

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE DANCE CRITIQUE ESSAY

Modern Technique (Dance Academic Component),

Instructor: Cynthia DuFault

OBJECTIVE

A critique essay of a Department dance concert is required to fulfill the dance academic component of this course. College essays are requirements towards obtaining college degrees, and it prepares students for future writing and research work. It should be taken seriously if students hope to be successful, not only in their academic endeavors but in their anticipated work field, as well.

- **Subject:** Attend a dress rehearsal and/or performance of a Department dance concert.
- **Research:** Take the time to reflect on the work. Interview the choreographers if you have questions, and to enforce and strengthen your point of view, investigate books, journals, websites, etc.
- **Writing the Essay:** To provide clarity, review all guidelines, including rubric, check list, and other material below.
- **Essay Format:** MLA ([Click for MLA Format Guidelines.](#))
- **Works Cited:** four (4) or more sources should be included and cited with a minimum of eight (8) quotes. Follow the MLA format guidelines link above for writing the Works Cited page.
- **Due:** The essay must be emailed by: _____
- **Delivery:** *Saving trees...no more hard copies, please.* Upload a WORD DOCUMENT (not a PDF) to Moodle "Critique Writing" folder.
- **Grading:** As the syllabus indicates, the essay counts as 20% of the course grade. See rubric below for specific details.

OUTCOME

- KNOW the format within critique writing: thesis, description, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, conclusion.
- UNDERSTAND the logic, structure, and flow of your critique essay.
- IDENTIFY the qualities that make your critique essay effective.
- STREAMLINE your writing process to achieve a better paper.
- USE the suggested sites to create correct MLA format and citations.
- MASTER clear and concise writing (utilizing the Writer's Block for any necessary tutoring).

CRITIQUE ESSAY FORMAT

I.) THE CRITIQUE ESSAY WILL BEGIN WITH AN INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH: It must include context for the critique including concert name, date, place, and who is presenting (student or senior concert, faculty concert, or a professional company). It will also include an interesting/catchy assertion about the performance as a whole.

II.) EACH OF THE FIVE (5) SELECTED CHOREOGRAPHIC WORKS WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS:

1. **A THESIS STATEMENT/IDENTIFYING INFORMATION PARAGRAPH:** It includes the dance title, choreographer, composer, and dancers as appropriate. **Note:** If it is a group piece of three or more, there is no need to include all of the names of the dancers, only one or two who stand out if applicable. It will also include an interesting/catchy assertion about the dance work as a whole.
2. **A DESCRIPTION PARAGRAPH:** Describe what you saw, physically. This is vivid, and it gives both a general sense of the dance work and some specific, detailed *movement moments*. Use plenty of action (-ing) words supported with describing (-ly) words. Incorporate research sources, the elements of dance (BEAST: body, energy, action, space, time) while describing what you observed. This is your strongest and, perhaps, longest section, giving your reader a clear idea of the dance work, visually. It is fine if the description section branches into more than one paragraph.
3. **AN ANALYSIS PARAGRAPH:** Next, you will dissect what you saw. One general way to do this is by *comparing and contrasting* dance works within the concert or within their genres. Another way is to discuss *historical facts* and how/why the dance work may or may not tie into a certain movement vocabulary, historically (example: classic modern or post-modern periods). You can also examine the dance work from a *theoretical sense*. Include research sources, the materials included below, and/or subject material from Robin's Theory and Notation course.
4. **AN INTERPRETATION PARAGRAPH:** Describe the intention of the work, including any literal affect the dance work had on you, expressively or emotionally. An example would be that it reminded you of something in particular, like another dance work, a movie, a dream, or a feeling. Perhaps, the dance work may only have been visually stimulating to you, which in this case, describe how the form or visual effects affected you.
5. **AN EVALUATION/CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH:** Describe if the dance work was successful. Evaluations are always supported by thorough, concrete explanations and broken down by way of description and even components of analysis. Example: *"I find the dance work cohesive because of the "so-and-so" factors through the following three strengths: first of all, the message delivered through movement was...; secondly, the intention and energy of the dancers performing were...; and thirdly, the overall trajectory of the work was..."*
6. **CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH:** This will complete the critique of each dance work. It will include a summarization and an interesting/catchy assertion about the work as a whole.

III.) THE CRITIQUE ESSAY WILL END WITH A CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH: This is at the very end of your essay. It includes a catchy statement about the overall concert, summarizing your ideas, and it will tie your essay together.

