**Dance 151: Dance and Culture: Dancing Values**

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**Approved by the Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance**

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**Justification**

This course is designed to fulfill the Culture and Values requirement within the Perspectives on the Liberal Arts and Sciences area of the General Curriculum. In this course we will be comparing various world dance forms with some contemporary and historical dances in the United States.

To fulfill the goals of the above, students will examine a wide variety of dance forms through observation and discussion of in-class dance experiences and film viewings. We will look at how these dances function in their indigenous contexts, how their meanings change over time, and how meaning changes as the cultural context changes. The instructor will facilitate these discussions, pointing out relevant concepts as they emerge from the students, or introducing them when necessary. Students are required to keep a journal of the course content over the semester (a entry of the relevant concepts for each class session) and this material is used by the student to write a final synthesis paper that weaves together the concepts from the course into their own understanding of the field of dance as a cultural expression of values.

This course uses the study of dance as a way of looking at a wide variety of cultural issues. The course challenges students to link their understanding of dance with a living world of ideas from a wide variety of cultures around the globe. We often think of dance as an art form, but it is often more of a social or cultural expression, binding a group of people by their shared values. Dance can be looked at from the perspective of Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, Philosophy, Religious and Spiritual Studies, and many other lenses as well. Topics that will emerge in this course are: Religion, Spirituality and the Corporal Body; Gender and Sexuality in a Variety of Social and Historical Contexts; Zen and the Intersection of Biomechanics and Philosophy; Film, Video, Internet, i-pod: the disembodiment of dance in a digital age; Politics and the Dancing Body, From the Court of Louis the XIV to the SoHo stage.

The integrative nature and agenda of the course reflects the evolution and creation of dances as they evolve over time, and in a constantly globalizing world. Dance forms bump up against each other much the way academic disciplines meet on a campus. The conversation that happens with each of these intersections leaves the subject changed; understood with more complexity and in wider ranging contexts. In this course, students will practice anthropology and sociology in analyzing dances that they have grown up with; mining from this analysis the function of these dances in their own cultural or societal context. Students will discover how dance is a way of resisting a political regime or of affirming the power of a political regime. Students will examine the art of dance in relation to other art forms, looking at how historical trends form a kind of zeitgeist, and see how arts movements are often formed from cultural trends in thinking. In some cultural settings, dance and theatre are the equivalent of literature and reading. As literacy may not always be common, the world of stories and ideas is very much a part of the culture. In this context, dance and theatre become critical means of communication and discourse. Religion is another area that often intersects with dance forms, and many dances are direct descendants of religious ritual performance. Other dances, though secular in nature, exist in a culture dominated by a particular religious worldview, which effects how and what can be danced, and by whom.

Our goal is to see students integrate their understanding of the many functions and contexts within which dance can manifest itself, with their own experience of dance as a participant, an observer, or both. That is why the final paper is so very important. The students’ final paper is their opportunity, outside of class discussions, to demonstrate the level to which they are integrating the course content into their own body of knowledge. A large part of the assessment of the students’ success is based on the level of integration of the material into their own personal understanding of the field of dance. The purpose of a course like this is not so much to acquire a standard number of facts about dance (though some of that is important), rather the emphasis is on a more qualitative understanding of the field in relation to other areas of the humanities: a truly liberal arts agenda. The primary goal of this course is to have the student build a connective framework in which to place different dances, countries, cultures, groups, and individuals alongside the student’s own values. By exploring the way in which the dances of other cultures and societies reflect the values and morals from which these dances arise, the students gain a more complex understanding of the cultural values that underlie the dance forms that they call their own. The students also begin to understand dance as more than just a fun thing that they do to blow off steam, but a uniquely expressive act that embodies the values and beliefs of a culture or social group.

Included is a sample course schedule that outlines the basic plan for each class session with Topic, supporting videos, movement sessions, and discussion topics

**Assessment**

Assessment of this course would be facilitated by saving a sample of final synthesis papers and having an assessment committee read them to assess if the students are able to discuss the course material in a way that shows a synthesis of ideas. Success by the students on their final papers should speak directly to the goals of the course. Students should be able to discuss dance forms that are familiar to them in ways that demonstrate an understanding of how those forms are an expression of culture and values. We would look for comparisons of the student’s chosen dance form with forms and concepts that were discussed and studied in class. We would also look for a level of depth of discussion that suggests more than a cursory knowledge of a variety of dance forms.

