UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, Spring Quarter 2019
Dance 116: Advanced Improvisation
Improvisation Devised from Black Futuring Practices of the African Diaspora in the Americas

Times & Location: Tuesday / Thursday: 10am – 12PM – Room 214
Instructor: André M. Zachery
Office Hours: for appointment time - please organize via email or in person

Contact Information: renegadepg@gmail.com | 374.915.3017

Course Description

This course will focus on improvisational modalities, strategies, methods and developments centering Black Cultural practices within the United States and across the African Diaspora in the Americas. Warm-up movement and technique will be grounded in floorwork principles that will evolve into improvisational studies, adventures and failures. Our required text will be Improvisation and Social Aesthetics (Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice). Additional readings and viewings of text and film of scholars and artists across various fields will be introduced in class for critical discussion and application. Framing our considerations of improvisation with Blackness we seek to unlock ideas of modernity, innovation and communication through the body in space and in relationship to persons, systems and timeframes.

Class will begin with Physical Propulsion - a training method of engaging the body through space using floor, standing and aerial techniques rooted in sacro-cranial alignment and awareness. The training method is built to functionally and tactically use physicality as an artistic conduit while testing the limits of movement across dimensions, especially across the usually forgotten transverse plane - the "z-axis". The aim is to achieve greater dynamic range across many levels while maintaining maximum efficiency in the body. The class works from the ground-up using movement variations from Flying Low technique codified by David Zambrano, Laban, Limon and Capoeira. The goal of each class is to gain more comfort and courage using the body into and out of the floor with dynamic range of motion, a sense of togetherness with class takers and musicality throughout the space.

Improvisation is an essential ingredient in Black culture and life fueling artistic production. The tertiary study material will cover artists, genres and periods including Hip hop, jazz, ringshout, Ella Fitzgerald, George E. Lewis, Vaudeville, the Black Arts Movement, William Forsythe, Alice Coltrane and John Coltrane, Soul Train, punk, Ishmael Houston-Jones, mayfield brooks, Vijay Iyer, David Grubbs and John Cage, the DAP, basketball in Black America and football in Brasil, club and voguing ball cultures and many others. Practices of “call and response”, “rhythm making”, “mirroring”, “cajoling”, “instigating” and other actions will be playfully interrogated in understanding how improvisation is at once an intelligent action, a spontaneous reaction, a considered gesture and an initiating force.

Ultimately, we intend to engage improvisation as a communicative exercise. Practicing deep listening, space making, consideration, risk-taking, sound creation and mutual support are part of deepening the skills of improvisation. Together with the sound artists, sound provider and musician in our class we will level-up our potential of improvisation.

Course Objectives

This is a two-unit course representing 6 hours of work per week (in and outside of class time). Over the course of
the semester the students are expected to engage in the following manner:

**Preparation for Movement and Discourse**
Student artists are expected to explore somatic and performance practices that support the working of movement through body individually and collectively. This should lead to an awareness of how to relate to space, time and others. The readings and viewings of text and material are mandatory. Student artists should be prepared to offer one question from the study material for group discussion. We will be using theoretical perspectives from persons across time to frame observations and experiences of improvisational moments, scores and structures. The goal is to increase our understanding and potential within improvisation as a form that is used in our respective practices, as a choreographic tool, a training vehicle in perception, and/or a performance mode in itself.

**Building Praxis**
How and why to frame or structure improvised work will be a key component not only for artistic and choreographic application but can be used as a problem-solving mechanism in various fields. Each student artist will experiment on devising structures, scores and spontaneous composition. This work aims to show us how clear frameworks can free us up to delve deeper and experience more of the unknown in our improvisations. We will also look at referencing, sourcing, crediting and lineage in praxis through a continuum and consider how cultural immersion can be a liberating process without exploitation.

**Maintaining a Supportive Atmosphere**
Failure will be embraced but effort is mandatory. We will work to eliminate judgment of self and others to engage with the work courageously and curiously. Student artists are expected to engage their attention with consistency and focus in order to practice well. Finally, we will work to apply an objective feedback method based on observation and open-ended dialogue free from value judgment and subjective isolation.