RUBRIC TABLE FOR DANCE CRITIQUE WRITING

A rubric is a way of explicitly stating expectations for achievement in assignments. It is based on several specific attributes that are each rated separately as excellent, good, adequate, or needs improvement; these separate ratings are then compiled for the total evaluation. Rubrics are useful because when you know the specific criteria by which papers are graded, you are more likely to be successful with the assignment.

Expectation	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Introduction	Gives a context for critique and an interesting assertion about the performance that captures the reader's attention.	Gives a context and somewhat interesting assertion.	Gives a context without an assertion or vice versa	Lacks a clear beginning altogether.
Identifying Information	Identifies all titles, choreographers, composers, and dancers as necessary for the pieces reviewed. It does not list non-key names from the program.	Identifies most of the key people necessary for pieces reviewed. It may list non-key names from the program.	Identifies some of the key people necessary for pieces reviewed, and it may list non-key names from the program.	There is minimal identification.
Thesis	Provides a strong thesis statement for the paper as a whole as well as for each dance piece.	Provides somewhat of a strong thesis statement for the paper as a whole as well as for each dance.	Lacks thesis statements for paper or some dances or provides weak ones.	Lacks thesis statements for paper or any dances discussed
Description	Gives lively general description and a great deal of vivid description of actual movement moments.	Gives good general description and some good description of actual movement moments.	Gives general description and some description of actual movement moments.	Gives general description but little or no description of actual movement moments.
Analysis, Interpretation, Evaluation	Includes analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Each is well supported by concrete observation of the dance itself, and all opinions are supported. There are affective quotes and works cited relative to content.	Includes analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Most statements are supported by concrete observation. There are somewhat affective quotes and works cited relative to content.	Includes some of the three. Statements are partially supported. There are somewhat related works cited and quotes.	Includes little analysis or interpretation. Statements are not supported. There are minimal to no possible works cited and quotes.
Flow and Organization	Maintains excellent flow because the discussion of each dance work relates to its thesis. Thoughts follow logically, and the syntax is varied.	Maintains good flow because the discussion of each dance work usually relates to its thesis. Thoughts usually follow logically, and the syntax is mostly varied.	Maintains some flow. The discussion of each dance is somewhat unfocused. Thoughts sometimes follow logically, and the syntax is somewhat varied.	Lacks flow, the discussion of each dance is unfocused and not logical, and the syntax is problematic.
Conclusion	Summarizes the writer's observations in an interesting way and adds something new.	Summarizes the writer's observations and may add something new.	Partially summarizes the writer's observations.	Lacks clarity.
Conversations of English Language	0-2 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	3-5 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	6-8 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	More than 8 errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
MLA Essay Format	0-2 errors with margins, line spacing, indenting, header, page number, and title	3-5 errors with margins, line spacing, indenting, header, page number, and title	6-8 errors with margins, line spacing, indenting, header, page number, and title	More than 8 errors with margins, line spacing, indenting, header, page number, and title
MLA Works Cited Format	4 or more works cited, 8 or more effective quotes, and with 0-2 errors in the format.	4-5 works cited, 8 or more somewhat effective quotes, and with 3-5 errors in the format.	4 works cited, 8 possible quotes, and with 6-8 errors in the format.	Less than 4 works cited, less than 8 possible to unrelated quotes, and more than 8 errors in format.

CHECKLIST FOR DANCE CRITIQUE ESSAY

The following is a list of questions that can be useful for your final **REVISION PROCESS**.

NOTE: Choosing to work with a tutor at the campus *Writer's Block* is highly recommended for everyone. Use this checklist and the Rubric Table while working with your tutor.

- Did you use the MLA format guidelines making sure that there are no errors with margins, line spacing, indenting, header, page number, and title?
- Does your critique essay begin with a thesis paragraph, giving event information such as:
 - concert name
 - date
 - place
 - who is presenting (ex: student or senior concert, faculty concert, or a professional company)?
- Does your critique essay have an interesting/catchy introduction that will draw in the reader?
- Does your critique essay discuss five different dance works?
- Does your critique essay include for each of the five (5) dance works 6 or more paragraphs?
 - **a thesis paragraph** - include the title, choreographer, composer, and any soloists who may stand out in the dance work and an interesting/catchy introduction that will draw in the reader.
 - **a descriptive paragraph** - defines a clear idea of the dance work, visually.
 - **an analysis paragraph** - compares/contrasts dance works, discusses relative historical facts associated with certain dance works, and/or examines the dance works from a theoretical sense.
 - **an interpretation paragraph** - describes the intention of the work, including any literal or nonliteral affects.
 - **an evaluation paragraph** - supports by thorough explanations.
 - **conclusion paragraph** - summarizes the work as a whole.
- Did you include a Works Cited page, did you use the MLA format guidelines, and are there no errors in formatting?
- Does your Works Cited page have four (4) or more sources, and no errors in formatting?
- Does your essay have eight (8) or more effective quotes, and no errors in formatting?
- Is your critique essay free from spelling or grammar errors?
- Are there any other typing/grammatical errors? Note: Spell check does not catch all errors (e.g., using *there* instead of *their*).
- Is punctuation used appropriately?
- Is there variety in the texture of the sentences (length, complexity, type of punctuation, syntax)?
- Did you choose your words wisely? A Thesaurus is a good tool, but triple check that the word you choose is clearly your intention.
- Does your critique essay flow as a whole?

