COURSE OUTLINE

I. Catalogue Description

MU 425 Life and Death in the Arts (4)
Examination of aesthetic expressions in music, art, architecture, dance, theater and literature that express common human experiences: birth, daily life, spirituality, love, and death. Consideration of cultural contexts of all works studied. Exploration and development of a personal collection of artworks. Attendance at arts events. 4 lecture/discussion. Prerequisite: Completion of GE coursework in areas A and C1, C2, and C3. Satisfies GE Area C4.

II. Required Background or Experience

Completion of GE coursework in areas A and C1, C2, and C3.

III. Expected Outcomes

At the end of instruction, students will be able to:
1. discuss orally and in writing the use of music and the other arts in at least one religious practice.
2. identify three important images, musical compositions, literary/theater works or dances from Western European post-renaissance culture, and explain their significance.
3. identify three important images, musical compositions, literary/theater works or dances from ancient or modern world cultures, and explain their significance.
4. discuss and evaluate the role of tradition in the evolution of human artistic expression.
5. discuss and analyze how advancing technology influences and is influenced by the arts, particularly from 1900 to the present.
6. discuss and analyze music’s power to create or enhance connection, community, and meaning.
7. create and catalog a personal collection of artworks around a theme.

RELATED DEPARTMENTAL LEARNING OUTCOME:
The individual completing a GE course in music will be able to discuss and appraise the role of music in a balanced life, using appropriate vocabulary and examples from the course just completed.

IV. Text and Readings
Portions of
• Dissanayake, *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began*, University of Washington Press, 2000. (consider the biological/physiological connection between people and the arts or artmaking)
• Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology*, New American Library, 1992 (a work of literature, views life from death through epitaphs)
• Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*, Harper Perrenial, 1994

Video resources:
• *The Songs are Free*, Bill Moyers interviewing Bernice Johnson Reagon, PBS, 1991

Additional readings may be drawn from:
• Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People*, University of Illinois Press, 2000 (Yiddish music)
• John H. McDowell, *Poetry and Violence*, University of Illinois Press, 2000 (music/poetry)
• John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Perigee, 1980 (is a theory of all arts and their perception)
• Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art* Princeton University Press, 1972. (considers changes in arts as reaction to industrialization and wars of early 20th century)
• Aaron Copland, *What to Listen for in Music*, Penguin, 1999 (music)
• Venturi, Scott-Brown, and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, MIT press, 1977 (architecture/design)

V. Minimum Student Materials

Textbook, Notebook, Sketchbook and colored pencils; parking and admission fees to class-related arts events. CD or cassette tape player, or computer audio capacity; access to computer for internet research and word processing.

VI. Minimum College Facilities
Classroom with space for performance demonstrations; computer, slide and video projection capacity either built-in or portable on cart; audio playback system; library access to art images and music and dance recordings of many times and cultures, either physically or via the internet.

VII. Course Outline

Week 1: **Self-definition of each class member**: discussion of family traditions, U.S. regional differences (example: the children's game "Operator" is called "Gossip" in Texas, communicating a moral message); **music you grew up with**; the elements of the arts.

Weeks 2-4 **Elements of Daily Life**: work, play, food preparation, child rearing, etc. How the arts are used to build a sense of community and to give meaning and purpose to daily life. Examination of some of the following art works and what they tell about the lives of those cultures.

MUSIC: lullabies, work songs (Native American and African-American, and English sea chanteys), children’s song games (‘scissors, rock, paper’ from Japan, “Obwisana” from Africa, etc.), today’s use of music in background.

ART/ARCHITECTURE: ancient artifacts, furniture design of various eras and countries, paintings in various styles reflecting daily life (such as Van Gogh's *Three Pairs of Boots*); the Chinese “chop”

DANCE: folk dances as connections to community/heritage

THEATER: storytelling of numerous cultures (incl puppet theater, myths and legends dramatized)

Weeks 5-6 **The Spirit World and Worship**: Brief review of world religions and their artistic expressions.

MUSIC: the use of chant in numerous religions; singing as a path to altered states

ART: Michelangelo’s *Pieta*; sculptures of Shiva; Shinto household gods; the caves at Lascaux;

ARCHITECTURE: Consideration of worship spaces over the millennia, close examination of at least one UNESCO world heritage site; Muslim use of word (calligraphy) as ornament

DANCE: “Ring Around a Rosy” and its historical roots; dancing as a path to altered states; *Kecak* from Bali

LITERATURE: creation stories;

Weeks 7-8 **Love, Courtship, and Marriage**: Discussion of erotic vs. romantic love.

Consideration of some of the following:

MUSIC: Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and Mallarmé's poem which inspired it, love songs of many generations from “Greensleeves” to today;

ART/ARCHITECTURE: the brothel paintings in Pompeii; Hindu depictions of human sexuality;

DANCE: *Romeo and Juliet* (choose from several versions) and *West Side Story*

LITERATURE: Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, *Pyramis and Thisbe*, other love stories
THEATER: A consideration of the tragedies of *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* as a segue into the consideration of death.

Weeks 9-10 **Death and Bereavement.** A discussion of how different cultures have dealt with death, from prehistoric cultures to the present day. Consideration of some of the following:

- **ART:** Picasso's *Guernica*; death masks;
- **MUSIC:** Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*; Brahms' *A German Requiem*;
- **LITERATURE:** John Donne's "Death, be not proud;" Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*

THEATER: Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*

Students will create their own epitaph.

**VIII. Instructional Methods**

Lecture-presentation; group discussion, open-ended ("why do you think xxx…?") journal writing prompts; socratic questioning; student presentations of minor research projects; viewing (or listening) and critiquing of art presentations/performances (live and video).

**IX. Evaluation of Outcomes**

Student participation in discussions will reflect and refer to other class reading and discussions; student work will connect broadly across cultures and course topics; students will probe thoughtfully into their chosen topic in the final project. Particular attention is paid to student connection to and examination of artistic expressions. (Fine and Performing Arts and Literature)

Ongoing student journal, building on writing prompts that encourage reflection and connection beyond the classroom.

Quizzes on or discussions of assigned reading; reflective essays on attendance of arts events; student presentations on assigned topics (small-scale research); student creative expressions; final project with essay.

The final project with essay (Collection and Catalog) will consist of a compilation of images and sounds* from a variety of cultures, treating a single topic in some depth (such as marriage, rain, war, or sacrifice), chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. The essay will identify and explain each item’s cultural and historical context, analyze it as a work of art, and discuss the personal aesthetic meaning of the pieces—functioning much like the catalog of a major museum exhibit.

Final Essay Examination if all course objectives have not been met during previous classes.

*images and sounds are considered to include the written or spoken word

**X. Assessment of the Course:**

Student will submit (in a sealed envelope) their responses to these questions:
• Did you draw more from previous coursework or more from life experience in preparing for these classes?
• Did this course cause you to think in a synthetic way, i.e. make connections from many different categories of knowledge?
• What suggestions do you have for improving the course?

Envelopes will not be opened until after grades are turned in.