**Administration**

The course would logically be overseen by the curriculum committee of the Department of Drama, Theatre and Dance. The director of the dance program would represent the course to the curriculum committee in regards to any changes or adjustments to the course content that may be needed. Initially the course would be taught by full-time faculty, but after the course is established and “best practice” for the course established, it could be taught by appropriately identified adjuncts.

**DANCE AND CULTURE: DANCING VALUES**

Class Schedule

**Dance as an Expression of Culture and Community**

Class 1

Go over syllabus and discuss course expectations

Personal and movement introductions

Class 2

Body as Instrument

Basic Anatomy, Mindfulness, Relaxation, Muscular Release and movement efficiency

Class 3

Introduction to Dance and Culture

Video: Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti -Maya Deren, 1947

Paris is Burning-Jennie Livingston, 1990

Vogue – Madonna - 1990

Discussion: Authenticity and appropriation of dances and styles

Class 4

Body as Instrument continued

Class 5

Evolution of African American dance forms and their influence on contemporary dance

Video: Excerpts from, Dance Black America – Chris Hegedus, 1985.

Robert Ferris Thompson’s 10 Canons of fine form from African Art in Motion, 1974

Discussion: Evolution of dance forms and cultural influences from an ethnomusicological perspective.

Class 6

Guest Teacher: African Dance Class

Class 7

Video: Dancing: Lord of the Dance – Produced by Thirteen/WNET and RM Arts 1993.

Discussion: Dance, Religion and Spirituality in multiple cultural and religious perspectives.

Class 8

Guest Teacher: Capoeira Angola

Class 9

Video: Dancing: Sex and Social Dance – Produced by Thirteen/WNET and RM Arts 1993

Discussion: Dance as a lens for understanding society and culture with respect to gender and sexuality.

Class 10

Guest Teacher: Salsa

**History of Western Theatre Dance from Early Roots to Present**

Class 11

Video: Dancing: Dance at Court – Produced by Thirteen/WNET and RM Arts 1993

Renaissance, Baroque dances.

A Knight’s Tale – Directed by Brian Hegland

Discussion: Functions of Dance in Society, Dance and political power in the Baroque era

Class 12

Movement Class - Creating a “Class Court Dance” based on an exploration of shared values and the “culture” of our classroom.

Discussion: What are our shared values? How do we rank our values in importance?

Class 13

Continuation of the “Class Court Dance”.

Class 14

Video: Dancing: Dance Center Stage – Produced by Thirteen/WNET and RM Arts 1993

Romantic Ballet Videos: La Sylphide, TBA

Discussion: Values from the Ballet Tradition

Class 15

Ballet Class

Class 16

Modern Dance

Video: Isadora Duncan: Movement from the Soul – Daniel Geller and Dayna Goldfine, 1988

Denishawn: The Birth of Modern Dance – New Jersy Dance Collective

Martha Graham in Performance – Nathan Kroll,

Discussion: Modernism in the arts, a cultural zeitgeist

Class 17

Modern Dance Class – Hawkins Technique: Zen and the Body in Performance.

Class 18

Video: Making Dances: Seven Postmodern Choreographers – Michael Blackwood, 1979

Butoh: Body on the Edge of Crisis – Michael Blackwood, 1991

Discussion: Postmodernism in the arts and society: a new worldview

Class 19

Merce Cunningham Methodologies: Zen and chance improvisation in choreography

**Dance Making: Collaborating and Negotiating with One’s Values**

Class 20

Authentic Movement

In-class improvisation assignments

Discussion: Personal meaning and movement: a dance therapy approach

Class 21

Abstraction. Movement as Metaphor: In-class movement haiku assignment

Introduce Final project assignments

Class 22

Working with Time, Space and Movement Qualities

Class 23

In class work time for final projects: individual group consultations with instructor

Class 24

In class work time for final projects: individual group consultations with instructor

Class 25

Showing and discussion of final projects in progress

Class 26

In class work time for final projects

Class 27

Final project Presentations

Final Papers Due

Class 28

Final Project Presentations

Final Class Discussion