University Studies
Cluster Proposal Cover Sheet
2004-2005

Cluster: **Popular Culture**
Title of course: **African Diasporan Dance in the Americas**
Course Number: **Hum 399**
Proposing Faculty: **Mary King**
Cluster Coordinator: **Grace Dillon**

Cluster Course to New Cluster
Other clusters this course is assigned to:

Non 'U' course proposed to Cluster
Removal

UNST Committee-- PASS: Yes [ ] No [ ]
If no, reason: ____________________________

UCC Committee-- PASS: Yes [ ] No [ ]
If no, reason: ____________________________
UNIVERSITY STUDIES
CLUSTER COURSE ADDITION
Adding a previously unapproved course to a cluster

PROPOSING FACULTY: Professor Mary King, chair, Dept. of Economics
To be taught by Catherine Evleshin, see #15 below

1. THE COURSE

A. COURSE TITLE, NUMBER, AND CATALOG DESCRIPTION

HUM 399 African Diasporan Dance in the Americas  4 credits

Introduction to current issues in dance research, focusing on Cuba, Jamaica, Brazil, and the United States, and including transcultural forms such as salsa and reggae. Theories about dance/movement as embodiment of belief, as a mode of cultural survival and transformation, as an identity marker relative to status, gender, age, race, and ethnicity will be presented through lectures, videos, demonstration, participation, and readings. Discussion will focus on issues of authenticity, stereotyping, commodification, and appropriation by others. No prior experience in dance necessary.

B. DEVELOPMENT
New course under development

C. AVAILABILITY
Offered one term per year

D. PREREQUISITES
Sophomore Inquiry course

2. COURSE OUTLINE

This course will provide the tools for analytical thinking about dance as culture. It is designed for students with or without prior experience in dance. The class focuses on dance traditions in selected cultures in the Americas that demonstrate African retentions, transformations, hybridization, and transculturation, i.e., Cuba, Brazil, Jamaica, and the influence of these dance cultures on the United States and global popular culture.

Students will attend and be examined on the content of lecture and video sessions that delineate the major topics and current issues in dance research. There will be two assignments to observe and/or participate in dance activities off-campus. Each student will select a topic from an approved list to research independently, and will submit a paper that demonstrates understanding and application of the theoretical principles to his/her topic. In addition, each student will complete a class presentation of the highlights of his/her topic through dance, music, media, visual arts, and/or prepared lecture.
Themes

I Dance/movement as identity – nationality/ethnicity, status, gender, and age; culture, sub-culture, and counter-culture. Uses of dance in the establishment of post-colonial national and regional identities. The roles of governmental, religious, and other institutions of power in determining the nature of cultural expressions. The audience/performer relationship and the relationship between urban and grassroots institutions.

Case study #1: Cuba: Socialism redefining Cuban and Afro-Cuban identity; the political, historical, social, and economic factors that led the post-revolutionary government to establish a taxonomy of Cuban dance forms that includes ballet, modern dance, folkloric, creole, and popular; the subsequent institutions and traditions based on that model.

Case study #2: Jamaica: the interplay of urban, rural, touristic, and the independent Maroon sectors in the shaping of a post-independence national identity based on African heritage; Jamaica's dance taxonomy compared with Cuba's; the history of rastafari and reggae.

Case study #3: Brazil: the history and transformation of samba and capoeira; samba and Brazilian national identity; samba reggae and Afro-Brazilian identity.

II Dance as an embodiment of and connection to the world of the spirits, as a means of maintaining African continuities in the reality of unequal power relations; the nature of belief and notions of syncretization revisited.

Case study #1: Cuban santeria: from the temple to the stage, and as an international phenomenon

Case study #2: Brazilian candomblé: from the temple to the streets, to the stage

Case study #3: Jamaican kumina: rural and urban

III How dance communicates, and what is communicated; examining notions about cultural universality, individual creativity, symbol, meaning, and aesthetic values; notions (in relation to dance) about popular culture, youth culture, race, gender, and sexual orientation

Case study #1: Festival culture as a voice for the powerless, as a laboratory for changing values in Brazil, Cuba, and Jamaica; festivals for the people and for the tourists.

