Directions: Read the indicated article with a view to each of the four major sections identified. At the bottom of each of each sub-section, indicate the sum of your figures. Note that not all articles have each section; e.g., your article may not have need of an explicit methodology (III.D). In this case, you may mark N/A (Not Applicable). However, you may also decide that the lack of a methodology is a critical weakness in the essay. In that case, give it 0 points and note it in your Feedback Sheet.

Following your scoring of the essay, fill in the strengths and areas for improvement on your Dance Studies Feedback Sheet. The scores you give for each relevant section should guide your feedback. For example, if you gave a low mark for the research question, you may indicate that in under ‘Suggestions for Improvement’. If you were unable to indicate a score for a section, e.g., again, methodology, note that as well.

Note that it is unlikely that your article will follow the exact order here. Sometimes research questions are delivered quite late in an article, or an author’s positionality may be peppered throughout the essay. One aim of the exercise is for you to become better able to identify such tools of writing.

The chief objective of this exercise is to improve your writing through your analysis of the components of excellent writing. By putting you on the other side of the marking table, it is hoped that you will appreciate what your readers are seeking in your essays, and produce it yourselves!

Assessment criteria for Dance Studies Essays

I. Introductory section [Choose A, B, or C and mark accordingly. Subtract 1-2 points for each criteria which is not present]

   6pts

   A. Abstract Style
      1. + 1-2 Introduction gives a clear sense of the topics to be addressed, their coherence and sequence, and signals theoretical frameworks.
      2. + 1-2 Choreographers, works, and historical periods are all articulated.
      3. + 1-2 The research question or thesis very clear and prominently placed.

   B. Critical Movement Analysis
1. + 1-2 Description of movement is clear (i.e., reader can envision the movement being described) and carefully worded. Makes use of evocative language, metaphor, etc. where helpful.
2. + 1-2 Selection analysed is directly relevant to the essay and serves as an appropriate introduction to the essay’s theme. Language choice introduces terms and concepts that will be explored and analysed in the course of the essay.
3. + 1-2 Research question of thesis is clearly articulated and flows from the movement analysis.

C. Theoretical Interrogation
1. + 1-2 Key concepts to be analysed are questioned in such a way that demonstrates understanding of their meaning.
2. + 1-2 Questions demonstrate awareness of the significance and reach of those concepts without straying beyond topics circumscribed by the essay.
3. + 1-2 Questions raised are actually addressed in the course of the essay.

Total Score: /6
Or N/A

II. Thesis or Research Question [award 1 pt for each criteria satisfied] 5 pts
The thesis or research question…
1. is clearly worded.
2. accurately circumscribes the scope (historical, genres, theoretical) of the essay.
3. can adequately be addressed given the limits of the essay (e.g., word-count, available resources, amount of time to research and compose the essay, is capable of being adequately addressed in an essay/dissertation format) [Circumscription]
4. is interesting. Takes a controversial stand, challenges prevalent belief, identifies significant gap in research, addresses marginalized people or perspective.
5. Delineates a substantial investigation that expresses comprehension of the current field of study and goes beyond this to add to scholarly considerations of the topic

III. Body: Investigation/Argument
[The following may not be present in all articles you read. Please select and mark as relevant.]

A. Historical Framework and Biography (may be in two or more sections and/or divided where relevant in the essay) [5 criteria, up to 2 pts each] 10 pts
1. Sources
   + 1-2 Consults multiple scholarly, reliable source
   0 Relies on one scholarly, reliable source
   - 1-2 Uses one source, or compilation of unreliable sources

2. Milieu
   + 1-2 Evinces appreciation of the choreographer discussed within her social and historical network
   0 Demonstrates little awareness of surrounding milieu
- 1-2 Demonstrates no awareness of surrounding milieu

3. Personal, Professional, or Developmental Significance
   + 1-2 Situates the piece/s within the choreographer’s life works, acknowledging how it is pivotal if applicable. Acknowledges influences, aftereffects, and reception where relevant
   0 Little awareness of choreographer’s oeuvre
   - 1-2 No expressed awareness of choreographer’s oeuvre

4. Objectivity
   + 1-2 Avoids statements of judgment (e.g., ‘best choreographer,’ ‘worst piece’) and does not read like an uncritical hagiography
   0 Occasional statements of judgment and uncritical appraisal
   - 1-2 Frequent statements of judgment and uncritical appraisal

5. Relevance and Contribution
   + 1-2 Biographical material is pointed to the aspects of the subject’s life that are directly relevant to the essay’s research question
   0 Biographical material is generally relevant
   - 1-2 Biographical material lacks relevance and/or focus

B. Literature Review [6 criteria, 2-4 pts each] 15pts

1. Adequacy and Comprehension of Resources
   + 1-2 Contains works considered essential to the topic addressed by the essay, making use of most current scholarship, and evincing knowledge of the previous discourse

2. Comprehension and Finesse
   + 1-2 Attentive to nuance within a scholar’s work and between scholars.
   0 Generally attentive to nuance within a scholar’s work and between scholars.
   - 1-2 Does not express awareness of subtlety in thought or variations in use of terms or concepts amongst scholars.