**Course Agenda**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category &amp; Timeframe</th>
<th>Weeks 1 - 3</th>
<th>Weeks 3 - 7</th>
<th>Weeks 8 -10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Conditioning &amp; Technique</strong></td>
<td>● Preparing bodies outside of class for stamina and muscle memory</td>
<td>● Initiating movement from core connection consistently</td>
<td>● Completing full class with ease</td>
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<td>● Establishing alignment and awareness of weight</td>
<td>● Identifying and investigating movement patterns</td>
<td>● Exploring greater dynamic range through level changing and momentum</td>
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<td><strong>Movement Development</strong></td>
<td>● Retaining movement sequences</td>
<td>● Expanding vocabulary and use of form</td>
<td>● A diverse set of movement qualities accessed with clarity</td>
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<td>● Training spatial and sonic awareness</td>
<td>● Building communicative phrasing and play with rhythm</td>
<td>● Setting intention with movement and place-making</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Engagement</strong></td>
<td>● Engaging study material</td>
<td>● Considering study</td>
<td>● Bringing in additional</td>
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Course Textbook & Viewing List

Required Text: *Improvisation and Social Aesthetics (Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice)* by Georgina Born (Editor), Eric Lewis (Editor), Will Straw (Editor)

Course Components

Engaging improvisation through dance and other forms using aspects of its histories, various lineages, and approaches – specifically rooted in the Black Aesthetic of the African Diaspora in the Americas. This work will be covered in class, through discussions and practice, and through reading assignments. *Understanding will be evaluated through references used in written assignments, class discussions.*

Social and Relational Aesthetics – terms relating to the various ways aesthetic tendencies will emerge the decentering and dismantling of fixated singularities and static binaries in relating to how and why each persons makes their choices and how communicative patterns and structures

Solo Improvisation. Composing the body. Somatic practices.
Tuning our instrument: Reading the composition of our body. Listening, noticing. Practicing being awake, aware, present, and preparing and understanding how to work from an open state of mind.
*Evaluated through class participation, writing assignments, and final score development assignment.*

Composing in duet and groups. Contact Improvisation. Contact and non-contact work. Unpacking what contact, within duet and group work, can be. How can this work teach us more about attention to the moment as we dance.
*Evaluated through class work, written assignments and final score development assignment.*

Composing space and time. Working in relationship to space and time, audience and each other. How these relationships and this feedback impacts compositional choices.
*Evaluation through class work, written assignments and final score development assignment*

Performance Practice. ‘How we see’ whilst dancing. Engaging our perceptual awareness. Continuity of attention and awareness whilst dancing. Practiced in both solo and group form.
*Evaluated through class work, written assignments and final score development assignment*

Voice as part of the dancing body. Including voice as a compositional option.

Tu / Th: 10AM – 12PM | Room 214
Instructor: A. Zachery
renegadepg@gmail.com | 347.915.3017
Framing improvisation: Spontaneous Composition and Structure: Studied through Solo, Duet and Group scoring. Evaluated through class participation, and development and presentation of a short scored piece (part of Final).

COURSE STRUCTURE

Tuesdays: Movement and practice class. Improvisation modalities and approaches will be introduced and applied together in the space.

Thursdays: Critical discussion and focused practice. Class will begin with movement warm-up and moving into a 30-minute conversation on assigned study materials. The remaining time will be spent considering the research in practice.

Major Practice Assignments
Working in groups of three, students will create and present a final 5-minute improvisational score. The score must composed of three components:
1. Sound that is originally composed or sourced and recorded by the creators. No canned music will be allowed.
2. A clear contribution from all three group-members that is apparent in the space during the final presentation.
3. Mandatory post-presentation attendance for critical discussion in the final class. Those that do not attend the final class will lose 25% on the final assignment grade.

Improvisation presentations: Tuesday, 4 June 2019
Post-presentation class discussion: Thursday, 6 June 2019

Major Writing Assignments
Each student will write a 3-page paper on how improvisational approaches in two disciplines outside of dance and performance have influence on their artistic interests and practice. Students are encouraged to use and reference the given research material and also provide at least three additional sources for their writings. Finally, one of the disciplines researched must be a part of the African Diaspora in the Americas.

Due Date: Thursday, 30 May 2019
Submission procedure: Electronic submissions only in .pdf format (Email)

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Regular, prompt attendance and full participation in all aspects of the class are required of all students. Students are expected to engage in a creative process with curiosity, discipline, rigor and generosity. Much of a creative practice is about navigating and accepting the terrain of unknown territory in order to discover something new or unexpected. Generosity toward and respect for the working environment. Unexcused absences are not allowed, and each one will lower the student’s grade by 2-points. No more than two excused absences, after which each (excused) absence will lower student’s grade by 2 points. Please submit excuses for absence in writing before the next class attended. Students are responsible for submitting written excuses for absence without instructors reminding. Engagement in class activities as demonstrated by sustained attention and participation, taking risks in exploring new ideas, an open attitude towards learning experiences presented, and constructive feedback to peers’ work.
Showings demonstrate accumulated understanding of concepts, principles and strategies proposed or discovered; assignments reflect thoughtfulness, clarity, and development over the course of the quarter. Completion of assigned viewings, readings and written assignments – thoughtful, in-depth discussion, and elaboration on ideas.