Case study #2: Partner dancing and the status of women; rumba, son, and salsa as instruments of Cuban identity, of Latino identity, as commodities, as gender markers; transformations resulting from commodification and appropriation by non-Cubans, by non-Latinos, and by the media.
READING LIST

Required of all students:

3. Evleshin, Catherine, “Jamaican Dance: Celebrating Autonomy”, (in publication with Indiana Press; instructor will make available), pp. 1-54
   c. Pinnock, Thomas Osha, “Rasta & Reggae” pp.95-106

TOPICS AND SOURCES FOR INDEPENDENT PROJECT (each student chooses one)

1. Afro-Puerto Rican Bomba


2. Dance in Maroon cultures: Jamaica, Suriname, Cuba, Brazil

   b. Daniel, Yvonne, “Dancing Up River” (source TBA)
   c. Dunham, Katherine, *Journey to Accompong*, 1935 (classic work in Caribbean ethnography, available in PSU library), selections TBA
   d. sources on maronage in Cuba and Brazil TBA

3. Resistance and revolt: fighting dance forms in Latin America and the Caribbean:
   capoeira Angola (Brazil), ladja/l’ag’ra (Martinique), Kalinda (Trinidad), Palo (Cuba), Petro (Haiti), Maroon War Dances (Jamaica)

   a. (capoeira in Brazil) Lewis, John Lowell, *Ring of Liberation*, selections TBA

c. (Cuba) video: “Apalencado” (in Evleshin’s collection) (IN Sloat, Caribbean Dance from Abakua to Zouk, 2002)


d. (Trinidad) Burton, pp. 156-224.

e. archival footage in “Free To Dance,” PBS, 2000 (in Evleshin’s collection)

4. modern and contemporary dance from a Caribbean perspective: Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, New York

(IN Sloat, Susana, *Caribbean Dance from Abakua to Zouk*)

a. Clark, A. Veve, Katherine Dunham’s Tropical Revue, pp. 305-319


c. John, Suki, “The Tecnica Cubana” 73-78

d. Sloat, Susana, “Islands Refracted: Recent Dance on Caribbean Themes in New York”

e. video viewings from Evleshin’s collection

5. Haitian dance traditions and voudou

a. (IN Sloat) Frank, Henry, “Haitian Voudou Ritual Dance and Its Secularization” pp. 109-113


d. Video viewing of “Free to Dance” PBS (from Evleshin’s collection) or Maya Deren film

6. Dominican Republic: merengué and more, internationalization of merengué


b. field trip to local ballroom to observe merengué
7. dance in the French Antilles: Martinique and Guadaloupe
   a. (IN Sloat) Dominique, Cyrille, "Sa Ki Ta Nou: Creole Dances of the French Caribbean” pp. 221-246
   b. Interview with local artist Ellen Cruz

8. Venezuela: El Tambor as Afro-Venezuelan identity (all available resources in this area are written in Spanish and provided by the instructor; assignments will include interview with local Venezuelan artist Adriana Martinez. Also video viewings from Evleshin’s collection)

9. Trinidad and Tabago
      (IN Sloat)

10. five distinct African religious traditions in Cuba (Abakua, Lucumi, Palo, Arara, Tumba Francesa) and their folklorization
    a. Hagedorn, Katherine, Divine Utterances, Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001
    b. Daniel, Yvonne, La Rumba, Indiana University Press, 1995 (selections TBA)
    c. video viewings from Evleschin’s collection

11. Afro-Peruvian Dance (sources TBA)

12. African and Cuban Influences on Mexican Folkloric Dance
    a. Cashion, Susan, (sources TBA)

13. Virgin Islands & Bahamas
    a. (Virgin Islands) sources TBA

14. Colombia: coastal Afro-Colombian Dances, Salsa in Cali (sources TBA)

15. Any aspect, not covered in class, pertaining to African Diasporan dance in the Americas suggested by the student and approved by the instructor.

   Catherine Evleshin is committed to teaching the course. Professor Evleshin taught in the Dance Department at Portland State University from 1969-1994. She has conducted field research in Brazil, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad & Tabago, and Puerto Rico, and has published articles and videotapes on dance and capoeira. Prof. Evleshin is currently a member of Omo Ire, a local performing company devoted to Afro-Cuban expressions, and choreographs for Teatro Milagro, a local Latino theater company. This month she is performing in New York City in “Alma de Cuba,” a bilingual play she choreographed earlier this year.
3. GENERAL EDUCATIONAL GOALS

A. COURSE CONTENT AND SUITABILITY FOR POPULAR CULTURE CLUSTER

"The computers are down and the entire office staff joins in a conga line."
"The real estate agent and his clients dance the tango through the perfect house."

Since the advent of MTV in the early 1980's, dance is a ubiquitous media image worldwide. In the same period, as inquiry in the social sciences has taken on a global viewpoint, dance has become recognized as a discipline in the social sciences. A dozen or so anthropologists and ethnologists with backgrounds in dance have produced a body of research and theory to support the academic study of the subject.

This course focuses on African and African-derived dance in four nations that have dominated popular culture for a century – Cuba, Brazil, Jamaica, and the United States. However, the popular and commercial use of these images has not always resulted in respect or understanding. Often they have encouraged stereotypy and marginalized the human activity of dance.

