

# Speculative Choreographies

BODIES, ECONOMIES, AND  
MOVEMENT IN A WORLD IN FLUX

## 2026 HUB Descriptions

### **Speculative Choreographies: Bodies Economies, and Movement in a World in Flux** California State University, Long Beach October 23-25, 2026

Hubs are meant to gather individuals around a stated theme, meeting two or three times over the course of the conference. More than any other presentation format, HUBs allow participants to gather repeatedly in close community throughout the conference - offering the potential for deep engagement. Below are the 10 HUBs chosen from those submitted by DSA's working groups for the 2026 conference. Each HUB is specifically programmed and curated, so please read the HUB description to better understand the theme and format of each one. The 2026 submission portal will open on December 19 and you may choose to submit to one of these 10 Hubs.

### **Speculative Leadership: Chairing/Coordinating Dance Programs in 21st Century Higher Education**

HUB Facilitator: Heather Castillo

People chairing, coordinating, advising, or holding leadership positions in dance programs face a multitude of challenges. Various factors shape decision making such as enrollment management, operational budgets, administrative pressures, resource allocation, student demands, etc. These positions often come with little compensation or release time, though many of us step into these roles to create possibility within dysfunctional/antiquated systems that value product over process. We often have to advocate and answer the question to both students and upper administration: what is the ROI of a dance degree with the escalating costs of higher education in the 21st century?

This hub will convene three panels consisting of four to five 10 minute micro-papers followed by a group discussion on the overall theme/topic each day. Please submit a micro-paper topic on a panel topic you would like to present on. These abstracts do not have to have the "answers" but can also pose a question, scenario, or challenge that you face in dance leadership.

### **Panel One: The Economic Considerations of Dance Leadership**

Discussion topics can be around operational budgets, endowments, funding, expenses, deferred maintenance costs, resources, facilities, time budgets etc

### **Panel Two: Curriculum in Flux**

Curricular pathways and a pathway to employment are shaping dance degrees. AI initiatives, technology, a broadening spectrum of research in the field of Dance Studies along with student demand, and the dance industry are at the forefront of curricular change. In what ways might we best use our leadership roles to shape the future of 21st-century dance education?

### **Panel Three: Honing the elevator pitch for dance**

What does it mean to constantly have to advocate for the value of dance? What strategies, skills, ideas, theories, and speculations swirl the corners of your mind as you try to ensure your program can not only survive, but thrive into the next century.

## ***Tropicalar: Choreographies of Peripheral Intensities***

HUB Facilitators/Presenters: Bianca Scliar, Patrícia Machado, Valkyrie Yao, María Regina Firmino-Castillo, Erika Villeroy da Costa, & Sanchita Sharma (Organizer)

This Hub proposes *tropicalar* as both a concept and a practice: a corporeal strategy emerging from Brazilian Tropicalism (Tropicália) (Oiticica 1967) rearticulated in the frame of contemporary dance research as a mode of moving through contradiction, excess, and colonial entanglement. The term refers dubiously to a stumble, to become tropical, but we imply it as a specific quality, moreover, as a modality of moving with the environment.

Rather than understanding the tropics as an exotic geography, we approach them as a periphery of intensity—a zone where climate, colonial history, racialized bodies, and global cultural flows collide. As we stumble, unstable choreographic conditions are generated, drawing from the tropicalist logic of cultural cannibalism (*antropofagia*) (de Andrade 1928).<sup>1</sup> In order to approach a process of devouring dominant cultural codes, we discuss transformation through distortion, improvisation, excretion and sensory overload, which enable opaque zones of sociability and accents to be tended for.

As we experiment and share *maze*-tendencies,<sup>2</sup> we investigate modes of distraction/attraction and discuss dispossession, expropriation of cultural juxtapositions and hierarchies of

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<sup>1</sup> *Anthropophagy* is a key concept in Brazilian modernism, introduced by Oswald de Andrade in his 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago*. It proposes a critical cultural cannibalism, devouring and transforming foreign influences to create something new from a local, often marginalized perspective.