3. Organization and Presentation
   + 1-2 Organizes themes cogently (e.g., ‘X argues that vernacular dance is …’ While largely agreeing with this definition, Y goes on to argue that …’), grouping according to similarities and polarizing viewpoints where appropriate

4. Accuracy and Charity
   + 1 Is charitable and precise in its portrayal of viewpoints
   0 Is generally charitable and precise in its portrayal of viewpoints
   - Is unfair (‘strawmanning’) and unfocused

5. Voice
   + 1-4 Establishes voice and situates herself within the literature review
Dr. Brandon Shaw
www.bradonxshaw.com

0 Sometimes establishes a voice, expresses awareness of gaps and biases, and exercises critical thinking
- Predominantly/only reports scholars’ perspectives without commentary or critique.

6. Critical thinking
+ 1-4 Where relevant, author calls attention to gaps and biases in the scholarship and applies critical thinking skills (e.g., awareness of contradictions and inconsistencies) [interrogating sources]
0 Author reports views accurately, but does not reflect critically
- 1-4 Author’s failure to engage critically impairs the essay.

C. Definitions of terms and concepts [3 criteria, up to 3 pts each] 8 pts
1. + 1-2 Relevant terms are presented
2. + 1-3 Terms are defined citing appropriate sources; author glosses quotations and demonstrates comprehension
3. + 1-3 Author groups and differentiates amongst terms

D. Methodology [3 criteria, up to 2 pts each] 6 pts
1. + 1-2 Methods chosen are appropriate to the subject matter and author demonstrates comprehension of them
2. + 1-2 Author is familiar with relevant literature and debates within each method
3. + 1-2 Methodology expresses knowledge of advantages and limitations of the methods used

E. Rationale [3 criteria, up to 2 pts each] 6 pts
Positionality
1. + 1-2 Author articulates investment and interest in the issue prompting the essay.
2. + 1-2 Author expresses awareness of predilections and biases that inform her/his own perspective.

Intervention
3. + 1-2 Author is expressly prompted by a gap or misrepresentation in current scholarship.

F. Movement Analysis [3 criteria, up to 2 pts each] 6 pts
1. + 1-2 Provides a clear image of the movement described. Uses terminology (e.g., LMA or balletic) accurately.
2. + 1-2 Is evocative and provides sense of motion.
3. + 1-2 Centres upon aspects most significant for the essay; does not give equal weight to all movement.

IV. Conclusion [Choose A, B, or C and mark accordingly. Subtract 0-2 points for each criteria which is not present] [3 criteria, up to 2 pts each] 6 pts
A. Recapitulation
1. Conclusion accurately summarizes primary points of the essay.
2. Conclusion addresses perceivable weak points, loose ends, or topics noted to be addressed later in the essay.
3. Conclusion acknowledges what is learned from the course of the article.

B. Looking forward and or around
1. Conclusion identifies aspects or ramifications of the essay very relevant to an issue the author would like to discuss.
2. Conclusion addresses perceivable weak points, loose ends, or topics noted to be addressed later in the essay.
3. Conclusion articulate how the findings may intervene in dance studies discourse or activities or discourse related to the subject matter.

C. Subjective reflection
1. Conclusion identifies an aspect of the essay the author would like to discuss.
2. Author clearly articulates how a specific issue may impact her practice, thought, activism, etc.
3. While personal, the conclusion is not private, but is both relatable and relevant to a wider readership.

V. Bibliography and sources [3 criteria, up to 2 pts each] 6 pts
1. All cited sources appear in the Bibliography.
2. Sources are properly listed according to MHRA guidelines.
3. Bibliographic sources are proper to university-level essays.

Vi. Style and Structure [2 criteria, 3 sub-criteria, up to 2 pts each] 10 pts
1. Paragraph division
   + Each paragraph exhibits a clear assignment and chosen content, adding a specific contribution to the argument and contributing to the overall trajectory.
   0 Paragraphs are generally clear in topic and contribution
   - Paragraphs are unclear clear in topic and contribution. Several topics at work in each paragraph. Unclear what some topics are contributing to the essay.

