

# Interdisciplinary Dance Research Methods for Undergraduate Dance Program

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## I. Introduction

Undergraduate degree programs in dance are found in every region of the Korea. Course offerings in these programs tend to fall primarily into three distinct areas namely, dance technique courses (in a variety of genres such as Korean dance, Ballet, and Modern dance), classes that focus on the creative process or the development of choreography and courses in dance history. Notably, while many dance curriculums offer undergraduate students courses to enhance their performance skills such as dance techniques and technical production for dance (i.e. lighting/costume design, etc.), arts advocacy and dance education, remarkably few opportunities exist for students to study in areas such as arts administration, arts advocacy, and research methods appropriate for dance studies.<sup>1)</sup> While courses in dance research-its history, methodologies and challenges-abound in graduate degree programs, creating these opportunities for post-secondary students seems to have been widely overlooked. Programs seeking to provide their students with a well-rounded and comprehensive education in dance would do well to offer courses in dance research in their undergraduate degree programs.

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1) Kyung Hee Kim(1991), To broaden student's knowledge and understanding in dance as on academic discipline, *Dance Research Journal of Korea* 13, pp.54-62; Ji H. Kim and Hyung Gun Shin(2009), A study on improvement plan for theoretical courses in university dance program, *The Korean Journal of Physical Education Conference Proceeding* 47, pp.33-39; Gihwa Kim and Hyun-son Baek(2013), Proposal of 'GROOVE 360 TM KIDS' based teaching model for practical training. *The Journal of Korean Dance* 31(1), pp.27-47; Kyung-He Ko and Hyun-Soon Baek(2013), The prospect for dance department in the university, *The Journal of Korean Dance* 31(3), pp.23-40.

Dance is most often recognized as a performance art and most faculties of University dance programs in Korea have their own dance companies and actively engaged in producing dances.<sup>2)</sup> Undoubtedly, when a university degree program in dance develops its marketing materials, they include as many images as possible of their students in the act of choreographing, rehearsing or performing movement. While the physical act of dancing is and arguably should remain at the center of dance degree programs for undergraduates, universities and colleges should recognize other aspects of the field. It is the research that has been conducted in dance that has provided a foundation for the study of the art form. Dance research can be practice-based, ethnographic, historical or anthropological. These ways of approaching dance have constituted a large portion of the research that has validated and enhanced the discipline. Through research, dance programs for undergraduates provide course that help students be able to connect their beliefs, thoughts, stories, and meanings to dance. How do we learn about dances from our past? How do we learn about the boundaries of and challenges in human movement? How are we to ascertain the relevance of dance in its social cultural or historical context? What can the dances of the world around us tell us about human development? These questions, which are integral to understanding dance and the growing complexity of our global society, are not answered through performance or the refinement of technique: it is research into the meanings, histories, languages and movements of dance that provide the answers. Undergraduate degree programs should not only cultivate brilliant dancers and students with a general awareness of dance history and ancillary fields. It is important that undergraduate students be equipped with the analytical tools necessary to have a deeper understanding of dance and its connection to society.

## II. Issues on Dance Research Methods

In the article '*The Prospect for Dace Department in the University*,' Kyung-He Ko and Hyun-Soon Baek argue that undergraduate dance programs need to have more dance studies based classes in order to nurture creative students be equipped with diversity and expertise, pointing the problems of an entrance system in dance departments in Korea.<sup>3)</sup> In addition, Kyung Hee Kim, a professor in dance, indicates that encouraging students "to learn and research the dance studies"<sup>4)</sup> is the most important responsibility for university dance programs. It will also help "to prepare them for a variety of careers and to broaden their knowledge, and experience in the dance field."<sup>5)</sup> Every dance major student will not develop into a professional performer or choreographer. This fact should not discourage

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2) Ki-Sook Cho(2013), A study of 'practice based research' in dance: Focusing on the concepts and process, *The Korean Research Journal of Dance Documentation* 31, p.231.

3) Kyung-He Ko and Hyun-Soon Baek(2013), pp.23-40.

4) Kyung Hee Kim(1991), p.55.

5) Ibid.

undergraduate students with an interest or passion for dance; there are other ways to remain in the field without becoming a performer or choreographer. Opportunities to write about dance, to conduct independent research and to use movement as a therapy are available in the dance field. Moreover, it should be noted that professional dance companies and dance/arts advocacy and philanthropic organizations look to hire persons with expertise in arts administrations and broader understanding of the discipline. Students should be made aware of the diversity of opportunities that abound in the dance field beyond performance; what better place for them to learn this than in their undergraduate degree program? Furthermore, students can be introduced during their undergraduate studies to the physical, intellectual and analytical skills that they will need in order to succeed in the dance field or in the career of their choice.