<sup>2</sup> *Maze tendencies* is not a formal concept but appears in Paola Berenstein Jacques' reading of Hélio Oiticica's work, connecting non-linear, deviant spatial experiences to the aesthetics of *ginga* and favela architecture. At Dé nétem Touan Bona, *Sagesse des lianes- Cosmopoétiques du refugee* (2021), the author refers to a way of life centered on preserving multiple viable pathways rather than committing to a single trajectory.

importance. Examining movements in the making, we dedicate our gathering to activate discussions of loss—of rights, of land, of recognition, of sovereignty, of matrixes of movement—where dispossession appears as a force that reveals the interdependent materiality of bodies and their possibilities of acting in common. The notion of dispossession in this context shifts the bonds with logics of ownership and individual autonomy, opening space for forms of cohabitation and relationality that are sustained by vulnerability, listening, instability, wandering, and care.

*Tropicar* thus becomes a choreographic proposition that operates through non-sovereign practices, producing modes of co-existence that occur in the gaps of categorized movements. The *tropico* marks the syncope, the *marron*, the suspended, hesitation, the ginga, the swing that carries movement itself (Rosa 2015).

This HUB invites scholars, artists, and practitioners to collectively research how peripheral intensities generate movement knowledge, aesthetic disruption, and embodied epistemologies beyond Eurocentric paradigms of dance analysis and practices. The HUB will explore questions such as:

- How can *tropicar* operate as a counter-colonial anti-methodic choreographic practice? In what ways does instability operate as a productive force in dance-making from the Global South?
- How does choreographic thinking travel, mutate, and is translated as artists navigate migration, diaspora, and uneven cultural power relations?
- How do heat and moisture, precarity, and cultural syncretism shape corporeal practices in tropical and subtropical contexts?
- How might Practice-as-Research be imagined as a relational methodology that helps theorize these peripheral intensities?

The HUB, proposed by the Practice-as-Research working group, will function as an experimental laboratory where dance operates not as representation of the tropics, but as a practice emerging from its contradictions. We will combine somatic practices with readings from Latin American countercolonial theory, performance studies, and Tropicalist aesthetics. We welcome participants from diverse contexts interested in postcolonial dance studies, Global South epistemologies, and experimental choreographic practices.

We imagine the HUB to convene over three ninety-minute sessions with four presentations each day, followed by a group discussion. Six participants will be selected through the DSA submission portal. We will have a total of 12 participants including the Hub facilitators who will also present their research. Each participant will have 15-minutes to lead the HUB towards short movement scores, creative writing sessions, paper presentations, dialogues, and theoretical exchanges and more. Our facilitators will work as discussants as well (2/day) and will offer feedback on presentations and guide us towards collective discussions.

This HUB welcomes in-person participation. Hub facilitators will be open to accommodating one or two online presentations. As much as we would like to provide a seamless experience in the

hyflex modality, please keep in mind that there might be gaps that the HUB facilitators will not be able to fill between in-person and online presentations due to the nature of selected presentations.

## **Queer and Trans Choreographies and Counter-Narratives HUB**

HUB Facilitators: Clare Croft, Irvin Manuel Gonzalez, & Bhumi B Patel

How does queer dance emerge across a range of geographies and catalyze political solidarity? In her introduction to the 2021 edition of foundational woman of color feminist, queer, and anti-racist text *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981/2021), Chicana lesbian scholar and artist Cherríe Moraga proposes that radical work has always been invested in “looking to our home grounds” to do “the hard connective labor of coalition, compassion and consciousness.” The Queer and Trans Choreographies and Counter-narratives Hub, facilitated by dance researchers from DSA’s cuir/quare/queer dance working group, will explore Moraga’s proposal, considering how queerness is enacted and examined through dance in relationship to lands, histories, and peoples across a range of geographies, deviant domesticities, and queer imaginaries. As we gather on the lands of the Tongva people, in the metro Los Angeles area, and in proximity to the Mexico-US border, researchers in the HUB will come together to explore questions and (un)tangle knots related to the gender binary and decolonization; queer and trans approaches to methods; and other topics related to the geographies that birth, circulate, and transform queer/cuir/quare dance. This might include cuir movidas and their radical affiliations, queer and trans migrant networks, gossip, storytelling, historiography, ethnography, dancemaking, dancing, and beyond.

As queerness often demands a variety of modes of engagement, we intentionally shape a HUB that equally values those working in writing, in dancing/choreography, and/or at the intersection of these practices. We expect to select approximately 15 participants who will circulate work-in-progress (in either written or video form) prior to the conference, and then—both through thematically organized subgroups and through the larger group—engage with one another’s work. We hope to work together with delight and intensity across two ninety-minute (ideally) in-person sessions during the conference.

