance research

### Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

### Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

### Teaching methods

Group work, Excursion, Lecture, Independent work

### Extra information on the teaching methods

- **lectures:** transfer of knowledge on the origins and development of Western dance theatre with reflective moments on performance fragments and theoretical texts from the scientific discipline of Dance Studies.
- **integration seminar:** students are given individual weekly reading and/or viewing assignments based on the philosophical and aesthetic concepts discussed in the lectures. This interactive learning situation familiarizes students with operationalizing theory using cases and formulating a theoretical point of view. Students are asked to reflect on the reading and/or viewing task during class with an opinion, a question, an association or a value judgment on the text and/or video.
- **independent work and excursions:** students are encouraged to broaden their individual viewing experience of dance theatre. Thanks to the partnerships with, among others, Arts Centre VierNulVier, students in the field of Stage and Media Art have a theatre pass. As part of their classes, students are encouraged to attend at least three dance performances. The exam will specifically probe to demonstrate the knowledge gained with a contemporary example not covered in class.
- **independent work and group work:** the students are given one specific archival assignment in groups. The results of this archive assignment are exhibited in the studio of Vandenhove - Centre for Art & Architecture. In this way, the students also have to reflect on the notion of dance as (im)material heritage and the exhibition practice concerning dance history. This archive assignment is also linked to a short individual writing assignment. This individual writing assignment is submitted together with the group work for evaluation.

### Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Van hofballet tot postmoderne-dans : de geschiedenis van het academische ballet en de moderne-dans

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: yes

Language : Dutch

Author : Luuk Utrecht

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : Yes

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Additional information: Although this book is very dated, it can be a useful guide in the absence of a better textbook for this subject, combined with the reader and slides. The book should definitely not be purchased, many second-hand

copies from previous years are still circulating and are also available in our library.

Type: Slides

Name: Slides made available on Ufora after class  
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty  
Optional: no  
Language : English

Type: Reader

Name: Reader with theoretical texts compiled by the lecturer through Ufora  
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty  
Optional: no  
Language : English  
Available on Ufora : Yes

### References

Several key works:

- Mantoan, Lindsey; Matthew Moore, and Angela Farr Schiller, eds. *Troubling Traditions: Canonicity, Theatre, and Performance in the US*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2022)
- *Rethinking Dance History*, ed. Geraldine Morris and Lorraine Nicholas (London: Routledge, 2018)
- Burt, Ramsay, *Ungoverning Dance: Contemporary European Theatre Dance and the Commons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- Randy Martin. 2014. "De-centered Social Kinesthetics." In *Knowledge LTD: Toward a social logic of the derivative*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 161-177.
- Lepecki, André. "The body as archive: Will to re-enact and the afterlives of dances." *Dance Research Journal* 42.2 (2010): 28-48.
- Mark Franko (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Reenactment*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

### Course content-related study coaching

Gradual preparation on the group assignment (archival research and exhibition) and the individual writing assignment during reflective moments in lectures and integration seminar.

Extra interim feedback is possible upon request and after appointment with Dr. Annelies Van Assche and/or Drs. Elias D'hollander.

### Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

### Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

### Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

### Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

### Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

### Extra information on the examination methods

- **Periodical (70%)**: paper (20%) and written exam (50%)
  - **Written assignment (20%)**: The archival assignment is linked to an individual writing assignment reflecting on the exhibition. Each group compiles their short papers into one long catalogue text for their exhibition. The individual contributions are submitted for evaluation.
  - **Written exam with open questions (50%)**: consisting of a knowledge question, insight questions and a question on the terminology used. The examination responds to the intended final competences.
- **Non-periodical (30%)**: permanent evaluation during seminars (10%) and group assignment (20%)
  - Non-periodical evaluation is an evaluation of the student's engagement and active participation during the seminars and other study-related activities,

which are specified in the didactic work forms. For the **integration seminars (10%)**, the engagement and participation of the students will be evaluated. The most important evaluation criteria are presence, engagement in the discussions and a critical research attitude during the guided group work/project.

- Students are given one specific **archival assignment in group (20%)**. The results of this archival research are exhibited in the atelier of Vandenhove - Centre for Art & Architecture. As such, the students are acquainted with a curatorial practice in relation to dance history.

The student must have finalized each of the evaluation forms in order to obtain a pass for the course unit.

#### **Calculation of the examination mark**

The periodical evaluation counts for 70%, the non-periodical evaluation counts for 30%.

The student must have finalized each of the evaluation forms in order to obtain a pass for the course unit.

#### **Facilities for Working Students**

- 1 Possible exemption from certain educational activities requiring student attendance, except for the work- and integration seminars, as the student's engagement and active participation is part of the evaluation. For these seminars, an alternative (individual) trajectory can be discussed.
  - 2 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year.
  - 3 Feedback can be given by email or during an appointment during office hours.
- For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy.