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Class of 2023

St. Olaf College

Individual Major Proposal:

Center for Integrative Studies

May 18, 2023

Cross-Cultural Wellness Studies

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**1. Description of Individual Major**

My proposed major draws on holistic approaches to well-being, cultural practices such as dance, and anthropological and ethnographic research methods as a way to discover how different cultures embody ideas of wellness. Throughout this major I will focus on dance in African communities and cultures to investigate the embodiment of physical, spiritual, emotional and social wellness.

**2. Central Questions**

**a. Guiding Questions for Major**

The following questions are intended to be guiding questions which are to be considered while looking at the specific questions:

* *How do different cultures define wellness?*
* Cross-culturally, how are the mind-body and soul situated when discussing wellness?

**b. Specific Questions for Major**

The following questions are intended to be answered throughout the undertaking of the Major:

* What is the most ethical perspective to study cross-cultural ideas of wellness?
* How do physical, spiritual, emotional and social wellness interact within cultural communities?
* How do cultures determine what areas of wellness are important for well-being?

**c. Long term Questions for Major**

The following questions are meant to be constantly wrestled with, even after the completion of the major:

* How is wellness economically informed?
* How is wellness medically informed?
* How is wellness morally informed?
* How do technological advancements affect cultures' perception of what physical, spiritual, emotional and social wellness look like?

**3. List of courses for Major**

**a. List of Major core courses**

The Core Courses of this Major are listed below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Wellness:**  (Courses in this section are meant to illuminate what comprises wellness as well as better my understanding of all components) | **Cultural Practices:**  (Courses in this section provide a space to explore how embodied wellness functions in different cultures and how they conceive of wellness) | **Research Methods:**  (Courses in this section provide  foundational frameworks and methods of analyses for the  remaining sections) |
| **PHIL 119:** Moral Psychology | **DANCE 141:** Top: Intermed West African Dance | **RACE 121:** Intro to Race and Ethnic Studies |
| **PHIL 231:** Philosophy of Mind | **DANCE 290:** Top: Dance Forms of Africa | **RACE 252:** Sem: Race, Gender & Indigenous St. |
| **PSYCH 398:** Psychological Perspective of the Human Person | **PHIL 396:** Philosophical Perspective on Social Issues | **SOAN 128:** Intro to Cultural Anthropology |
| **ID 241:** Health Challenges | **IS 392: Senior Capstone** | **SOAN 373:** Ethnographic Research Methods |
|  |  | **Total Credits: 12** |
|  |  |

\*Highlighted courses signify courses that I have taken

● **PHIL 119:** Moral Psychology(Taken Year 2 Fall Sem)

This course is an important part of the major Cross- Cultural Wellness Studies because it addresses a very my question: *how is wellness morally informed?* This course helped me to think about how people might make different decisions based on their epistemological beliefs around friendship, family, humanity, etc.

**●PHIL 231:** Philosophy of Mind (Taken Year 2 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of the major Cross-Cultural Wellness Studies because it attempts to discern the nature of the mind-body connection. In a philosophical approach this course asks students to explore the human mind/consciousness and how this relates to the human body. This knowledge is integral for the major as it helps me to address the question, *how do wellness factors interact?*

● **PSYCH 396** (Taken Year 4 Fall Sem)

This course is an important part of the major Cross- Cultural Wellness Studies because it will address a larger component of my theory of wellness, the social aspect*.* This course will be looking at health through an psychological lens and thus help me to further my understanding of how of human relationships and human identity. This course is also critical for my major because it offers a perspective outside of anthropology, dance, philosophy, and religion on wellness.

● **ID 241:** Health Challenges (Taken Year 4 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of the major Cross- Cultural Wellness Studies because it will address a larger question of my studies, *how is wellness economically informed?* This course will be looking at health through an anthropological and economic lens and thus help me to further my understanding of how different health factors interact. This course is also critical for my major because it will offer me a perspective of how forms of wellness can operate to make the world healthier.

● **REL 236:** How to Make a Life (Taken Year 4 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of the major Cross- Cultural Wellness Studies because it will address a larger question of my studies, *how do cultures determine what areas of wellness are important for well-being?* This course will be looking at health through sociological and religious lens, examining what it means to have a ‘flourishing life.’ Thus, it will help me to understand different ways in which many cultures theorize and act this out.

● **DANCE 141:** Top: Intermed West African Dance (Taken Year 3 Fall Sem)

This course is an important part of my major because I got to experience how a group of cultures embody wellness in their day to day life. Because this was a dance course, it was experiential learning, which is important because some aspects of holistic health you cannot learn through seminar. This course is also extremely important for my major because it demonstrated to me how different factors of wellness like spiritual, emotional, social, mental, physical, etc. interact.

● **DANCE 290:** Top: Dance Forms of Africa (Taken Year 3 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of my major because it revealed to me how the health of cultures can revolve around certain factors or one factor that encompasses other aspects of wellness For many cultures in Africa, this major factor is dance. This course was extremely important to my major because it offered me a model of holistic health, both by insiders (Africans themselves) and outsiders, non-African sociologists/anthropologists.

\****As seen above,*** *one can see through my two courses in African dances this past year, that I have built my passion for African dances and developed this interest to fit into my individual major. I started with a West African dance course, which was a practical course. I built upon embodied knowledge of West African dances and cultures by taking a theory course, where I learned how to analyze these dances and synthesize the patterns between the dances that unite the continent of Africa.*

*\* Note: Although dance is not one of the threads, dance is crucial to the major because dance is the embodiment of health and culture. This is a class where the coherence of the major is important.*

● **PHIL 396:** Philosophical Perspective on Social Issues (Taken Year 4 Fall Sem)

This course is an important part of my major because it combined my interest areas of philosophy, dance and anthropology. This course offered me an important interdisciplinary understanding of wellness. Furthermore, this course will help me to investigate the question Cross-culturally, how are the mind-body and soul situated when discussing wellness?

