

COURSE SYLLABUS - OLLI
Seeing Dance: Understanding the Body in Motion
4 Week Course - Weds 3:30 – 5:00
October 4, 11, 18, 25

Instructor: Jan Erkert, Professor Emerita, Department of Dance, University of
Illinois

Description

This four-week course is an introduction to seeing and appreciating the art form of dance. This course will be focused on dance performances from the Dance at Illinois (DAI) that will be presented in Fall 2023. Participants will be encouraged to see the following performance:

October Dance at the Festival Theater, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts!

October 12-14, 2023 --Dance at Illinois (DAI) is thrilled to announce that former Martha Graham Dance Company Principal and Miller/Com Lecturer Miki Orihara and principle dancer Elizabeth Auclair will be setting Martha Graham's iconic work *Steps in the Street* (from *Chronicles*). Originally for 10 women, DAI will be reimagining the work for a cast of a mix of gender identifying students. This concert will also feature premieres by Professor Cynthia Oliver, new Assistant Professor Alexandra Barbier, and Assistant Head Anna Sapozhnikov.

[About October Dance](#)

[Get Tickets Here:](#)

Participants will learn how choreographers weave together bodies, movement, light, staging and sound to create meaning. During class sessions, interviews of guest choreographers and dancers from the productions will unveil the intimate collaboration that occurs between choreographers, dancers and designers. Participants will also playfully explore the choreographic process by creating a solo for Jan Erkert by directing and developing the movement, choosing the costumes, sound and staging.

Course Outline

Class #1 Oct 4 Seeing Dance –

- What makes dance, dance? We will explore all the elements which choreographers utilize to create a dance – space, time, energy, sound, movement, light, stage décor.

Class #2 Oct. 11 Guests: Elizabeth Auclair, principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company and students from the Department of Dance. This class will explore the iconic work *Steps in the Street* by Martha Graham, considered to be one of the mothers of modern dance. Interviews of DAI students and Elizabeth Auclair, a principal dancer with the Graham company, who will be setting the work on the students at DAI, will reveal the process between choreographers and dancers.

Class #3 Oct. 18 Guest Artists: Choreographers in October Dance: Anna Sapozhnikov, Cynthia Oliver, Alexandra Barbier.

- This class will feature interviews with Dance at Illinois faculty who created works for Dance at Illinois performance. The interview will focus on the processes of artistic collaboration with designers and the challenges of staging a work.

Class #4 Oct. 25

- How is a dance made? In this class, participants will create a solo dance for Instructor Erkert. We will discuss how movement is generated, how sound, lights, costume are chosen and how the weave of all the elements creates a gestalt of "meaning."

Subject to change based on student needs.

Research List and Reading List for Students (If interested)

Lerman, Liz. 2011. *Hiking the Horizontal, Field Notes from a Choreographer*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Rethorst, Susan. 2015. *A Choreographic Mind: Autobodygraphical Writings*. Helsinki: University of the Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy.

Preston-Dunlop, Valerie. 1998. *Looking at Dances, a Choreological Perspective on Choreography*. London, England: Verve Publishing.

Tharp, Twyla. 2003. *The Creative Habit, Learn it and Use It for Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Biography: Jan Erkert is a choreographer, dance educator and author. She is Professor Emerita at the University of Illinois where she served as Head of the Department of Dance from 2006-2022. As Artistic Director of Jan Erkert & Dancers she created over 70 works, which received national and international recognition. Erkert's current research

explores leadership from an artist's perspective. She has been awarded two major awards from the University of Illinois - the Executive Officer Distinguished Leadership Award, and the Larine Y. Cowan Make a Difference Award for Leadership in Diversity for her outstanding academic leadership and vision. Ms. Erkert is a Fulbright Scholar Awardee and a nationally renowned teacher having conducted guest artist residencies throughout the United States, Mexico, Europe and Asia. She is the author of Harnessing the Wind: The Art of Teaching Modern Dance and she received the 1999 Excellence in Teaching Award from Columbia College Chicago. She was selected to be a Public Voices Fellow in 2020 as part of the national OpEd Project, and has published numerous OpEds in such publications as CNN Opinion, The Chicago Sun Times, and Ms. Magazine. She is the Director of the Alumni OpEd Project at University of Illinois and is currently seeking publication of her manuscript, *Every Body has a Body Full of Wisdom, Stories of Leadership and Life*.