2. Paragraph interrelation
   + Clear connection and cohesion between paragraphs. Conclusion of one paragraph may anticipate or introduce topic of the next. Following paragraph has clear relation to the preceding paragraph (e.g., respond to a question raised by the former, bring new information to light that interrogates what had previously seemed unproblematic)
   0 Paragraphs occasionally express sequence and cohesion.
   - Paragraphs have little relation with each other.

Quotations and Citations
3. + 1-2 Quotation is appropriately framed by an introduction to the quotation and some commentary afterward (usually indicating the author’s relation to the views expressed by the quotation).
4. + 1-2 Is the quotation relevant? (either supporting author’s point or providing case of counterpoint)
5. +1-2 Difficult and lengthier quotations are provided with a gloss (i.e., analysis via close-reading). Author’s reading of the quotation accurate and fair.

**Throughout the essay** point may be deducted according to…

**Semantics**: Is the writing clear? Can an informed, interested reader understand what you are writing and think along with you?

**Syntax**: are grammar, spelling, and punctuation as required by Department and University guidelines?

**Appearance and Formatting**: spacings and margins should be regular and in accordance with School guidelines and should not give the reader the impression that one is using large fonts, narrow margins, or large spacings to fill up the page. (Besides, it’s word count, not pages. Speaking of…)

**Verbosity (vs Economy)**: as opposed to figuring something out in your essay, know what you want to say and find the simplest means of doing so.

**Register**: is the writing style, ya know, like, appropriate to academic essays?

**Things I like to write about…**

Introductions
Clear statement of intent; comprehensive, and clearly structured. Fastidious, authoritative. Evocative with a clear orientation in the final question. Informed, beautifully written, and enticing. Provocative, promising an exciting journey with a knowledgeable guide.

Historical Framework and Biographies
Excellent economy and focus, choosing events and productions most crucial to the piece focused upon in the essay. Careful, informed analysis of complexity of intra-caste relations in southern India. Author remains on topic even while exploring many facets of Nijinsky’s life and career, and expertly navigates an impressive collection of biographic and critical sources.

Literature reviews
A well-chosen collection of authors. Difficult themes are managed elegantly with keen awareness of nuanced differences among authors and evolution of the term through its scholarly use over time. Brilliant critical voice and respectful interrogation of authors.
Good detective work seeking out gaps in scholarship! Excellent critique of a false dichotomy and offering of very serviceable substitution.

Body
Essay possesses a clear trajectory throughout. Signposting alerts reader that what may appear as a tangent will prove crucial to the argument. Writing maintains an intensity, passion, and clarity through the course of the essay. Selection of choreography functions as an effective rebuttal to the scholar’s argument, and the dance description is evocative and accurate. Paragraphs’ interrelationship express rhythmic call and response. Paragraphs cohere snuggly and express powerful logic.

Conclusion
While strong throughout, the conclusion demonstrates author’s ability to think independently beyond the parameters of the secondary literature. Conclusion expresses the gaps and dead ends of current research into the topic, and also proffers two plausible solutions. Essay bodes well for student’s future scholarship.

Bibliography
… [Nothing. I just want it complete and formatted correctly.]

Some concepts and terms you need in your (writing) life

Circumscription: marking off the territory or domain of your investigation
Trajectory: a sense of where you’re going
Interrogation: questioning sources, authors, and ways of thinking
Gaps: blind spots and areas left unaddressed (you should also seek out why that gap is there)
Positionality: articulation of your perspective (experience, biases, background)
Framing: here, a frame around longer quotations. Introduce it, explain it (gloss) if necessary, tell us what you think about it (if relevant), and tell us why it matters
Signposting: like signs that say ‘this way for Valletta’ or ’20km to Xemxija’ these let readers know where you’re going or remind us where we’ve been. Eg, ‘as was mentioned in the previous section’ or ‘it will be made clear in the following analysis that…’ Use only when necessary (and might not be necessary in essays under 3000 words).
Sourcing: backing up claims with reputable, certifiable sources. This is a guard against sweeping generalizations and just untruths.

Heinous Sins

---- Plagiarism: it’s disrespectful to other scholars (and you’ll fail)
---- Sweeping Generalizations: eg, speaking for large groups (of people, nations, eras, ethnicities) without awareness of dissenting or marginal voices
---- Beginning essays with ‘since the beginning of civilization/history’
---- Saying ‘dance’ when really you mean a specific kind of dance (eg, concert/staged dance by white choreographers in western Europe and North America)
----- Asking a really interesting question, then not answering it (boooooo!)

BS 23.4.2017