Title: DANCE, MUSIC, AND MEANING (Developers: Susan Griffin and David Schildkret)

Course Description:

“Dance, Music, and Meaning” explores the fundamental nature of human experience across time and culture through the medium of dance and music. Using a variety of dance and musical materials, including folk dance and music, popular dance and music, and such theatrical forms as ballet and modern dance and the music connected with them, students will gain insight into how dance and music are structured, how they function within society, how they have changed over time, and how to appreciate them.

Course Objectives:

Students successfully completing this course will:

1. Learn some significant fundamental concepts about the purposes, meanings, and structures of dance and music.
2. Expand their knowledge of the arts and their place in human experience.
3. Recognize various forms and purposes of dance and music and place them correctly within a culture and time period.
4. Be able to use the basic vocabulary of dance and music to describe and discuss a variety of types of both.
5. Have a better appreciation of similarities and differences among people of various times and places.
6. Gain an understanding of how dance and music can help themselves and others relate to better (i.e., understand, experience) to the world around them, to current events, and to people and cultures different from themselves.
7. Improve their research skills, including
   a. framing questions
   b. using material gained from the artwork itself to support arguments and opinions
   c. finding data on the internet
   d. sharing the information they have gained in an engaging, dynamic way.
8. Explore ways to apply the arts and culture knowledge they gain in this course to other areas of human thought and endeavor.
Essential Questions:

I. What is the nature of dance and music?
   a. What are the basic forms of dance and music?
   b. What are the basic functions of dance and music?
   c. How do these forms and functions express themselves similarly and differently in different times, places, and cultures?
   d. Does the purpose of the dance affect the nature of the movement? (Is theatrical dance inherently different from social dance, for example?) Does the purpose of the music affect the nature of the music? For both, if so, how? What are the similarities? What are the differences? How does level of skill influence the dance or music that results, and is skill level one of the ways we distinguish types of dance (does presentational dance require more skill and training than folk dance, for example)?

II. What is the relationship between dance and music?
   a. Why is the pairing of dance and music so pervasive? (Compare to other arts)
   b. What is the relative importance of dance and music when they happen together? How do they function separately?
   c. How do dance and music relate to the environment (cultural, social, historical, etc.) in which they exist?

III. What do dance and music express?
   a. When are dance and music narrative? What kinds of narratives do they relate? How is this the same and different across time and cultures?
   b. When are dance and music purely abstract? When they are, what purposes and functions do they serve? What, if anything, do they express?
   c. How do dance and music help to establish hierarchies and relationships within societies? Between performer and observer? Between musical and choreographic creators? What is our relationship to dance and music, both collectively and individually?

TEXTBOOK:
ISBN 0871273187

Other readings will be available on the course Blackboard site.

GRADING:

- Class attendance and participation: 25%
- Group projects: 25%
- Journal, Reflections, and Short Writing Assignments: 25%
Final Project: 25%

(includes a written component and an in-class presentation)

COURSE OUTLINE

Unit One: The Nature of Dance; the Nature of Music; Their Connection; Basic Vocabulary

Weeks 1 – 2

Reading: Appreciating Dance (hereafter AD), Chapter 1

The following will be provided on the course Blackboard site:
Schildkret article on musical materials and style

Assignments: Week 1, Written reflection in journal

Week 2, Written reflection in journal; short group project

Unit Two: Presentational Dance and Its Music: Ballet, Court Dance, Modern Dance

Weeks 3 – 5

Reading: AD, Chapter 4 - 5

Assignments: Continue journal reflections, including one on relationship of dance and music in an assigned piece.

Dance analysis worksheet

Music analysis worksheet

Preliminary thoughts on a final project. The proposal is due in the middle of the next unit (week 7)

Unit Three: Ritual Dance and Its Music

Reading: AD, Chapter 2

Weeks 6 – 8

Assignments: Journal reflections
Group project and presentation on ritual dance, presented in class at the end of week 7 and the beginning of week 8

Final project proposal due, beginning of week 7

**Unit Four: Social Dance and Its Music**

Weeks 9 – 11

**Reading:** AD, Chapter 3

**Assignments:** Continue journal reflections, work on final project

Group project and presentation on social dance, presented in class at the end of week 10 and the beginning of week 11.

Progress reports on final projects, including rough drafts where appropriate, due week 10.

**Unit Five: Dance and Music for Exercise**

Weeks 12 – 13

**Reading:**

**Assignments:** Continue journal reflections, work on final project

Group project and presentation: create a 2-minute exercise dance (with music) modeled on an example you find and using movement and sound vocabulary you have seen in the course. Teach this to the class or another group.

**Unit Six: Summaries and Conclusions**

Weeks 14 – 15

**Reading:** AD, Chapter 6 – 8

**Assignment:** Present final project in class, written component of final project due.