Providing undergraduate students with an opportunity to learn about and practice the application of various methodologies for dance research would present several opportunities. Research skills give students 1) the ability to access, obtain and interpret information is necessary, 2) the ability to work independently, and 3) the ability to be resourceful—to deal imaginatively, skillfully and promptly in difficult and/or new situations—is pivotal to career success. Effective research demonstrates one’s ability to interpret and apply knowledge in a variety of ways. If a student decides to pursue graduate study in dance or a related field in the performing arts, humanities or ancillary disciplines, broad familiarity with research methodologies give them with an advantage: they will be better prepared to meet the challenges advanced coursework. Most importantly, providing undergraduate students with the opportunity to learn and practice research methods in dance places them within the larger historical scope of the dance field. Dance scholar Janet Adshead-Lansdale addresses this last point in her book *The Study of Dance*. Recognizing dance as “a structure and disciplined area of study” within the arts, Lansdale a UK-based scholar points out that “it[dance] must be demonstrated that these processes, skills and techniques exist, in relation to composition, performance and interpretation.”<sup>6)</sup> While Lansdale acknowledges that “knowing in dance is not a simple matter but a complex way of using different sources of information and skills,” she supports the notion that structures of the study of dance within the educational system are “required which lay out the relevant concepts, the methods of procedure, etc., which are appropriate to study.”<sup>7)</sup>

In Ki-Sook Cho’s *A Study of ‘Practice Based Research’ in Dance*, the author speaks that the Korean dance professors who perform and research in University should work to illuminate their dances through research. By exploring ‘Practice Based Research’, Cho decisively points out dance should be paired with research or research based learning in higher education. As a scholarly creative work, practice based research is a way to question, ask, and find the answer by collecting and analyzing somatic data which a researcher writes in the first person about what (s)he experienced in his/her

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6) Janet Adshead-Lansdale(1981), *The Study of Dance*(London: Dance Books), p.12.

7) Ibid.

body. While dance has been interpreted by critics and audiences, Cho indicates that practice based research empowers voices of dancers. Research in dance is not an “ivory tower of dance” rather, she points out, it is a way to “integrate the practical and research.”<sup>8)</sup>

Lansdale and Cho make insightful comments as to why undergraduate students should have an opportunity to study and practice dance research methods. Lansdale points out that the diverse methods used to research dance empower investigators to produce a variety of research outcomes ranging from and including performances, texts and other scholarly projects. Cho goes on to elucidate how Korean dance professors in particular should make use of analysis as a means of researching their dances. This capability to generate both performed and written research dance are important aspects of any comprehensive education. Undergraduate students pursuing degrees in dance need to develop these competencies so that they might be inspired not only to create and perform, but to understand and contextualize their work within the broader landscape of the dance field.

Dance research by its very nature is interdisciplinary, interfacing with sociology, performance studies, communication, anthropology, music and history. Consequently, students who pursue dance research are broadening their academic horizons by become conversant with a variety of disciplines. The ability to engage a broad set of interests and assimilate large amounts of information is significant for students who choose to pursue graduate level work. Undergraduate degree programs have a responsibility to prepare their students for graduate work in a manner that is conducive to the rigor and demands of advanced research.

Undergraduate courses in dance research methods have the potential of empowering students to pursue a broad set of interests within the field and beyond. Such courses encourage the development of life skills and additional competencies that are transferrable both to advanced degree work and the job market. By providing students with these opportunities, college and university dance programs can take the lead in fostering interdisciplinary scholarship amongst their students while continuing the legacy of dance research. Undergraduate students will be able to situate their performance and/or choreography within larger contexts and histories. The result of an undergraduate course that teaches research methods in dance is the development of young scholar-artists who are able to connect what they do both performed and written-and to the world around them in a meaningful way. Students who are exposed to such a course move forward with both the analytical and creative tools needed to fully comprehend dance. It is with these ideas and priorities in mind that the program, *Introduction to Dance Research Methods* is offered.

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8) Ki-Sook Cho(2013), p.255.

### III. Proposal for Dance Course: Introduction to Dance Research Methods

As a dance teacher at a Korean college, I realize that research skills are as important as performance skills in dance. I have seen more students with majors in dance go on to take master's programs in dance or other related studies than join dance companies. After taking studio dance classes that were mainly focused on performance skills in my undergraduate study, I was not clear on what I should study when I came to US. Although I finally decided on my research topic, I hoped that there would be a class that will inform multiple perspectives and ways of dance research to guide student research at the undergraduate level. The goal of dance programs in Korea is to train students to develop as highly skilled performers. As such, the need for offering programs of research methodology to undergraduate students is strong. I am proposing a new course, named '*Introduction to Dance Research Methods*,' to be added to the curriculum for undergraduate dance programs in Korea.