*Evaluations will be based on the following:*
- Participation in all physical and theoretical all aspects of class 40%
- Attendance 10%
- Final Paper 25%
- Final Presentations 25%

(Unexcused absences from more than three class meetings will affect grade. For every absence after the first 3, the grade will drop 1/3 of a letter (e.g. A to A-, B+ to B, etc.)

**Method of Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard / Category</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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| Excellent           | • Student artist comes prepared with questions and inquiry from assigned study materials.  
• Student artist engages in constructive and objective open-ended dialogue with others on their work, research and interest.  
• Student artist offers and credits additional material for discussion in class.  
| • Student artist complete all tasks and objectives of assignment prior to class on the due date.  
• Student artist credit sources and inspirations with equity and parity.  
• Student artist prepares directed questions for the cohort to unpack.  
• Student artist takes time to receive feedback in the way they need objectively.  
| • See attendance policy above.  
• Student artist is prepared to participate at the class starting time. |
| Satisfactory        | • Student artist forms subjective opinions and statements based on research material the work of the cohort.  
• Student artists center themselves to receive a majority of class focus and attention.  
• Student artist provides no  
| • Student artist completes all tasks and objectives after the required time and date of class.  
• Student artist offers few references and source material for crediting or discussion.  
• Student artist has non-focused questions for the  
| • See attendance policy above.  
• Student artist arrives late and is not prepared to participate at the class starting time. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>Student artists provide no prepared questions or objective thoughts from assigned material or discussion on work.</th>
<th>Student artist do not or refuse to complete assignments.</th>
<th>See attendance policy above.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Student artist do not disclose injuries or physical status in written form prior to class.</td>
<td>Student artist offer no source material or crediting for their studies.</td>
<td>Student artist offers no explanation for late arrival and/or is not prepared with their materials for class participation.</td>
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<td>Student artist refuse to engage physically in the space.</td>
<td>Student artist refuse feedback or to participate in engagement with the cohort.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student artist do not engage in feedback with cohort.</td>
<td>Student artist do not contact instructor with emergency needs that would inflict their ability to attend class.</td>
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### Grading Policy

**Grading Scale**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>76-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-75</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>66-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
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*The syllabus and course agenda are both subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.*
Student Conduct Codes

https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode

https://senate.ucla.edu/regulations/chapter1#bootstrap-fieldgroup-accordion-item--section-4-grades-3

https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Contact-Us

Medical Notes

Please be aware that the Ashe Center recently implemented an online system that allows students to self-generate their own non-verified medical notes. This has led to a system where students can now obtain 3 different types of medical notes:

1. Self-Generated (not verified) statement of Illness or Injury
2. Verified Illness or Injury
3. Student was in an appointment during class time

While we are required to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, faculty can decide to whether to accept medical notes, even verified ones, at their own discretion.

There are many unintended consequences to requesting/accepting medical notes from students. One primary consequence is that students seeking medical notes for minor ailments has resulted in a severe drain on our student health facilities. The online, self-generated notes were developed in response to this high demand for such notes.

The verified illness notes would seem the most reliable note, but are often the result of an appointment with a Physician sometime after the illness is over, and they therefore rely on what the students report. However, some students do seek a medical appointment for a note while ill. This has had the unintended consequence that these students are up and about when they would be better off in bed and not spreading their illness to other students.

You will want to determine if you will accept medical notes, for what you will accept these, and what type of note. Consider alternatives to requiring a medical note, such as simply not accepting them and then allowing the student to drop attendance at a certain number of classes.

Differently Abled Student Needs

UCLA strives to be an accessible campus prepared to receive students, faculty and staff of varying abilities and statuses. “Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. In order to ensure accommodations, students need to contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term.”

Title IX Resources

UCLA prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, there are a variety of resources to assist you.

CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES:

You can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465. Counseling
and Psychological Services (CAPS) also provides confidential counseling to all students and can be reached 24/7 at (310) 825-0768.

