

DANCE THESIS GUIDELINES, DEPARTMENT OF THEATER AND DANCE

"The traditional senior thesis involves one or two semesters of original research and writing, culminating in a substantial paper on a research topic of the student's design. Such an effort requires that the student possess an excellent understanding of the *subject area, its theoretical underpinnings, and its research methodology*. The student must also be able to think critically and comprehensively about the topic, and must be able to advance a well-formulated argument. Conducting a senior thesis not only draws on a student's past academic experience, it also requires considerable independent thinking and creativity, self-discipline, and effective time management." "Some departments and programs offer or require thesis work that includes theatrical or musical performance, video production, curriculum development, or studio art work and exhibition." <http://www.bates.edu/academics/programs-resources/senior-thesis/>

Dance Thesis Option 1. Choreographic Project and supporting academic paper.

Dance Thesis Option 2. Written thesis of theoretical, historical, or contextual research and an accompanying portfolio of creative experience.

Dance Thesis Option 3. Performance Project and supporting academic paper.

Dance Thesis Option 1: Choreographic Project and Paper

The Choreographic Project and Paper option allows students to delve deeply into creative research in the field of choreography by creating a substantive, original dance work to be performed in either the Fall or Spring Dance concerts, or an alternate venue agreed upon by advisor and department. Required coursework: 3-4 Creative Process courses, including DANC 351 (or an approved Study Abroad or Independent Study to fulfill the DANC 351 requirement). Choreographic Research is understood to have both a creative and scholarly component, with presentation of a final work and a substantive paper examining the theoretical basis, contextual implications, and the process and product of the creative research. Suggested lengths: 12-30 minutes of original choreography, with a 30-50 page academic paper. This thesis should have the following components:

1. **PROPOSAL:** 3-4 page proposal due Spring of Junior Year: 1.5 spacing, 12 point standard font. Proposals should include a heading (name, year, thesis type), and take the form of 4 sections, noted below:

1. **WHAT & WHEN** In one-two sentences, note whether you are proposing a choreographic, performance, or written thesis; and when (1 or 2 semester thesis; Fall or Winter).
2. **WHAT, HOW, WHERE** In one to two sentences, provide a brief description that explains what you hope to explore in your research, your research methodology (how), and where you hope to present, with why this venue for your research if proposing an alternative space/venue. For a written thesis, include any other elements of your research that are pertinent to your work. (eg surveys/interviews, informal showings or workshops, embodied research). For a choreographic or performance thesis, please include preliminary details of the work or process. One-two sentence examples:

"I hope to choreograph a small group work that explores first, second, and third wave feminism to be performed in the Fall Dance Concert;"

"I hope to make a mediated performance solo installation in blackbox. I don't know what it will be about yet;"

"I hope to do a written thesis exploring the influence of west African dances on western modern dance techniques and performance in the U.S."

"I propose a performance thesis that explores the intersection of improvisation and set material. I hope to work with a professional artist in this research and plan to perform the work in the Fall dance concert."

3. **NARRATIVE** This section is the body of your proposal and should be 2-3 pages in length, written in an essay format that includes all components noted below.

1. 1-3 creative/scholarly research questions;
2. Methodology: how do you plan to research your topic? Identify the methods you will use in your choreographic research; your approach to the rehearsal process and performance; and, outline the research methods you will employ for the scholarly, written component.

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3. Explain the historical and contextual context for your research. This might include supporting lines of inquiry, interdisciplinary threads to explore, other artists and scholars, embodied research, etc.
4. Outline the timeline of your proposed research and any resources needed. Resources might include: cast size, technical theatre and design, interviews, research materials, grant writing, anticipated workshops, travel, etc.;
5. Suggested criteria for assessment and advisor interaction, including proposed visits to rehearsals, writing meetings schedule, and your proposed method for advisor response to progress in both the studio and written work.

4. **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY** 5 sources minimum, MLA format.

2. **CHOREOGRAPHIC PIECE:** During Fall and/or Spring of Senior Year you will to create and present a substantial piece of original choreography the parameters of which are developed in conversation with your adviser. This is core content of the thesis. Video documentation services will be provided by the department, however thesis students are responsible for processing video into the appropriate format for submission in final thesis document. Discussion of venue and format of the performance will be decided in collaboration with the department according to the shifting demands on the department technical support resources. There will be \$300 for each thesis project. Requests for additional department funds will need a proposal to the department. Kerry O'Brien in the Dean of Faculty office also has information on other thesis research grants.