This course would guide students to think about what areas to study; why they have chosen that area and how to conduct research in that area. The *Introduction to Dance Research Methods* class will help students to think more critically and articulate with clarity their thinking process. Sally Gardner states that,

The question of practice as research is not a superficial one. It is a way of helping us to 'think what we are doing' in the broadest sense of questioning how we are living our research and knowledge production processes and what benefit, implications and vision this may contain for lives as they are actually lived.<sup>9)</sup>

Questioning as a beginning to research will help students develop the ability to investigate a subject or idea. It requires that the investigator to know not only what questions to ask of its subject or idea but also what methods to employ in order to seek out an answer or achieve a desired end. This ability is no less relevant to the study of dance than to any other field as evidenced by the abundance of dance research courses present in Masters and Doctoral level programs in the field, internationally. If graduate students in dance are routinely encouraged to develop an understanding of research methodologies and problems presented by trying to gain a greater and deeper understanding of dance, why aren't undergraduates in Korea given a similar opportunity in their degree programs?

#### 1. Overview

*Introduction to Dance Research Methods* is intended to be taught in the context of an undergraduate dance program leading to a Bachelors of Arts (BA) or Bachelors of Fine Arts (BFA) degree as a part

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9) Sally Gardner(2012), *Practicing research, researching practice: Thinking through contemporary dance*, *Cultural Studies Review* 18(1), p.148.

of its core curriculum for majors. This course is a writing-intensive course that will satisfy the “arts” section of college or university core curriculum. The course will make use of both student-centered and active learning approaches. As such, *Introduction to Research Methods* will incorporate class discussions, written assignments and “think-write-speak (TWS)” activities and will give students an opportunity to develop group projects, evaluate the work of their peers and fulfill course objectives.

## 2. Course Goals and Objectives

The goals of the course are to develop a working knowledge of research methods used in contemporary dance scholarship. The course is intended to enable students to develop basic proficiency in applying appropriate research ethics, protocols and methods in dance research.

The course objectives are intended to explain the concrete measure by which the aforementioned goals will be realized. By the end of one semester in the course, students will be able to do the following:

- **Develop** a working definition of dance research
- **Distinguish** between primary and secondary sources
- **Analyze** choreography by using thick-movement description
- **Apply** ethnographic, historical and practice-based approaches to dance research
- **Create** a portfolio demonstrating mastery of dance research methods

## 3. Course Topics

Topics to be covered in the course will be engaged in the following order;

- **What is Research?** - Unit to guide students to a general understanding of scholarly inquiry.
- **Analyzing Dance** – Unit to introduce students to research techniques for dance including thick-movement description.
- **Dance Research: Ethnographic Approaches** – Unit to introduce students to ethnographic approaches to dance inquiry.
- **Dance Research: Historical Approaches** – Unit to introduce students to historical approaches to dance inquiry.
- **Dance Research: Practice-based Approaches** – Unit to introduce students to practice-based approaches to dance inquiry.

## 4. Course Strategies

What follows are the activities, exercises and assessment techniques that will be used in the course. Course strategies are intended to remain flexible in order to allow for both active learning and student-centered approaches to assignments and assessment.

<Table 1> Course Strategies for activities, exercises and assessment techniques

Course Objectives	Strategy: Activity/Exercise	Assessment	Notes
To guide students to a general understanding of scholarly inquiry.	<p>A pair activity: Students will work independently to develop definitions of research. Students will then form pairs to combine the strongest elements of their independent definitions of research. Each set of students will present their definition to the class.</p> <p>Short Paper Exercise: Students will complete a short written exercise in class where they reflect on the process of developing the class's definition of research for the semester. Students will be asked to focus on their contribution to the process.</p>	<p>As a class, the students will work together to select the strongest components of the research definitions created by the pairs. The students as a group will then develop a working definition of research that they will continue to reference throughout the semester.</p> <p>Instructor will read through all short papers and provide feedback. Feedback is intended to guide students through a reflective process where they can understand their relationship and attitude towards their research.</p>	<p>A paired activity will be facilitated by instructor. Instructor will not supply students with research definitions prior to the activity.</p> <p>Both assignments will be supplemented by course readings and lectures.</p>
To introduce students to find resources	Students will work in pairs to collect literature and resources related to conducting research. Students will work as teams and visit libraries such as University library, Korea National Archives of the Arts in order to collect resources.	Students will work as a class to generate a set of processes that would inform research practices. This set of processes will be referenced by the class for the remaining of the semester.	Instructor will meet students at University library and Korea National Archives of the Arts as a fieldtrip and collect students' paper on their process.

