

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PAPER TOPICS

**Topic Selection:** Within the context of 20<sup>th</sup>- 21st century dance history in American Culture, you may choose to research a specific time period, specific style or choreographer, or a related issue (dance and technology, gender studies- such as representation of gender in specific time-period or genres, training methods, etc.). Consider what interests you, as you will build on this research throughout the semester.

**Thesis:** To be developed after you have teased out your options for a topic. Your thesis may be formed as a question you develop. This will be further discussed in class. (also see examples below).

**Methodology:** Your process of weaving together the materials you gather and research you conduct to explore your topic and thesis.

**Conclusion:** What did you discover? How did your thesis evolve?

### QUALITY:

Formal writing (no slang), and an articulate, developed report of your findings

### LENGTH:

7-9 pages (no cover page, not including works cited), typed, spell checked, proofread

### FORMAT

- All sources cited using MLA format
- Double space, .12 font, 1 inch margins

### SOURCES

-Utilize the library database for scholarly sources and book sources. Do not rely on Wikipedia or other variable online sources, and ALWAYS check the validity of your sources (example: do not assume that all blogs are trustworthy- look into who is writing and what their credentials are).

A successful research paper will draw from a variety of sources, and may include personal interview or video, in addition to print and web sources.

-At least, but not limited to five sources- you will be evaluated on the quality and thoughtful use of your sources.

**PLAGIARISM:** Note the SMC policy as listed on the syllabus

**The following are examples of possible approaches, sample topics and questions that provide a research outline**

## EXAMPLE FOR HOW TO FIND A TOPIC

1. Read biographies of major choreographers, View videos of their work. Consider their choreography in historical and cultural context. Narrow your focus to your particular interest.

\*Suggested choreographers/books:

Acocella, Joan. *Mark Morris*.

Cohen, Selma Jean. *Doris Humphrey: An Artist First*.

Daly, Ann. *Done Into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America*.

De Mille, Agnes. *Martha*.

Duncan, Isadora. *My Life*.

Graham, Martha. *Blood Memory*.

Hay, Deborah. *Lamb at the Altar*.

Jones, Bill T. *Last Night on Earth*.

Kendall, Elizabeth. *Where She Danced*.

Limón, José. *An Unfinished Memoir*.

Louis, Murray. *Murray Louis on Dance*.

*The Mary Wigman Book: Her Writings*. ed. Walter Sorell Monk, Meredith. ed. Deborah Jowitt.

Mumaw, Barton. *Barton Mumaw, Dancer*.

Shawn, Ted. *A Thousand and One Night Stands*.

Shelton, Suzanne. *Divine Dancer: A Biography of Ruth St. Denis*.

Siegel, Martha. *Days on Earth: The Dance of Doris Humphrey*.

Taylor, Paul. *Private Domain*.

Tharp, Twyla. *Push Comes to Shove*.

2. Watch one of the dances from Martha Graham's Greek cycle, such as *Errand Into the Maze*, *Cave of the Heart*, *Night Journey*. Read other versions of the same myths (e.g. minotaur, Jason and Medea, Oedipus and Jocasta)

\*suggested reading: Banes, Sally. *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*. New York & London: Routledge, 1997, chapter on *Night Journey*.

3. Watch an abstract or neo-classical ballet, such as Balanchine's *Agon* or *The Four Temperaments*. Discuss representation of women.

\*suggested reading: Ann Daly, "The Balanchine Woman: Of Hummingbirds and Channel Swimmers." *Drama review*. Cambridge, Mass. v. 31, no. 1, T113 (spring 1987), p. 8-21.

4. For other ideas, browse through collections of dance scholarship (like *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage*; *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*; *Bodies of the Text: Dance as Theory, Literature as Dance*) to get a sense of idea what people are writing and thinking and arguing about dance.

## DEVELOPING A QUESTION: SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENTS

### 1) *Twyla Tharp: Pop culture, genre and narrative*

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship of popular music and contemporary dance in the development of a contemporary dance musical, specifically by researching Twyla Tharp's choreography set to Billy Joel's music in her production of *Movin' Out*. I will look at how Tharp develops her narrative, musically and choreographically, how the use of Billy Joel's song lyrics factor into the creation of Tharp's thematic choreography, and how Tharp's production of *Sinatra Suite*, differs in terms of choreographic choices, music, and development of narrative

### 2) *Men in Tights and Feathers: Art or Spectacle...or Both?*

This presentation addresses the characteristics of performance that falls between the opposing worlds of concert and commercial dance. Exploring what constitutes a dance as either concert (high art) or commercial (mass appeal) may create a new category of performance that falls between the two extremes. A new question is thus employed; what exactly is that gray area of dance-performance that has artistic qualities yet can appeal to the masses? This presentation identifies a multitude of factors that may contribute to the differing characteristics of concert versus commercial dance, and then further classifies the genre of performance that falls within the wide continuum. Examples from the popular television shows *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Live to Dance*, as well as Matthew Bourne's adaptation of *Swan Lake* will be used to provide support for the idea that dance performance doesn't have to fall within one extreme or the other.

### 3. *Goodbye Corset, Hello Freedom*

One of the most prominent and enduring influences on early twentieth century culture is the life and work of Isadora Duncan. Credited in the dance world as being the mother of modern dance, Duncan's fascination with free-flowing natural movements led her to introduce the world to a dance form that was the very opposite of ballet. Greatly intrigued by the Women's Rights Movement of the time, this paper asserts that Duncan can be considered one of the first feminists. Duncan devoted her life not only to dance but to the liberation of women in society. This paper looks at how Duncan embodied and influenced freedom for women in her own life and work on the bodily level. Further, it reveals a changing viewpoint of Duncan's life from past to present day.