3. **WRITTEN PAPER:** In conjunction with your choreographic research, your paper should be a fully developed academic explanation of how you addressed your research questions through choreographic and literature-based research. It should be written for a reader who has not seen the piece, so it should include detailed description where appropriate. It must include a detailed description of your choreographic methods including research into the sources of those methods, the relationship of those methods to your research questions, and an honest evaluation of the outcomes of those methods. It must demonstrate knowledge of the place of your work in the field of choreography and in the context of the ongoing discourse about the art form within its cultural context. The paper should have the following components in MLA style:

- Title (and standard thesis title page)
- Artists' statement. A short declaration of your aesthetic values, influences, and directions.
- Introduction. State your research questions and briefly situate your choreographic and literature-based research in aesthetic and historical context.
- Academic context. A display of knowledge and understanding of the situation of your work with the field using standard academic writing practices to provide evidence.
 - i. Survey of relevant dance literature. This section should explore how your research questions and methods relate to the field of dance at large. In addition to any major discussions of your topic in dance literature, you must research at least two to three artists working in a similar vein to yours.
 - ii. If your research questions are cross-disciplinary, this section should include discussions of relevant literature from outside the field of dance.
- Methodology. Discuss how you explored your research questions. What did you do in the studio to make your piece?
 - i. How did you spend your time in the studio, and how did this relate to your research questions?
 - ii. How did you prepare for studio time, and how did this relate to your research questions including creative stimuli?
 - iii. How did you approach answering your cross-disciplinary or theoretical questions, if you had them?
- Creative Process Reflection. In well supported academic language, give an honest self-evaluation of your creative process.
 - i. This section might include a description of the piece, however descriptions might also be distributed throughout the paper where appropriate.
 - ii. Critical evaluation of your choreographic process, including collaborative aspects of the creative process.
 - iii. Critical evaluation of your choreographic product.
 - iv. Context of your piece in terms of performance intentions, audience relationship
 - v. Responses of dancers and audience members, if appropriate.

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- vi. What would you change or develop if you could do it over again, and why?
- Conclusion. Draw together ideas and makes suggestions for further research.
- Bibliography of all works cited including videos and performances

4. **FINAL PACKAGE:** Documentation of the performance and written paper formally presented as a single document following all protocols of thesis presentation. Video documentation of the performance and the printed program must be included in the final thesis document. Choreographic research notes, photographs and other visual material add a lot to this document.

Guidelines for Choreographic Thesis Assessment

Thesis student and advisor will decide together the weight of the two parts (Choreographic Wrok, Paper) and how these two parts will unfold through the research.

Performance piece 60% A substantial piece of choreography. Approximate length: 12-30 minutes; however, length is not to be decided by the arbitrary measure of minutes, but rather the quality and complexity of thinking in process and final product presentation. Below is a suggested rubric for assessment of the choreographic work, to be adjusted/ revised in consultation with your advisor.

Rehearsal Process	
Made good use of studio time with dancers	
Made good use of performance research time alone	
Made good use of advising	

Performance Product	
Invention in vocabulary and choreographic methodology	
Growth as a choreographer	

Written/package 40% A substantial academic paper of approximately 30 - 50 pages depending on the form that your writing takes in relation to your research and your own piece, assessing process and final product. Suggested rubric below, to be adjusted/ revised in consultation with your advisor.

Format/ Bibliography/Final Package Submission (10%)

Introduction/Conclusion (10%)

Artist Statement/Supporting Documentation of Work (10%)

Content: Argument (25%) Articulation of Research Questions, threaded through written work; development of an argument; supporting academic research (scholarship/embodied) to ground the argument.

Content: Methodology and Creative Process/Product Reflection (25%) This will be in the form of a brief section in your introduction, outlining your research methodology for the whole thesis, as well as a distinct chapter that articulates your creative process and engages in a critical analysis/reflection of the process and final product.

Content: Situating in the Field (10%) Situating your research (process/product) in the field of creative research in dance, with choreographic analysis of the work of other artists, exploration of contemporary research in your

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research topic, etc. While this might yield a separate chapter, this component most likely will be threaded throughout the written work.

Development, Synthesis, Cohesion (10%) This is an assessment of your development with this written work over time. Have you met deadlines? Have you demonstrated forward progress in this work? How have you incorporated advisor feedback in writing and argument development?