Spirituality, Creativity and the Human Experience Cluster (Renewal)

1. What is the theme you propose for your group of courses? In what ways do you think this theme speaks to issues important to our freshman population? To the University’s mission?

The freshman cluster “Spirituality, Creativity and the Human Experience” will study the wicked problem of oppression. Our focus will be on ritual—in music, dance and spirituality—as a way that humans reveal, resist and offer alternatives to oppression. Students will learn about ancient and contemporary rituals as imperfect solutions to the wicked problems of discrimination and oppression. This oppression may be based on religion, culture, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation or other aspects of a person’s identity.

Our cluster will introduce important artists, thinkers, and their work to students. Our focus will be on rituals of art and spirit that respond to oppression on the personal, familial, community and global levels. Students will study theories and techniques of creative thought and expression through their written and oral course contributions. Each course in this cluster should appeal to freshmen both by presenting new and often exotic ideas, practices, and expressions and by helping them to understand how they all spring from questions, experiences, and quests for meaning that are universal to the human experience. We want our students to learn to encounter cultural difference with an open mind, a willingness to explore, and an understanding of its essential humanness.

Through their participation in this cluster students should gain a greater appreciation for human creativity. In art, creativity and spirituality, there is no one right way to express yourself. Students will learn to appreciate the practical application of rituals as neither right nor wrong, but simply better or worse at making meaning. This cluster will examine the important role creative thought and expression have played throughout history and continue to play today, allowing humans to go beyond the “known” and into the realm of the “unknown,” forging new territory and making way for original ideas and inspirations. In this way, humans may band together to find common solutions to unsolvable “wicked” problems.

The theme of this cluster is global and multicultural. Through their participation in this cluster, students should gain a respect for and understanding of artistic and intellectual traditions around the world. Using hip-hop as an example, our students are instinctively curious about rituals of resistance—to colonialism, oppression, and authoritarian power. They lean in when we study cultural traditions from around the world through the lens of creativity, empowerment and self-expression. While many of our students relate immediately to hip-hop as a lens, other students will be engaged by other traditions covered in our courses. The theme of the cluster develops this natural interest further, by focusing the student’s attention on a diversity of contemporary responses to the ageless wicked problem of oppression. Students should gain a more global and multicultural perspective, a respect for the basic humanity expressed in these forms, and the ability to think beyond their own given cultural frameworks.

Dance, music, and religion are all human responses to our place in the world and to our perennial questions about existence. Although the arts do not attempt to provide explicit answers in the way that religion sometimes does, the three disciplines seem to be essential to human culture to the extent that dance and music are in many societies inseparable from religion. All of the disciplines represented in this cluster therefore are concerned with humanity’s search for meaning.
2. List the three courses (prefix, number, title, units)

DANC 1202: World Dance: Oral Traditions to the Stage (4 units)
MUS 1004: Introduction to World Music & Culture (4 units)
PHIL 1401: Introduction to World Religions (4 units)

3. Explain how the theme will be used to integrate course content in each course.

The “Spirituality, Creativity and the Human Experience” cluster will introduce students to varying manifestations of creative movement, expression, and thought at different times and from different cultures. Critical to creativity is the connecting of the mind, body and spirit; this cluster will explore the power of that integration as a means to generating alternatives to oppression. This theme will run throughout our study of creativity and ritual in our three inter-related courses. Each course will engage students in researching and presenting about rituals that are meaningful to them. Students will be encouraged to investigate how their ritual projects might go beyond providing unity and comfort, to making space for dealing with conflict and taking collective action in the face of oppression.

DANC 1202 World Dance: From Oral Traditions to the Stage explores Pilipino, African, Mexican, European, Middle Eastern, and American cultural dances through the lens of traditions, especially the oral traditions and storytelling from which they come. This course includes individual projects on movement and literature of world cultures. World dance forms and artists will be studied in the context of myth, folklore, history and music. Students will also study the nature of the creative process in dance. As students examine dance traditions from around the world, we will study their influence on dance practices of today. This course covers aspects of social, ritual and concert dance forms.

