



Critical Dance Experiments
March 5th - 6th, 2026
University of California - Riverside

"To ignore flesh is to ignore how bodies have been made to speak difference" (Hortense Spillers, Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book)

Critical Dance Experiments is a conference organized by MFA and PhD students in UC Riverside's Department of Dance in collaboration with the 2026 Current Topics in Dance Research Colloquium Series - it aims to rethink dance scholarship in its multiple forms, at the nexus of theory and praxis, and in response to the urgencies of our shared times and places. We consider flesh in its potential to interrupt, intervene, and/or reimagine an existence otherwise, seeking to address how our embodied practices, choices, and pedagogies as artists, educators and scholars transit between multiple conceptions of what the body is and what dance and performance do, and understanding the need to build coalition not against but through difference.

By calling in Hortense Spillers' theory of flesh, we name the labor of Black women/femme scholars and artists who have contributed to shaping Dance Studies. We continue to interrogate racialized and gendered assumptions of personhood that underlie foundational terms and keywords in dance and performance, such as choreography, technique, performativity, and "the body". We are interested in how academic research, aesthetic practices and teaching methodologies may contribute to disrupting or upholding hegemonic structures that condition our ways of being and perceiving the world.

We are soliciting proposals from across and beyond the arts and humanities that address dance and performance as a meaning-making practice, and/or that consider the social and individual body as a site of agency, refusal or compliance. We ask questions such as:

- What does centering the body/flesh activate as dance emerges during critical times?
- What is the body? What is choreography? What can dance and performance do? What happens when we question the assumptions behind these concepts?
- In what ways can the intersections of race, gender, class and other categories of difference contribute to interrogations of these keywords in dance and performance studies?
- How can our embodied practices help to build coalition through difference across communities?

- What does it mean to place dance and performance at the center of technology and innovation?
- How can disciplines outside of dance and performance studies benefit from an embodied approach?

We are excited to receive submissions that approach questions of the body from multiple perspectives. The examples below suggest possible areas of exploration:

Identity & Coalition

- Raciality, gender, and sexuality
- Confronting anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, anti-Brownness, anti-Asianness
- Confronting anti-queerness
- Queering as method and praxis
- Religious identity
- Worldmaking and placemaking across performance and everyday life

Care, Community and Healing

- Practices of care and wellbeing
- Embodied and community-based care
- Spirituality and the body
- Healing modalities and embodied knowledge traditions

Technology and its Implications

- Dance and technology
- Materiality/ephemerality of the body, performance, and media
- Mediation/Immediation
- Materiality of film

Archival Practices

- The body as archive / counter-archive / anarchive
- Speculative fictions
- Temporalities of memory
- Black/Indigenous/ancestral futurities

Resistance/Refusal

- Critical pedagogies
- Decolonization
- Subjectivity and agency / practices of refusal
- Surveillance and sousveillance
- Governance / ungovernability
- Labor and economies of value

Flesh, Sensation, & Embodied Experimentation

- Erotics
- Somatics
- Embodiment
- Flesh and affect
- Scores, improvisation, and structured open forms
- Experimental performance and multimedia adaptation
- Praxis as theory & practice as research

We welcome works situated within diverse fields, from the arts to the humanities to STEM. We accept proposals for individual paper presentations (20 minutes), poster presentations, pre-formed panels (105 minutes | 35 minutes per speaker), performances (max: 30 minutes) and workshops (75 minutes). To submit, please complete this [form](#) by **December 30th, 2025**. You will be asked to submit a 250-word abstract along with a short bio and any technical requirements/specifications for your presentation/project/performance. Selected presenters will be notified by **January 12th, 2026**.

For submission inquiries, please contact us at mcole053@ucr.edu or edac002@ucr.edu.

TIMELINE	
Nov. 20th	Call for proposals open
Dec. 30th	Deadline for submissions
Jan. 15th	Notification of accepted proposal submissions
Jan. 31st	Deadline to accept presentation slot