## **Dancing in the Dark: Nightlife in Dark Times**

HUB Facilitators: Theresa Goldbach, Erica Acevedo-Ontiveros, Jen Atkins, Christine Şahin

During difficult times, many find comfort in the communities and celebrations of nightlife. However, it is also in such challenging times when nightlife centers and cultures are most threatened. Some threats come from outside, from over regulation and policing by municipal or government forces, or from economic forces like gentrification. Some threats are internal, from the physical dangers that come with aging, to struggles over signification and ownership of ludic dance practices. In addition, the act of researching nightlife can bring its own setbacks and

difficulties, from issues of access to the association of nightlife with vice and a pathologizing of the simple act of going out to party.

This HUB seeks to address these difficulties, as well as other unique issues for anyone researching nightlife. We welcome a broad range of topics associated with the precarity of nightlife scenes as well as the precarity of participating in such scenes. We hope to foster rich conversations, share strategies, and think through the historical value and importance of these scenes. We also hope to dance and laugh and share a joyful space. Maybe we'll even party like it's 1999!

Potential topics:

- Nightlife during times of oppression, repression, and persecution
- Social dance as revolution
- Roles of marginalized communities in creation, evolution, and popularization of social and street dance
- Dance music and nightlife
- Ludic spaces of nightlife as sites of resistance
- Nightlife and sexuality; queer nightlife scenes in oppressive environments
- Gender and nightlife
- Disappearance/precariety of nightlife practices, scenes, histories
- Valorization of nightlife - monetary value vs cultural/social value
- Role of control substances in social dance practices
- Counterculture nightlife as counternarrative
- Aging, ageism, and nightlife; too young or too old for the club
- Nightlife and social capital
- The use of space or idea of place in clubs and venues; microstories of individual nightlife figures, venues or local scenes

This HUB accepts proposals from remote presenters.

## **Materialist Approaches to Dance Studies**

HUB Facilitators: Juliana DeVaan & Emily Hawk

The Histories of Dance Working Group was formed in 2023 to connect dance scholars whose work is grounded in archival research methods. Our members study a range of movement styles, in various periods, across geographic regions and languages, but are united by a devotion to a historical materialist study of dance. We held our first in-person meeting in 2025 at the DSA conference in Washington, D.C., and for the past three years, we have met annually for a day-long symposium. We have more than 150 members.

Our HUB at DSA's 2026 meeting, "Materialist Approaches to Dance Studies," will expand the work of our previous symposia, which have educated dance scholars in practical archival skills and shared research-in-progress that utilize archives creatively. Over the course of

three days, we will hold three roundtables that feature between three to five speakers exploring these themes. We welcome paper and presentation proposals that fit with any of the three themes, as you see fit.

The first will address political economies of dance. How do we “follow the money” in our research, and what is the place of political and economic history in our studies of dance? How should we engage histories of arts funding in our work? Subjects of interest include the National Endowment for the Arts, State and Municipal arts councils, private foundations, individual donors and development practices, and the place of dance in neoliberal service economies.

A second roundtable will explore how we can connect histories of dance to broader historical narratives. As Lynn Garafola, a senior advisor to the HDWG, recounted in her presentation at our 2025 symposium, she began her career before the era of digitized newspapers; combing through print runs in search of reviews of the Ballet Russes, she realized that the premiere of Agnes De Mille’s Rodeo coincided with one of the bloodiest battles of WWII, giving the cheerful choreography new meaning in context. How can we situate dance within social and political context beyond the stage while making efficient use of digital archives and research tools? We welcome proposals that connect dance to subjects beyond dance studies: political history, social history, histories of social movements, histories of gender and sexuality, urban history, labor history—the possibilities are endless!

The final session will think through the ways in which racism and colonialism shape archival resources and processing practices, and how dance scholars can read both with and against the grain to counter these forces. Potential presentations might address the historiography of Black dance, Indigenous dance practices, the ways in which imperial governments used dance to expand their power, and post-colonial attempts to repair and restore dance histories.

This HUB is intended for in-person participation.