MUS 1004 Introduction to World Music & Culture explores the creative process in music and associated arts from historical and anthropological perspectives. Students gain a basic understanding of the elements of music and how it is created, received, and understood within a select number of cultures around the world, including those within Africa, Latin America, and North America. Our goal is to discover how music and its related arts are used to form expressions of the human spirit. Music as ritual and as community practice will be studied, with a particular focus on how these traditions illuminate the struggles of our students today, in their own lives.

PHIL 1401: Introduction to World Religions introduces students to issues that are centrally important to all human beings in terms of the ways that fundamental questions of human existence are creatively answered by religious traditions growing out of global diversity. Eastern and Western religious traditions will be taught from the perspective of its particular relationship with oppression and/or colonialism alongside its expressions of resistance in the face of these challenges. Both historical and contemporary examples will be discussed. Second, the students will take on a group project wherein they will be asked to invent their own contemporary religion, with the aim of addressing some current form of oppression and/or colonialism that seems most relevant to their lives.

This cluster will be further integrated by three “All Cluster” meetings (one each quarter) and one field trip per year to see a performance/event, which all cluster students will attend. Core faculty from these three courses will meet in during the first week of Summer Quarter 2014 to plan content and activities for each of these all cluster activities. Service learning activities for our cluster may include opportunities to volunteer at cultural dance and music events (performances, festivals, etc.) as well as at religious or spiritual community service projects, such as church programs to help homeless veterans.
4. Explain how each course in the proposed learning community will support student learning of each of the cluster’s lower division general education area learning outcomes (passed by Academic Senate February 17, 2004).

**DANC 1202** examines significant artistic expressions of the creative intellect. Dance artists and traditions from around the world are the focus of this study. We will explore the creative process in dance, and how that process varies from culture to culture. Readings about myth, folklore and anthropology will complement our study of dance artists by explicating the physical culture in which these dance traditions are practiced. We integrate evaluative and descriptive aspects of the history, theory, aesthetics, and criticism of different works, forms, styles, and schools of art: Students will learn to see, describe, analyze and evaluate the composition of dances and dance styles.

**MUS 1004** emphasizes the relationships between the music, dance, and other expressive activities and the cultures that create, maintain, and give meaning to them. Students investigate how changes in creative expressions, like music and dance, are connected to broader social, political, and economic changes in society. Students learn the difficult task of relating musical or sound expression to cultural realities, by experiencing widely divergent forms of expression from the perspectives of the cultures or individuals that give rise to them. Students also learn to reflect on how this new understanding affects each of them, personally.

**PHIL 1401** teaches students to critically examine major sources of human spirituality in the world at large and how these attempt to explain and form the human experience. Religious ideas and theories will be examined through the use of historical, literary, and philosophical approaches and methods. Most importantly, students will be encouraged towards an understanding of enduring and fundamental human concerns such as the nature of evil, the self, questions of meaning, and about what happens after death.

1) Students will demonstrate through oral and written work how foundational works in the humanities illuminate enduring human concerns and the intellectual and cultural traditions within which these concerns arise, including both classical and contemporary artists and/or theorists.

**DANC 1202**: The study of dance traditions from around the world, both classical and contemporary, illuminates the search for meaning. Music and cosmology (myths and stories of the afterlife) provide the foundation for many classical dance forms. For example, Yoruban dances from West Africa incorporate songs and myths about deities that explicate this polytheistic worldview. Today, many contemporary dance artists and performance theorists are concerned with themes of identity, intercultural dialogue, violence, love and the performance of race, gender and class in dance. Through oral and written presentation of research, as well as attending lecture demonstrations of world dance forms, students will gain understanding of how dance and movement speaks to themes such as these in a non-verbal language.

**MUS 1004**: This course on world music emphasizes the relationships between the music, dance, and other expressive activities and the cultures that create, maintain, and give meaning to them. Students learn in this course that, in many parts of the world, music is more than a form of entertainment; it is also a fundamentally important element of history, religion, national identity, politics, and the economy for each culture or society we study. This course gets at these ideas by studying their “classical,” traditional, and contemporary expressions. The written and oral assignments in this course demand that
students understand these expressions and their deeper or broader meanings within the cultures we study.

**PHIL 1401:** Students will study several of the world’s major religions, and will demonstrate their critical engagement with these traditions through a variety of assignments, both written and oral. Focus is placed on ritual as a spiritual method of shaping identity, forming community, and responding to conflict or oppression.

