

# RLST 3838: Dancing Culture Religion

---

Summer 2013  
Online Session A

Sam Gill

[sam.gill@colorado.edu](mailto:sam.gill@colorado.edu)

[www.Sam-Gill.com](http://www.Sam-Gill.com)

John Thibdeau - Teaching Assistant

[thibdeaujc@gmail.com](mailto:thibdeaujc@gmail.com)

“Dancing Culture Religion” is 1) a critical examination of the received cultural, religious, and academic understandings of dancing and the body, 2) the consideration of a richer body of theory of dancing constructed by your instructor that will more adequately support comparative studies of culture and religion, 3) the study of dancing in cultures and religions in a representation of diverse cultures and religions, and 4) a celebration of the beauty, vitality, and joy of dancing. Notably the theory of dancing developed in the course places dancing as foundational to religion and ritual as well as many other distinctively human concerns such as language, art, symbolism, metaphor, and vitality.

**Structure of Online Course:** As an online or “virtual” course students will obviously not be coming to a designated classroom at a scheduled time to listen to lectures, participate in discussion, and be evaluated. Students taking the class may be located anywhere in the world that has Internet access. Nonetheless as offered by the University of Colorado, summer session online courses are not totally self-paced learning experiences to be completed at any time elected by the student. These courses are to be completed within the standard “resident” class schedule for specific summer terms.

Rather than attempting to imitate the daily routine of an “actual” class, this course is organized so that course materials (readings and video podcasts of lectures illustrated with images and videos) are available online to students to be read and experienced in a designated sequence. They are all available at the beginning of the course and can be consumed at the pace convenient to and elected by students with just a few imposed deadlines. A sequence of required student writing assignments followed by prompt critical feedback provides the most successful learning experience. Therefore, structured into the course are dates by which students must have certain work completed and submitted for evaluation. The structure of the course is designed to accommodate the greatest flexibility to student scheduling while providing regular on-going production and critical feedback leading to improving and developing student performance throughout the course.

**Course Materials:** Readings, lectures, and the syllabus are made available to you on my personal website [www.Sam-Gill.com](http://www.Sam-Gill.com), see under “Dancing Culture Religion” tab. There is no D2L site for the course. Go to this site and you will find video podcasts (VPC) for each lecture as well as a PDF version of the lecture should you want to consult them in preparation of your papers or to complement the video podcasts. The course readings are also available as PDFs from this page.

**Readings:** Limited readings available as PDFs correlating with some of the lecture topics are available from the course page on [www.Sam-Gill.com](http://www.Sam-Gill.com). Students are required to read the assigned materials prior to and as preparation for the lectures that correspond to the topic. Follow the syllabus schedule below.

**Lectures:** Students are required to view every video podcast in the sequence indicated. The lectures total about twenty-one hours; this is less than an hour for each class day (not that we actually have class days). The lectures should be completed to correspond with the due dates on the Content Mastery papers.

**Content Mastery Papers:** During the semester, you are required to write 3 papers demonstrating your mastery of the content of the course. Each paper is cumulative for the course but should emphasize the section immediately preceding the specific deadline. The papers will be read and graded more or less competitively, meaning that those who demonstrate the fullest and most comprehensive understanding of the course content will receive the highest grades. You may approach these papers in any style you wish and you may add audiovisual materials if they serve you. Papers must be turned in electronically as a PDF or WORD document email attachment to your TA by midnight on the date due. No late papers will be accepted for any reason. You will receive a written response to these papers with your grade. See “Calendar of Due Dates” below. Here are some criteria that will be useful in writing these papers.

- No notes as in what you would note while listening to a lecture or reading an assignment. The paper should be a discussion and demonstration of what you understand.
- Styles of writing common to “texting,” “tweeting,” and “social media” are likely not adequate.
- The core concepts of the lectures and the readings should be included, although you may elect to discuss several concepts in relationship to one another.
- Reference to the specific cultural examples presented in class is expected. Do not simply describe these dance tradition, but rather show how the dance and concepts are specifically connected.
- Audiovisual (rich media) materials may be included, but if you elect to do so you should be sure that you discuss how these relate to your work. Don’t add these as decoration.
- Styles and narrative voices that demonstrate a strong appreciation and connection with the course concepts/perspectives will obviously be rewarded.

**Interpretive Projects:** The major objective of the course is to prepare you to understand dancing in more complex, interesting, and profound ways than is likely based on the way dance is given to us by our culture. Two times during the term you will prepare an interpretive paper using the following criteria (each should be easily discernible in your project):

- Select a dance tradition other than those being covered in the course. Research the dance in its cultural, historical, and religious contexts using at least 3 sources other than those assigned in the course. Include an annotated bibliography with your project, that is, a list of your sources and a brief note indicating how each contributed to your project.

- Incorporate a brief description of the dance in its cultural, historical, and religious contexts highlighting how it is important to those who do this dance. Include images, music, and videos embedded in your presentation as useful.
- Discuss this dance tradition focusing on interpreting and appreciating it from the perspectives/concepts being presented in this course. In your discussion you must make specific references to the details of the dance and you must make specific use of ideas and perspectives presented in the course. Make clear reference to how you see the relevance and value of interpreting and understanding the dance you are focusing on from the perspectives you choose. This is the most important part of these projects and your work will not earn a grade above a “C” unless this aspect of the paper is well developed, clear, and demonstrates your understanding of the course perspectives you use.
- Creative engaging presentations will be given favorable consideration.

These Interpretive Projects are to be turned in as an email attachment to the TA by midnight on the date due. These projects will be evaluated competitively. Your project will be letter graded and you will receive a written critical evaluation.