## **Dance & Digital Culture: How technology and our digital lives affect the ways we create, watch, and share dance**

HUB Facilitators: Autumn Mist Belk & Britt Whitmoyer Fishel

The Dance & Technology Working Group invites proposals for participation in a hybrid discussion and movement HUB exploring how digital culture shapes the contemporary field of dance. This HUB will investigate how our creative processes, viewing habits, and modes of sharing work are increasingly framed by digital tools, online environments, and evolving technological ethics. Together, we will examine questions at the intersection of embodiment and emerging technologies, including how social media aesthetics shift movement choices; how looping and remix culture inform choreographic thinking; how multi-window attention changes perception; and how our bodies respond to digital overload, fragmentation, and constant connectivity.

Participants will engage in both conversation and physical exploration. Movement-based proposals may include improvisations inspired by digital metaphors (scrolling, buffering, lag, swiping, filtering, AI-generated prompt chains), visual mapping, small-group tasks, and dramaturgical frameworks that participants can apply to their own artistic or scholarly work. Discussions should address ethical questions: What does authorship mean in an era of AI-assisted creation? Who owns the digital traces of our movement? How do we maintain bodily autonomy in a world of surveillance technologies? What human values must we protect as technology expands?

Participants may apply with short research presentations or to lead a discussion, movement workshop, or other collaborative activity focused on one of the above topics. This HUB will meet for three 90-minute sessions over the conference, with each session including a mixture of presentations (10-20 minutes), guided discussions (20-30 minutes), and embodied activities (30-45 minutes). In addition to the HUB facilitators, a maximum of 12 participants will be accepted as presenters through the DSA submission portal. Participants must be in-person at the conference.

## **The Nineteenth-Century Lens: Seeing Dance**

HUB Facilitators: Lynn Matluck Brooks, Gara Gargano, Madison Mainwaring, and Olivia Sabee

Drawing on the root, “spect” (meaning “to look”) of “speculative” and “spectacular,” the Dancing the Long Nineteenth Century Working Group invites engagement with questions around the evolution of looking during the nineteenth century. A period of rapidly changing technologies and the proliferation of mass culture, the nineteenth century also saw numerous social shifts, which impacted cultures of performance and spectatorship. These changes made observation of bodily presentation and difference critical to social, aesthetic, and political spheres. One well-documented aspect of this period is the expanded role of what we would now call dance criticism; in both Europe and the U.S., discursive accounts of theatrical dancing proliferated, as did visual documentation via lithography and cartooning. Yet none of these forms of documenting were transparent or even translucent, but rather they all revealed social, political, scientific, technological, moral, or critical lenses by which dances were viewed and interpreted. At the same time, attempts to depict dance outside the theaters proliferated as well, to various ends. For example, regional social dances were documented in France, for fear that without inscription, they might disappear; meanwhile, in Philadelphia, Black upper-class balls, after attracting derogatory commentary in the press, went underground.

Abstracts for papers, lecture-demonstrations, and/or participatory workshops might consider how any of the following areas (or related ones) interface with questions of seeing or documenting dance in the nineteenth century:

- journalism
- lithography
- cartooning
- social commentary

- physiologies
- optical technologies
- the colonial archive and documents intended for surveillance
- travel narratives

This will be a fully in-person hub, featuring three 20-minute presentations per day, followed by a moderated Q&A session. Abstracts for demonstrations and participatory sessions may request up to 30 minutes for presentations. We'd love to hear from you if this hub is of interest. If you have questions or want to discuss a submission, please email [osabee1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:osabee1@swarthmore.edu).

## **What Now, What Next: Screendance and Popular Culture**

HUB Facilitators: Juliet McMains, Elizabeth June Bergman, Cara Hagan, Omari Carter

Social, popular, and vernacular dances have been integral to screendance since its inception. Many pioneering figures—Busby Berkeley, Gene Kelly, Maya Deren—worked extensively with these forms. Yet, after Deren's seminal *A Study in Choreography for the Camera* (1945), the experimental art branch of screendance largely centered on modern, postmodern, contemporary, and ballet traditions. As screendance has expanded dramatically in the past decade—fueled by visual culture and the proliferation of screendance festivals worldwide—social and popular dances remain underrepresented in these curated spaces.