NON-CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES:
You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491. These offices may be required to pursue an official investigation.

Faculty and TAs are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Coordinator—A NON-CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCE—should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

**Psychological Health, Well-Being and Resilience**

UCLA is renowned for academic excellence, and yet we know that many students feel overwhelmed at times by demands to succeed academically, socially and personally. Our campus community is committed to helping all students thrive, learn to cope with stress, and build resilience. Remember, self-care is a skill that is critical to your long-term success. Here are some of the many resources available at UCLA to support you:

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):** [https://www.counseling.ucla.edu/](https://www.counseling.ucla.edu/) Provides counseling and other psychological/mental health services to students. Walk-in hours are Monday-Thursday 8am-4:30pm and Friday 9am-4:30pm in John Wooden Center West. Crisis counseling is also available 24 hours/day at (310) 825-0768.

- **Ashe Student Health and Wellness Center:** [http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu](http://www.studenthealth.ucla.edu) Provides high quality and accessible ambulatory healthcare and education by caring professionals to support the academic success and personal development of all UCLA students.

- **Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI):** [https://healthy.ucla.edu](https://healthy.ucla.edu) Provides links to a wide variety of resources for enhancing physical and psychological well-being, positive social interactions, healthy sleep, healthy eating, healthy physical activity and more.

- **Campus and Student Resilience:** [https://www.resilience.ucla.edu](https://www.resilience.ucla.edu) Provides programs to promote resilience and trains students to help support their peers.

- **UCLA Recreation:** [https://www.recreation.ucla.edu/](https://www.recreation.ucla.edu/) Offers a broad array of services and programs including fitness, yoga, dance, martial arts, meditation, sports, and much more.

- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:** [https://equity.ucla.edu/](https://equity.ucla.edu/) Committed to providing an equal learning, working and living environment at UCLA and supports a range of programs to promote these goals campus-wide.

- **UCLA GRIT Coaching Program:** [https://www.grit.ucla.edu/](https://www.grit.ucla.edu/) GRIT stands for Guidance, Resilience, Integrity and Transformation. In this program, UCLA students receive individualized support from trained peer coaches to manage stress, fostering positive social connections, set goals, and navigate campus resources.

**Resources for Students Dealing with Financial Stress**

- **Bruin Shelter:** [http://www.bruinshelter.org/](http://www.bruinshelter.org/) Provides a safe, supportive environment for fellow college students experiencing homelessness by fostering a collaborative effort between universities, community-based organizations, and service providers.

- **The CPO Food Shelter:** [http://www.cpo.ucla.edu/cpo/foodcloset/](http://www.cpo.ucla.edu/cpo/foodcloset/) Provides free food for any UCLA student who may be experiencing hunger and/or struggling to attain food due to financial hardships.

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Health/Safety - General info on prevention and care of injuries.

1. **Health Screening.** Dance can be a very physically demanding activity. Therefore, it is imperative if you have an injury or other medical condition which could be worsened by exercise, that you:

   a. see a doctor at the Student Health Center or a private medical facility of your choice, and
   b. provide your instructor with a note from this physician regarding any recommended exercise limitations.

2. **Health Insurance.** You are encouraged to find out about your medical coverage at the beginning of the quarter. Then, if an injury occurs, you will know where to go, what will be covered, and any other procedures necessary to facilitate appropriate treatment.

3. **First Aid Supplies.** First aid supplies are not available through the WAC department and you will have to go to Student Health Services or another medical center of your choice if such supplies are needed. Therefore, you are encouraged to regularly carry in your dance/exercise bag any supplies which you might need or regularly use such as: band-aids, antibiotic ointment, blister care supplies, coach tape, an elastic bandage, disposable ice bags, and appropriate medications.

4. **Injury Procedures.** One very important measure for preventing injuries is an adequate warm-up. Please avoid being late for class and missing this important element of class. If you are late, check with your instructor regarding appropriate procedures for warming up. If an injury should occur during class, please let your instructor know immediately.

   RICE: Rest – Ice – Compression – Elevation – these are key principles to know regarding immediate response to an injury. However, if it is serious and you are not able to move, stay calm and still until the appropriate medical personnel arrives to attend to your injury.

**Office for Students with Disabilities**

If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform your instructor and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, 310.825.1501, 310.206-6083 (telephone device for the deaf).

Website: [www.osd.ucla.edu](http://www.osd.ucla.edu)