

## **Emory Department of Theater and Dance**

### **Dance Program Honors Project**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Dance faculty invite gifted and hard-working dance majors, passionate about the field to work on an honors project. Whatever the research area—performance, choreography, history, or movement theory—students must be committed to the deep process involved in investigating dance. Completing a project requires an intense time and energy commitment. It is incumbent upon the student to independently complete the work of the honors project. The advisors and dance faculty act as critical resources to the student.

#### **An honors candidate:**

- Demonstrates full participation in Dance Program events.
- Shows consistent development as a dance major (Including work in Technique, Performance, Choreography, and Analysis).
- Produces exemplary research in all dance course work.
- Must show strong potential in the track of their choice.

#### **ELIGIBILITY**

Students with a 3.7 or higher GPA will be notified by the Dance Program Honors Coordinator of their eligibility for honors in January or February their junior year. If invited by the coordinator (with dance faculty input) students submit a project proposal in April of the junior year. Students who meet all the eligibility requirements but are not invited into the honors program may submit a written request to be considered. There are specific course requirements for each category of research that are articulated later in this document. See “Required Completed Course Work for Specific Tracks.” Students struggling to complete the major course work will not be considered.

#### **GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION AND ACCEPTANCE FOR HONORS IN DANCE**

##### **Determine track**

In the spring of junior year, the student should determine the research track of interest and meet with the Dance Honors Coordinator, or dance major advisor, to discuss ideas. The student may also opt to choose a project advisor at the same time. Faculty members are available to offer guidance for the project in its formative state. This may also be a good time to determine if the project will satisfy a Writing Requirement (WR).

##### **The proposal**

Under the guidance of the faculty advisor or honors coordinator, the student writes and submits a proposal, which is then shared with a committee of full-time dance faculty. The proposal consists

of an abstract (1-2 pages) that describes the project's intent and singular focus. A specific deadline for proposals will be set by the coordinator near April 1.

### **Committee approval**

The committee will approve, deny, or request that the student reshape or refine the project. Faculty approval of the honors proposal will be based on the student's eligibility in that focused area, the merit of the proposal, and the assessment of the student's work in the dance program up to that point. Projects are approved or denied by the end of April.

### **Timeline for project work**

Over the summer, after project approval, the student researches and explores the topic broadly through readings, viewings, and/or studio work. Students may also be encouraged by their advisor to participate in movement workshops that would be pertinent to their research topic. Substantial work on the project begins fall semester of senior year.

In January, students submit a committee roster of at least three faculty members, two from the Department of Theater and Dance, and one from another department. These three faculty comprise the core committee for final project evaluation. Students may opt to have more than three committee members, but only the core may determine the level of honors. If the committee is comprised of more than three, then the voting members should be decided by the student prior to submitting the committee roster. The College Honors Office provides the exact date for submission of the committee roster.

## **DANCE RESEARCH TRACKS**

**A. Choreographic Research** – culminating in a presentation with support paper (no WR) or written thesis (WR)

Students completing honors in this track create a substantial body of original work investigating a singular concept or theme, which might include or focus on choreographic elements and/or approaches, form and structure, movement vocabulary, or content/context.

**B. Performance Research** – culminating in a presentation with support paper (no WR) or written thesis (WR)

Students completing honors in this track perform work(s) that exhibit(s) a range of dynamics, character, style, form, or content/context.

**C. Choreographic/Performance Research** – culminating in a presentation with support paper (no WR) or a written thesis (WR)

Students completing honors in this track create a program of original work defined by the previous singular tracks, performing in a substantial portion (50%) of the work.

**D. Historical or Theoretical Research** – culminating in a written thesis (WR)

Students completing honors in this track explore a historical or theoretical research question. Students in this track have previously demonstrated successful research and writing skills.

## **COURSE WORK**

**It is recommended that students complete the following courses before beginning honors in dance:**

20 hours of the dance major including,

- DANC 250 Choreography I
- DANC 220 History of Western Concert Dance
- DANC 240 Dance Literacy (preferably completed by the end of junior year)
- DANC 350 Choreography II
- DANC 207R Emory Dance Company

### **Required Completed Course Work for Specific Tracks:**

- Students completing track A or C with group choreography are required to have completed Choreography II (DANC 350).
- Students completing track A or C with solo choreography are required to have completed Choreography I (DANC 250).
- Students completing track A, B, and C are required to have participated in a substantial amount of choreographic work by faculty or guest artists.
- Students in track B and C should be proficient in Level 3 technique courses.
- Students completing track D are required to have completed History of Western Concert (DANC 220) and Dance Literacy (DANC 240).

### **An honors student in dance enrolls in:**

**DANC 495A** (1-8 credit hours) Fall semester of the senior year. No WR permitted.

**DANC 495B** (1-8 credit hours) Spring semester of senior year. This can be with or without the WR.

\*Discuss credit hour choices with your advisor

These courses are individualized seminars that will be structured around the specific track, research topic, and needs of the student. The student and advisor will set up a seminar schedule that requires weekly or bi-monthly meetings, and may include rehearsal viewings. Suggested readings and viewings, or a reading/media packet that supports the research will be provided by the faculty advisor.