2) **Students will demonstrate a developing understanding of the interaction among historical and cultural contexts, individual works, and the development of humanities over time.**

**DANC 1202:** Specific dance forms and artists will be studied in the context of cultural history, musical and religious frameworks, and the nature of the creative process. As we examine dance traditions in pre-colonial Africa (Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia), Asia (Korea and India), Latin America (Mexico, Brazil) and North America (African- and Native-American) we will follow the trajectory of these dance forms into the 21st Century, studying their influence on today’s dance practices.

**MUS 1004:** One of the key perspectives we teach in this course is how musical expression changes over time as the cultures we study change as well. In the study of Cuban music, for instance, we begin by looking at the musical legacies of the freed African slaves that developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and how these traditions differed in how they were created and received from the more European-oriented musical and dance traditions of the largely white and/or European-educated ruling classes. We then explore the enormous musical changes that emerged with Cuba’s independence from Spain and the rise of contemporary forms of nationalism, which encouraged the growth of musical and dance forms that emphasized the integration of the “African” and “European” elements. This type of longitudinal study demands that students understand how changes in creative expressions, like music and dance, are connected to broader social, political, and economic changes in society.

**PHIL 1401:** Students will develop an understanding of the interaction between the various traditions, how each has evolved and both independently and in tandem with other faith traditions. Focus is placed on how indigenous cultures syncretize with colonial traditions, and how migration impacts spiritual practice and rituals of resistance.

3) **Through oral and written work, students will demonstrate their ability to critically employ concepts, theories, and methods of analysis used in the humanities to interpret and evaluate enduring human concerns.**

**DANC 1202:** Students will read, discuss, observe, study and write about concepts in world dance that illuminate the creative process. Through interpretation of ritual, concert and social dance forms, students will gain insight into movement as a representation of meaning. Students will also learn to critically examine and analyze individual dances with a culturally inclusive approach.

**MUS 1004:** One of the important points that students learn in this course is how to connect music to nearly all important aspects of the human experience, including questions about how humans relate to each other, how they conceive of themselves as individuals and groups, and how they should interact with a divine or spiritual world. In our course, students learn the difficult task of relating musical or sound expression to cultural realities. This is accomplished in large part by assigning written and oral exercises and assignments that demand increasing levels of sophistication in each
student’s ability to speak about the cultural or social dimensions of the music they listen to. We make use of both individual and group-based assignments to develop these skills.

**PHIL 1401:** Students will engage with the questions raised and the ways these questions are answered in and by each of the major world religions. They will demonstrate their ability to analyze and work critically with these ideas, as well as to integrate non-religious methods of understanding the spiritual traditions under consideration, through a variety of assignments both written and oral. Culminating work includes devising a new set of rituals that meet spiritual, cultural and personal needs for meaning.

4) **Students will critically reflect on the formation of human goals and values, and will articulate an understanding of the creativity reflected in works of the humanities that influenced the formation of those ideas.**

**DANC 1202:** Dances, in the context of their underlying myths and stories, will be explored as vehicles for the dissemination of human values and spiritual worldviews. The role of creative expression in preserving and questioning culture will also be studied.

**MUS 1004:** Students learn to understand widely divergent forms of expression from the perspectives of the cultures or individuals that give rise to them, but also to reflect on how this new understanding affects each of them, personally. Along with formal means of assessment, such as quizzes and exams, students in this course are also asked to regularly submit “journal” entries that are more informal and ask for reflection or feedback on how what they are learning is affecting them.

**PHIL 1401:** Students will critically reflect on the formation of human goals and values, and will articulate an understanding of the creativity reflected in the formation, evolution, practice, and understanding of the world’s major religious traditions.

5. N/A

6. Attached - course syllabi for the three courses.

**Please note:** DANC 1202 and PHIL 1401 each include a culminating assignment in which students devise an original dance ritual or a new form of ‘religion’ to share with the class. This group project explicitly involves research into traditions, innovations, technology, and the expression of meaning through transformative ritual and community action. MUS 1004 has a parallel assignment for each curriculum module, which explores connections between music, protest and identity in different parts of the world. Final presentations in all quarters, for all three courses, include this research component.