### Summary of Dates and Deadlines:

No assignments will be accepted after the stated deadline due date, Boulder time.

June 3	1 <sup>st</sup> day of term
June 11	Content Master Paper #1 covering Sections 1 through 3
June 17	Interpretive Project #1
June 21	Content Mastery Paper #2 covering Sections 4 and 5
July 3	Content Mastery Paper #3 covering Sections 6 through 8
July 5	Last day of term, Interpretive Project #2

**Submitting Work:** All papers must be submitted as an email attachment in Word or PDF format sent to your TA.

**Course Grading:** The three Content Master papers and the two Interpretive Projects will each have a value of 20% of your course grade.

### Course Schedule – Lectures & Readings

#### Section 1: Introduction

1. Intro to Sam & Course Overview (26:10)

#### Section 2: Dancing in the Context of Popular Western Cultures

2. Contemporary American Folk Theories of Dancing—Part 1 (19:04)
3. Contemporary American Folk Theories of Dancing—Part 2 (36:23)
4. Contemporary American Folk Theories of Dancing—Part 3 (32:53)
5. Contemporary American Folk Theories of Dancing—Part 4 (37:07)

6. Christian and Western “High Culture” Perspectives on Dancing (35:19)
7. Dancing in Public Education (39:08)
8. Dancing in University Education (22:36)
9. Dancing in America ... or Not (22:23)
10. The Importance of Dancing to World Religions and Cultures (21:25)

### Section 3: Moving

11. Dancing is Moving, but not all Moving is Dancing (25:26)  
Johnson, The Meaning of the Body, “Meaning is More than Words and Deeper than Concepts,” pp. 1-15
12. Primacy of Movement (15:43)  
Sheets-Johnstone, The Primacy of Movement, pp. 131-39, 232-46
13. Kinesthetic Sense—The Dancer’s Sense (19:49)
14. Movement and Perception (10:28)  
Johnson, The Meaning of the Body, “The Movement of Life,” pp. 19-32
15. Demanding Self-movement: the Key to Acuity (29:01)
16. Movement “In Itself” (9:54)  
Johnson, The Meaning of the Body, “The Origin of Meaning in Organism-Environment Coupling,” pp. 113-34
17. Movement & Meaning (18:12)  
Johnson, The Meaning of the Body, “The Corporeal Roots of Symbolic Meaning,” pp. 135-54
18. Breakin’ and Ballet (45:00)
19. I’d rather Throw like a Girl than Dance like a Guy (25:47)
20. Movement, Plasticity, and Life Cycle (8:54)
21. Moving and Dancing, Dancing and Gesturing (10:30)

### **Complete by June 11 for Content Mastery Paper #1**

### Section 4: Gesturing

22. Gesture, Visible Action as Utterance (10:06)
23. Gesture and Agency, Dancing as Gesturing (19:11)
24. Dancing as Techniques of Body: Marcel Mauss (9:36)
25. Dancing the Other: Body as Instrument—André Leroi-Gourhan 1 (18:39)
26. Dancing the Other—André Leroi-Gourhan 2 (23:23)
27. “They Jump Up of Themselves” Gesture & Identity in Central Australia 1 (29:01)
28. “They Jump Up of Themselves” Gesture & Identity in Central Australia 2 (31:01)
29. Gesturing and Touching (24:21)
30. The Neuroscience of Touching and Gesturing (11:42)
31. Dancing and the Survival of Men (37:39)
32. Touching & Gesturing: Dance Contributions to Teen Development (4:42)
33. Touch and SalsAmigos Dancing (29:05)

### Section 5: Self-Othering

34. Dancing as Self-Othering - 1: Javanese Wayang Kulit (32:10)

Miettinen, "Shadow Play," pp. 75-87

35. Dancing as Self-Othering - 2: Javanese Classical Dancing (13:57)

Miettinen, "Indonesia: Java," Court Dance: Bedhaya & Serimpi, pp. 88-91

36. Dancing as Self-Othering - 3: Merleau-Ponty's "Flesh Ontology" (23:24)

37. Dancing as Self-Othering - 4: Understanding Dancing (36:46)

38. Dancing as Self-Othering - 5: Reflections on Java (13:37)

### **Complete by June 21 for Content Mastery Paper #2**

#### **Section 6: Playing**

39. Play - 1: Nataraja Hindu Lord of Dancing (12:09)

Coomaraswami, "Dance of Shiva," pp. 66-78

40. Play - 2: Friedrich Schiller (19:17)

41. Play - 3: Hans-Georg Gadamer (12:04)

42. Play - 4: Jacques Derrida (20:45)

43. Play - 5: Lila, Nataraja, and Dancing as Play (22:04)

Handelman, *Play & Culture* (1992), "Passages to Play: Paradox and Process," pp. 1-13

44. Go Up Into the Gaps: Play and Native American Religions – 1 (11:21)

45. Go Up Into the Gaps: Play and Native American Religions – 2 (24:18)

46. Go Up Into the Gaps: Play and Native American Religions – 3 (24:46)

#### **Section 7: Seducing**

47. Dancing as Seduction - 1: Bolero (28:55)

Aparisio, *Listening to Salsa*, pp. 69-82

48. Dancing as Seduction - 2: Baudrillard (32:23)

49. Dancing as Seduction - 3: Aura (26:03)

50. Dancing as Seduction - 4: Feminine (26:55)

#### **Section 8: Making**

51. Dancing as Making - 1: Proprioception (32:46)

52. Dancing as Making - 2: Seduction (9:22)

53. Dancing as Making - 3: Pure Depth (37:34)

54. Dancing as Making – 4 (23:14)

### **Complete by July 3 for Content Mastery Paper #3**