USING B.E.A.S.T. (THE ELEMENTS OF DANCE AND CRITIQUING DANCE)

<h1>B</h1>	<p>BODY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis: Which body parts were accentuated? • Pathway: Where did the movement begin and end in a single action? • Pattern: Was there be a movement repetition or a sense of design? • Shape: What body shapes were created?
<h1>E</h1>	<p>ENERGY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional-based: What was the emotional-base of the movement? • Attack: Was the movement sharp or smooth? • Weight: Did the movement represent a sense of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strength: push, impacted, horizontal; - Lightness: resisting downward, initiating upward; - Resiliency: rebound, even up and down? • Flow: Was the movement free, bound, balanced, and/or neutral? • Quality: Was the movement flowing, tight, loose, sharp, swinging, swaying, suspended, collapsed, smooth, etc.?
<h1>A</h1>	<p>ACTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical-based: What was the physical-base of the movement? • Locomotor: Did the movement traveling through space (slide, walk, hop, run, skip, leap, roll, crawl, gallop/chassé, turns, etc.)? • Non-Locomotor: Was the movement in place or within the dancer's kinesphere (stretch, bend, rise, fall, swing, rock, tip, shake, suspend, etc.)?
<h1>S</h1>	<p>SPACE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size: Was the movement large, small, wide and/or narrow movement? • Levels: Was the movement executed on a high, middle and/or low level? • Place: Was the motion within personal space (kinesphere) or toward the full use of the space? • Direction: What were the stage directions (DS, UP, SR, SL, CS, etc.)? • Orientation: What was the facing on stage in relation to front or the audience (forward, backward, side left/right, diagonal)? • Pathway: What were the paths or floor patterns? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lines: forward to backward, side to side, diagonal, squares, zigzag - Circular • Relationship: What was the general relationship? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between dancers: beside, over, under, connected, alone, in front, behind, side - Between dancers and the audience: presentational or being observed (with the fourth wall)
<h1>T</h1>	<p>TIME</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tempo (speed): How fast or slow was the movement? • Timing: What was the sense of timing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - metered: pulse, tempo, accent, rhythmic pattern - free rhythm: open, sensed, improvisational, cued within the dancers - clock time: real time such as seconds • Time Relationships: Were the dancers moving in a complimentary and/or contrasting relationships? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unison: dancers moving together with the same movement - cannon: dancers moving at different times with the same movement - counterpoint: dancers moving at the same time with the different movement

CRITIQUING DANCE BY USING B.E.A.S.T. AND ASKING WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, & HOW

<p>WHO</p>	<p>DEFINING THE DANCER(S) AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO EACH OTHER AND THE AUDIENCE USE: ALL OF BEAST</p>	<p>Although all of the BEAST defines WHO, ENERGY/emotional base is a good place to start.</p>
<p>WHAT</p>	<p>DEFINES WHAT YOU SEE PHYSICALLY AND/OR THE INTENTION/MESSAGE OF THE CHOREOGRAPHER USE: ALL OF BEAST</p>	<p>Although all of the BEAST defines WHAT, using ACTION and action words like -ing words (jumping, hopping, skipping, etc.) is most helpful.</p>
<p>WHEN</p>	<p>DEFINES THE TIME AND/OR TIMING USE: SPACE AND TIME</p>	<p>Using SPACE and TIME is the most helpful as it can define the setting within a timeframe, and/or a historical period of time.</p>
<p>WHERE</p>	<p>DEFINES THE PLACE USE: SPACE</p>	<p>Using SPACE is the most helpful as it can define the place of setting.</p>
<p>HOW</p>	<p>DESCRIBES THE WHO, WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE USE: ALL OF BEAST</p>	<p>Although all of the BEAST defines HOW, ENERGY/emotional-base is a good place to start and using describing words like -ly words (explosively, lightly, slowly, quickly, etc.)</p>