As part of the course work for DANC 495A the student will submit a progress paper documenting the research through the end of the fall semester, due the last day of the semester.

As part of the course work for DANC 495B (Track A-C) the student will submit a paper documenting choreographic and/or the performance research. The length and content of the paper differs depending on the WR status. (See section on Writing a Thesis or Support Paper for details). Students completing research in the areas of theory or history will submit a written thesis (WR).

Students completing work in Performance Research, or Choreographic & Performance Research are required to enroll in upper-level technique courses both fall and spring semesters. Technical study 5 days per week is highly recommended.

Students in Historical or Theoretical Research (Track D) produce a written thesis that fulfills the writing requirement (WR). Therefore, student in Track D, must in enroll in 495B WR spring semester. Extensive reading and re-writes of the paper are required.

**ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES FOR TRACKS A (Choreography), B (Performance), and C (Choreography and Performance):**

1. The project concert or showing should be scheduled through the technical director, honors coordinator, and director of the Dance Program in the junior year. Projects with extraordinary budgets need to be considered at this same time.
2. The student should schedule at least 2 showings of the work-in-progress over the course of each semester to obtain feedback and discuss the work. Spring semester honors students can also present work for commentary in the Monday night Choreography Lab (DANC 360R). In addition, candidates are encouraged to share their work in process with the larger Atlanta dance community for experience and feedback.
3. Dance faculty strongly recommend that students cast in honors work be enrolled in a technique class. This helps to ensure that performers are at their technical best in representing the choreographer's vision.
4. Students cast in honors work must enroll in DANC 491R for *at least* one semester (Fall or Spring) during the process. Encourage your cast members to discuss their enrollment plans with their individual Dance advisor.
5. It is the honors student's responsibility at the onset of the project to inform all performers of technical rehearsals, dress rehearsals, and performance dates. Participants who cannot attend studio rehearsals, technical rehearsals, or a performance date should not be cast in the work.
6. All committee members **MUST** be available to attend a performance and more than one viewing is encouraged. Watching a dress rehearsal does not satisfy this requirement. However, seeing a rehearsal is valuable as it gives context for the final piece; therefore, the honors student should invite committee members to observe their rehearsal process.
7. The support paper or written thesis must be submitted to all committee members in a timely manner. General guidelines: include abstract, formal analysis, and subjective information about the process and findings. This paper should conform to the highest standards of writing. The condition of the paper submitted will be considered when evaluating the overall thesis project.
8. The production elements, including scene, costume, sound, lighting, and projection, for the presentation of choreographic work is generally simple. The research should emphasize the choreography and performance. If the candidate is concurrently researching sophisticated

production elements to further artistic intent, that can be accommodated under the following circumstances:

- a. The candidate must have allocated funds for any extra technical crew.
- b. The scenic elements must not encumber regularly scheduled dance classes.
- c. The honors candidate has taken one of the following courses (the course taken should reflect the area of production or design element the candidate intends to research):
  - THEA 130 Stagecraft
  - THEA 230 Principles of Design
  - THEA 331 Costume Design
  - THEA 332 Set Design
  - THEA 334 Sound Design
  - DANC 230 Lighting Design for Dance

*Or*

- Has had significant experience in the area of design/production outside of academia
- Has engaged appropriate design collaborators for completion of the project

## **WRITING A SUPPORT OR THESIS PAPER: GENERAL GUIDELINES**

A developed project poses questions, articulates a point of view, and moves the candidate into the unknown. It leads to discovering ideas and thoughts through the body that can then be articulated in written form. The investigation that partners creative work includes readings, preparation for rehearsals, interviews or conversations with the commissioned artist (if applicable), and viewing of performances. The support paper or thesis accompanying performance or choreography tracks provides the committee with an integrated synthesis of the process. It reflects on the creative process. Readings, activity in the studio, discussions, and reflection should reveal the artist's thoughts, choreographic processes, and the project's outcomes. Additionally, the paper should comprehensively apply and integrate information attained from course work in the program's curriculum (history, choreography, Laban analysis, performance).

### **Support Paper no WR**

The support paper that is not fulfilling the writing requirement should be a minimum of 15-20 pages as stipulated by the advisor. Papers should, of course, conform to the highest standards of correctness in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage.

## **Thesis or Support Paper with WR (Satisfying Writing Requirement Guidelines, Emory College of Arts and Sciences faculty governance)**

The goal of writing-intensive courses is to improve writing skills through writing regularly in a context where mentors in the various communities of discourse encourage, guide, and communicate to students, high standards of writing through instruction and example. The goals within the honors project may be fulfilled by a combination of assignments, a gradual progression of a longer research paper, revisions, journals, and written exercises—all designed to achieve higher standards of writing. A writing intensive course should combine the following two components in ways appropriate to the discipline:

- Frequent writing assignments or drafts (which may be un-graded).
- At least one rigorous writing project carried out over the course of the semester under the guidance and supervision of the instructor.