Meanwhile, popular dance thrives on social media, where short-form vertical video dominates global screens. This shift raises urgent questions: What unique challenges and creative possibilities arise when adapting social and popular forms to screendance? How does the aesthetics of vertical video reshape our understanding of cinematic dance? In what ways have efforts toward diversity—across race, gender, age, and ability—reconfigured the field? And how do funding structures and the influx of high-budget productions influence innovation and access? How do spectatorship and spectacle mediate speculation about the labor behind these productions, including what is seen, what remains invisible, and what is imagined?

This panel invites screendance makers, educators, theorists, and scholars to critically examine the intersections of social, popular, and vernacular dance with contemporary screen practices. Together, we will explore how these forms can expand the artistic, cultural, and technological horizons of screendance.

Each HUB participant will be charged with guiding our roundtable discussion for 15-20 minutes. Each HUB participant will be asked to circulate their prompt for our discussion at least one week prior to the conference.

Remote participation is possible, and will be coordinated by HUB facilitators.



## **Activating Asian and Asian Diaspora Dance Futures: Creating Resilience Through Community**

HUB Facilitator: Emily Wilcox

The goal of this HUB is to support Asian and Asian diaspora dance studies by building community among scholars who work in this field from a variety of locations, positionalities, and research topics. The HUB engages the 2026 conference theme, speculative choreographies, by interrogating, exploring, and reimagining the contingent futures of Asian and Asian Diaspora dance studies in the academy. Scholars who work on Asian and Asian Diaspora dance studies often feel they have to continuously explain themselves and justify the importance of their work, which takes a toll on mental health and makes it difficult to have productive and collaborative exchanges that advance their own work. Using a presentation, feedback, and discussion structure, this HUB will provide a space for intellectual dialogue among scholars specializing in Asian and Asian diaspora dance studies and counteract the isolation many feel in their home institutions.

To allow for maximum participation from scholars based in different locations and with different access to travel funds, the HUB will be primarily in-person but will also allow for online participation on Zoom. All participants, both in-person and online, will be expected to attend all three sessions of the HUB to create a sustained conversation across the three days. Every effort will be made to accommodate multiple time zones, with priority for participants in-person and in Asia. The HUB will consist of six invited participants who will serve as discussants and six applicants who will present their own research. Applicants should propose a 15-minute paper on their current research on which they would like to get feedback from an invited HUB discussant.

The HUB will have a maximum of twelve participants, including six presenters and six discussants. The session will also be open to observers. The six confirmed discussants are Priyanka Basu (King's College London), SanSan Kwan (UC Berkeley), Chuyun Oh (San Diego State University), Lorenzo Perillo (The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa), and Tara Rodman (UC Irvine). The discussants reflect senior scholars with attention to the diversity of fields within Asian and Asian diaspora dance studies, research methodologies, and personal identities.

## **Folklórico Dance across Borders: Between Spectacle, Movement, and Embodied Histories**

HUB Facilitators: Manuel R. Cuellar and Xóchitl Chávez

Mexican regional and traditional dance—known today as folklórico—constitutes a shared embodied language of transnational mexicanidad (Mexicanness), forming cultural exchange circuits between communities across the U.S.-Mexico border. As one of the primary expressive modes of mexicanidad, folklórico offers an invaluable window into the promises, conflicts, frictions, and failures of this contested ideation and the contingent attachments to Greater

Mexico that it enables. Operating as a signifying paradigm for negotiating ethnically and racially marked belonging, folklórico functions as a complex site of global modernity and world-making practice, despite its exclusion by academia.

The Mexican Folklórico Dance across Borders Working Group invites scholars and practitioners to analyze the power dynamics at play in the performances of folklórico, addressing questions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, citizenship, ability, indigeneity, and Asian- and Afro-diasporic expressions. Foregrounding intersectional and transdisciplinary approaches, including practice and community-engaged research, papers should tend to the affective, political, material, and corporeal forms that folklórico enacts through choreographies of resistance, belonging, and social justice in Mexico, the United States, and across borders. We encourage historical, interdisciplinary, and experimental approaches—including speculation—engaging folklórico as a critical site of knowledge production and circulation, an archival location, an aesthetic practice, a counter-narrative to dominant representations of Mexican and Mexican American communities, and a vital embodied tradition mobilized across generations, from community celebrations to ICE raid protests.

The HUB will consist of three 90-minute sessions with four presentations per session (of work previously circulated among HUB participants). We expect to limit the number to 16 presenters (in case there are co-presenters) and offer a hybrid option for people who cannot travel to the United States from Mexico or elsewhere.