The following table addresses the course goal of providing students with a broad background in and working knowledge of research methods used in contemporary dance scholarship.

<Table 2> Course Strategies for the Course Goal

Course Objectives	Strategy: Activity/Exercise	Assessment	Notes
To introduce students to investigation techniques for dance	Thick Movement Description: Students will work independently to draft a thick movement description of a one-minute phrase from a piece of choreography of their choice.	Each student will be asked to read their description aloud while another class member or members try to execute the phrase. The class will then offer feedback on the strength or weakness of the description. Assignment will receive a "plus" grade for completion. No letter grade will be assigned; completion of the activity constitutes a passing grade.	The written exercise will be turned in to the instructor for feedback and be supplemented by course readings and lectures.
To introduce students to anthropological approaches to dance inquiry.	Students will work as teams to draft an anthropological research study plan of a dance community of their choice; emphasis will be placed on the socio-cultural questions that the study will seek to answer. Students will present their research plan to the class.	Class will be instructed to raise questions related to ethical issues and other problems related to the study.	Activity will be supplemented by two course readings of anthropological dance studies

To introduce students to ethnographic approaches to dance inquiry.	Students will conduct ethnographic field work in a local dance community; emphasis will be on what interior information they can glean about the community through becoming a part of it for a brief period. Students will present a summary of their research findings to the class.	Class will be instructed to raise questions concerning the field practices of their peers related to ethical conduct and participant observation.	Activity will be supplemented by two course readings of ethnographic dance studies.
To introduce students to historical approaches to dance inquiry.	Students will research a specific piece of choreography and write a historical report on it, making use of primary and secondary resources. Students will present a summary of their history to the class	Class will be instructed to raise questions concerning research ethics and treatment of source materials by their peers.	Activity will be supplemented by two course readings of historical dance studies.
To introduce students to practice-based approaches to dance inquiry.	Students will be guided to develop a set of questions in order to conduct a studio-based exploration of a selected topic. In teams, students will present their movement exploration and additional research findings to the class.	Class will be instructed to ask their peers about their research process, including selection of topic and project outcomes.	Activity will be supplemented by two course readings of practice-based dance studies.

## 5. Citation and Explanation of Resources

*Introduction to Dance Research Methods* will make use of the following texts listed in order of use.

### *Required Course Readings*

1. “Thinking in Print: The Uses of Research, Public and Private.” The Craft of Research. Booth, Wayne C., et al. Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 9-16.  
(Used to introduce the concept of research to students)
2. “What is Research?” Jung Gyu Y., ed., Fundamentals of Research Methodology. Seoul: Bummun Education, 2011. 4-7.  
(Used to introduce the concept of research to students)
3. Kim, Hyun Jung. “Critical Remarks on the Ethnographic Studies of Dance.” *Dance Research Journal of Korea*, 2010. 64: 55-85.  
(Used to introduce students to ethnographic approaches to dance research)
4. Buckland, Theresa J. “Introduction: Reflecting on Dance Ethnography.” Buckland, Theresa J., ed., Dance in the Field: Theory, Methods and Issues in Dance Ethnography. New York: St Martin’s Press, 1999. 1-10.  
(Used to introduce students to ethnographic approaches to dance research)
5. Frosch, Joann D. “Dance Ethnography: Tracing the Weave of Dance in the Fabric of Culture.” Fraleigh, Sondra Horton and Penelope Hanstein, eds Researching Dance: Evolving Modes of

- Inquiry. Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999. 249-280.  
(Used to introduce students to ethnographic approaches to dance research)
6. Song, Jongkun. "An Enquiry on the Contemporary Methodologies of Studying Dance History." *Dance Research Journal of Korea*, 2004. 39: 195-206.  
(Used to introduce students to historical approaches to dance research)
7. Dils, Ann and Ann Cooper Albright. "The Pleasures of Studying Dance History." Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press. 2003 2-6.  
(Used to introduce students to historical approaches to dance research)
8. Van Zile, Judy. "The Many Faces of Korean Dance." Dils, Ann and Ann Cooper Albright, eds., Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press. 2003. 178-190.  
(Used to introduce students to historical approaches to dance research)
9. Cho, Ki-Sook. "A Study of 'Practice Based Research' in Dance-Focusig on the Concepts and Process." *The Korean Research Journal of Dance Documentation*, 2013, 31: 229-255.  
(Used to introduce students to practice-based approaches in dance research)
10. Cancienne, Mary Beth and Celeste N. Snowber. "Writing Rhythm: Movement as Method." Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice. New York: The Guilford Press. 2009. 198-214.  
(Used to introduce students to practice-based approaches in dance research)
11. Barton, N., Friberg, Carsten., and Parekh-Gaihede, Rose. At the Intersection between Art and Research: Practice-Based Research in the Performing Arts. Portland: Ringgold Inc. 2010. 1-360.  
(Used to introduce students to practice-based approaches in dance research)