Papers should, of course, conform to the highest standards of correctness in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage. Strategies for improving writing will vary with the instructor. But at least once during the semester a writing intensive class must involve students revising their work for writing assignment in response to the instructor's written and/or oral comments (in individual conferences) on an earlier draft.

For Tracks A, B, and C, a thesis paper fulfilling the writing requirement should be a minimum of 20 pages of polished writing. For Track D, the thesis format and length should be discussed with the advisor and honors coordinator but will range between 35-50 pages.

### **THE DEFENSE**

An oral examination of the honors project will be presented at the end of the senior year at which all committee members are present. Defending an honors thesis is a formal procedure and comprehensive in nature. The format consists of the candidate re-introducing the project along with any updates and committee members asking the candidate questions that pertain to the process, methodology, results, and context of the project.

Committee members may ask questions connected to any course work or readings that have been assigned. Committee members may offer suggestions for rewrites, and a final copy of the thesis or support paper is submitted to the College Honors Committee.

The student schedules the thesis defense, finding a time that is suitable for all committee members. A space commonly used for the defense is the Arts Common Room – Schwartz 208. Students should allow for a two-hour time slot when scheduling the defense. All committee members must be present at the defense. All dance faculty members can attend the defense. The honors student may invite a non-committee member to the defense, but this person cannot be present for the deliberations.

## **AWARDING HONORS IN DANCE**

### **Tracks A, B, C Students need to maintain a GPA of 3.7.**

The committee recommends the degree of honors to the College Honors Committee as follows:

**Honors (cum laude):** Satisfactory completion of the honors project.

**High Honors (magna cum laude):** Outstanding completion of the project. Performance or choreographic work exhibits quality comparable to a master's thesis project. Written portion should be high quality.

**Highest Honors (summa cum laude):** Exceptional completion of the project. Performance or choreographic work exhibits quality comparable to a professional work. Written portion should be of highest quality.

### **Criteria for evaluating Track A (Choreography)**

The following applicable criteria will be used in determining honors awards:

- Unique choreographic voice and originality of concept
- Clear structure
- Movement invention
- Innovative use of choreographic tools
- Use of non-dance elements
- Evidence of rich process
- Sophisticated use of content
- Professionalism in approach to collaborators
- Dancer coaching
- Articulate thesis writing

### **Criteria for evaluating Track B (Performance)**

The following applicable criteria will be used in determining honors awards:

- Embodiment of material
- Development-investigation of movement ideas
- Collaborative modes of choreography
- Interpersonal skills in rehearsal
- Clarity of intention
- Dynamic range
- Relationship to music
- Evidence of a rich process
- Technical ability
- Articulate thesis writing
- Stage persona

### **Criteria for evaluating Track C (Choreography/Performance)**

See lists for both Track A and B.

## **Track D Students need to maintain a GPA of 3.7.**

The committee recommends the degree of honors to the College Honors Committee as follows:

**Honors (cum laude)** Satisfactory completion of the honors project.

**High Honors (magna cum laude)** Outstanding completion of the project. Thesis of quality sufficient for oral presentation to scholars in the candidate's field.

**Highest Honors (summa cum laude)** Exceptional completion of the project. Thesis of a quality suitable for publication.

### **Criteria for evaluating Track D (Historical or Theoretical Research)**

The following applicable criteria will be used in determining honors awards:

- Articulates a clear argument or research question(s)
- Substantial "Literature Review" of existing scholarship
- Strong supporting evidence towards claim
- Clear research methodology and approach
- Papers should conform to the highest standards of correctness in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and usage
- Works cited adheres to format decided between student and advisor

## **GRANTS**

Honors candidates are encouraged to apply for funding for projects. The Dance Program office manager must have copies of all grants (SIRE, CCA, or others.)

## **DOCUMENTATION**

### **Video and Write-Up**

Students participating in Tracks A, B, or C must have performances professionally recorded. The Dance Program will provide this service. The Dance Program keeps digital videos for archival purposes on Vimeo or other web-based file storage. Because these are housed in the Woodruff Library online, a link may not always be able to accompany the write-up, depending on copyright issues surrounding music and choreography. Therefore, it is suggested that in addition to the video recording, photographs be included as part of the thesis.

### **Other support documentation**

Materials used to announce performances such as electronic announcements, flyers, press release copy, and also programs must be approved by the adviser before publicly distributed. Students are encouraged to include these materials and other materials pertinent to the process, such as rehearsal schedules, grant proposals, etc. as part of their project write-up. Students must submit fifteen copies of performance programs to the Dance Program office manager for the program's archives.

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