The systematic study of these dance cultures goes to the heart of several issues in contemporary society, i.e., myths about colonialism, race, gender, sexuality, social class, and religion. The course examines viewpoints in three world cultures in which dance is viewed, supported, and utilized differently than in the United States. A major focus will be the interrelationships among traditional and contemporary, sacred and secular, participatory and presentational, and dance commodified for tourists and the media.

B. UNST GOALS

a. Inquiry and Critical Thinking:

In the USA, many students (mostly female) begin their college education with prior experience in dance, while others (mostly male) discover dance during their college careers. While there are opportunities in Portland to train and participate in a variety of specific dance forms and styles, there are few ways to systematically study this activity in a cross-cultural context. In this course, students will be introduced to a way of looking at dance as a metaphor for societal and group values, and sometimes as a counter-culture or individual vision for change. The goal is to lead students to assess dance not as offbeat, erotic, or exotic entertainment, but as the embodiment of significant symbols of values, identities, beliefs, and interpersonal relationships.

In addition to the subject area presented by the instructor, students will have an opportunity for guided independent investigation of an area of dance culture of particular interest to each of them (within the broad topic of dance in the Americas), and to share their discoveries with their classmates.
b. Communication:

With the paper assignment, each student must demonstrate h/her ability to research and write independently about a topic, and to present to the class the highlights of the topic through oral and/or visual communication.

c. Diversity of Human Experience:

Each of the four societies compared in this course represents a specific history and point of view about the African Diasporan peoples and cultures within their national boundaries, and in the Hemisphere. Jamaica acquired independence from colonialism a mere 40 years ago, and is building its identity as a Black nation. In the same decade, Cuba became a socialist nation that officially recognizes its roots in Africa as central to the shaping of a new society. Brazil shares many parallels to the United States - a wealth of natural resources, and a varied and expansive geography, and a regional history of slavery. But Brazil officially has pursued a different path to solving issues of race and social inequality. Lastly, African-American society in the USA, after a century of struggle for legal equality, now presents alternative and challenging viewpoints to mainstream attitudes. In all four nations, and across borders, these “other voices” manifest in the cultural expressions in festivals, theaters, dance halls, temples, film and television.

d. Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility:

Dance is generally described by powerful and “mainstream” sectors of North American society as inconsequential, secular, feminine, Black, and homosexual, a view not shared by African cultures traditionally, where dance holds equal status with other forms of expression. Students will discover that dance and related cultural expressions are frequently the domain of powerless sectors of society. But, even under the oppressive conditions of slavery and racism, there is abundant evidence of the role of dance in the survival of African values and beliefs, as well as in the development of entire new hybrid cultures that today exert powerful transcultural influences across the globe.

This potent form of expression has not been accepted in Eurocentric circles without fear and protest. How we evaluate these images of the moving human body that greet us with every commercial break, if not in the programming content itself, has even today reached a stage of conflict. Parents deny children television images of nudity and sensuality, while in the supermarket checkout line the children view the covers of magazine that reveal what they missed. Will dance again be relegated to the “domain of the devil,” as it was once defined in many sectors of American society? From past experience, the instructor anticipates a concern and interest among students in religious practices such as animal sacrifice and the exclusion of women. While the main topic of the course is dance, these questions will be discussed in the context of danced religions.
Notions and values will be challenged in this course, through video images and statements by native voices. In my guest lecture in a Black Studies course this past summer, one religiously conservative student wrote on the appreciation card, “Thank you for turning my world upside down.”

A. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The instructor, an experienced and active performer in local folkloric companies who has conducted field research in Cuba, Jamaica, and Brazil, will punctuate the lectures by teaching rhythms, dance, and songs basic to each of the forms. Native movers, local dance instructors and percussionists, and visiting artists will guest teach the class on a regular basis.

The purpose will be for students to experience movement and rhythmic principles in their bodies, not to be evaluated for their skills (the course will be manageable for the handicapped). These participatory experiences demonstrate the African principle that rhythm and movement are essential aspects of communication accessible to all.

Toward the end of the course, each student will participate in the delivery of information through presentations of h/her individual topic.
PROPOSING FACULTY: Mary King, Chair—Economics Department

COURSE TITLE AND NUMBER: HUM 399: African Diasporan Dance in the Americas

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OBTAIN CHAIR AND CLUSTER COORDINATOR SIGNATURES BEFORE SUBMITTING TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES OFFICE

DEPARTMENT CHAIR(S): __________________________. DATE: 9/30/03

World Cultures and Dance Pilot Program

_________________________. DATE: ____________

CLUSTER COORDINATOR: _________________________. DATE: 9/29/03

All changes to Clusters must be approved by PSU's Senate Curriculum Committee.

THE ORIGINAL + 12 COPIES OF THE PROPOSAL MUST BE RECEIVED AT UNIVERSITY STUDIES (CH 163) BY OCTOBER 31, 2003

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION

CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS: ___________________________. DATE: ____________

CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE: ___________________________. DATE: ____________