## 6. Assessment

For assessment, the course will incorporate in-class and homework assignments. In-Class assignment will be three sections: Think-Speak-Write Activity, Short Paper, Case Study Interpretations. Instructions for these assignments will be given in class on the day they will be presented. The assignments are graded on a pass/fail basis where completion of the assignment constitutes a passing grade. For the Thick-Movement-Description Assignment, students will work independently to draft a short thick movement description from a one-minute long piece of choreography of their choice. For the ethnographic Inquiry, Students will conduct ethnographic field work in a local dance community. Students will write up a 300-400 words report on the observation and present a summary of their research findings to the class. For, historical Inquiry, students will research a specific piece of choreography and write a historical report on it, making use of primary and secondary resources. Students will present a summary of their history to the class. For practice-based

inquiry, students will be guided to develop a set of research questions in order to conduct a studio-based exploration of a selected topic. In teams, students will present their movement exploration and additional research findings to the class. For finals, students will submit all written work from the semester in one portfolio. The portfolio will include a 2-3 page reflection essay written by the student.

## IV. Conclusion

*Introduction to Dance Research Methods* is proposed as a course intended to provide undergraduate students with an understanding of research methods employed in contemporary dance scholarship. The course will use a spectrum of activities, teaching strategies and assessment techniques in order to complement diverse learning styles and facilitate an inclusive classroom setting. Designed to expose and empower students in a broad range of research methodologies, the course should not duplicate any other course given in another department. The course will benefit any dance major by providing undergraduate students an opportunity to approach the dance field from a research perspective. Additionally, the course will give students the necessary resources to analyze and interpret dance and apply various research practices in an ethical, informed and logical manner. The intellectual development of the students will be fostered by the application of developmental learning strategies that are both active and student-centered in their approach.

The proposed course connects to and supports other dance department offerings in three ways. First, the course provides students with a new way to approach studio practice. The refinement of technique is no longer an end in itself; it is necessary in order to support research agendas where movement-based inquiry is the selected methodology. Secondly, dance history courses will perhaps become more approachable and of interest since the students will be given an opportunity to work as historians in the proposed course. Lastly, it should be noted that the proposed course supports the development of analytical and critical thinking skills which can be applied to other classes. It should be noted that the proposed course introduces students to qualitative research methods which can be applied in the social sciences, thereby supporting the education of the student in courses outside the dance department. The focus of dance education is to develop the student by equipping him or her with resources that further their ability to perform analysis and critiques of written and performed texts. Furthermore, the student is vested with the responsibility to make competent, creative, unique contributions to the discipline.

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논문투고일 2015. 6. 15

심사일 2015. 6. 22

심사완료일 2015. 7. 15

## 학제간 무용학연구법에 관한 대학 무용 프로그램 개발

박 정 선

중앙대, 한성대 강사

본 연구는 현대 무용학 분야에서 전개되고 있는 무용연구법을 다양한 이해와 시각을 가지고 접근하도록 돕는 대학 무용 연구법 프로그램을 개발하는데 그 목적이 있다. 한국의 대학 무용 커리큘럼이 실기위주로 편향되어 있음을 지적하고, 졸업 이후의 무용 전공생들의 진로를 고려하여 무용연구법 프로그램을 통한 기초지식에 대한 탐구와 연구법을 학제간 다방면으로 소개하고 그 중요성을 살펴본다. 무용연구법을 통해 무용에 관한 생각, 스토리, 신념, 그리고 의미들을 춤과 연결할 수 있다. 따라서 본 연구는 무용 연구법의 현위치를 조명하고, 연구법에 관한 다양한 시각과 이슈를 논의하며, 대학 무용 전공생들에게 춤과 사고를 연결시켜줄 수 있는 학제간 무용연구법을 소개하는 무용프로그램을 소개한다.

키워드: 학제간 무용연구법 (Interdisciplinary dance research methods), 대학무용프로그램(Undergraduate program in dance), 학생중심 교육(Student-centered education), 고등교육(Higher education), 대학무용 전공생(Undergraduate dance students)