● **IS 392:** Senior Capstone (Taken Year 4 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of my major because it will help me further my Tanzania independent research. This capstone will broaden my studies to make them cross-cultural. Furthermore, this course will help me to investigate the universal state of holistic health and address my question of: *How do people perceive wellness?*

● **RACE 121:** Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies (Taken Year 3 Fall Sem)

This course is an important part of the major Cross-Cultural Wellness Studies because it relates politics and social identities to health and lifestyle. This course offered me a framework to understand the ‘world’ of economic health. Specifically, I learned how social factors like race, gender and ethnicity function in our world in ways that lead certain groups to have lower standards of life.

● **RACE 252:** Sem: Race, Gender & Indigenous St. (Taken Year 3 Fall Sem)

This course is an important part of the major as it gave concrete and in-depth examples of theories and systems I learned about in my RACE 121 course. This is very important for my individual major as it gave me an understanding of how identities and politics may come into play to affect the holistic health of communities I am studying later in my major.

\***As seen above**, e*arly in my career here at St. Olaf College I took an introductory course to race and ethnic studies(RACE 121). Since then I’ve taken a number of courses exploring critical race theory, including a race seminar and Afrofuturism, as well as my major course, RACE 252, which developed my understanding of abstract theory into systems of power working to shape our world.*

● **SOAN 128:** Intro to Cultural Anthropology (Taken Year 3 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of my major because it offers tools on how to analyze cultures in multiple ways, with rich, real life ethnographies. First, it offers tools on how to look at cultures as unique distinctive entities. Secondly, it offers tools on how to look at cultures as products of a wider system, offering a framework that showcases similarities. This course built on my systematic understanding of health from RACE 121 and 252.

● **SOAN 373:** Ethnographic Research Methods (Taken Year 3 Spring Sem)

This course is an important part of the major because it offered me tools on how to interact and learn from cultures and communities in ethical and respectful ways. This course is also extremely important because it offered me the space to explore the idea of holistic health on St. Olaf Campus.

*\*****As seen above,*** *early in my career at St. Olaf College I took an introduction to cultural anthropology course(SOAN128) which gave me methods to examine different cultures and understand why they are the way they are. At the end of this course, we did a mini-ethnography, which offered me theoretical frameworks for the final research paper in my Ethnographic Research Methods course (SOAN373). The SOAN373 course was extremely useful as it provided me with research tools for my travel and informal research in the Maasai Villages of Tanzania where I yearn to learn more about the way of life of the Maasai communities.*

**4. Rationale   
  
Importance of Holistic Health Studies:** This major is extremely important as for many years the United States and the Western World in general have been experiencing a health crisis. Yet, this region is one of the most technologically and economically advanced. What is happening? I believe this crisis is partly due to people’s extreme focus on health. Historically and currently Western ideas of health are based in the biomedical model which solely focuses on the biological and genetic effects on illness and disease. The biomedical model ignores influences of social, emotional, and spiritual wellness.   
 This major offers individuals an alternative to the Western approach to health. This major explores a holistic approach to wellness, asking us to look not just at the whole person but the whole person in the world around them. By asking questions about the body-mind-soul connection and emotional, spiritual and social wellness, this approach to wellness allows for individuals and communities to widen their perspective of health and their being in the world.   
 The major Holistic Health Studies is a worthy St. Olaf major as it clearly aligns with the St. Olaf Mission Statement. The mission statement specifies the importance of graduating with excellence *“in the liberal arts, examine faith and values, and explore meaningful vocation in an inclusive, globally engaged community nourished by Lutheran tradition.”*  
 - Liberal Arts: My individual major cannot be pinned down to one discipline. It is a composition of dance, sociology/anthropology, philosophy, public health, and race and ethnic studies.   
 - Faith and Values: Through supplementary religion courses and core philosophy courses, my major examines how people make decisions based on personal and communal epistemologies and ontologies.   
 -Vocation: Through my direct experiential theoretical study of cultures and communities I am able to incorporate the needs of the world into a method of study and work that is interesting and fulfilling to me   
 - Globally Engaged: My individual major looks at cultures all over the world in efforts to examine conceptions of holistic health. This can be seen through race and ethnic study courses, dance courses, sociology/anthropology courses as well as my independent courses.   
  
 Another reason this major is important is because it is a good fit for my goals after college. I have a passion to help people feel invigorated about life which I believe requires one to find an activity that gives one purpose, that is healthy for their body, mind and soul, but also feels good for them! I believe by exploring different cultural practices of wellness, including embodied wellness, I will have the tools to understand how wellness works in this world and be able to offer my knowledge to others.   
 Finally, this major is important because no other majors can offer me what I am looking to study in the way I would like to study it. I want to explore wellness immersively. I would like to experience wellness practices, not just read about them in the textbook. Because I get to design this major, I have the room to experience wellness practices like dance.

**5. Understanding my pursuit: Why Cross-Cultural Wellness Studies?**

For as long as I can remember there has been a focus on food consumption and physical activity in my family. My dad is a dietitian and my mom is a psychologist with high expectations for success for her kids, so it is not that difficult to understand how I became a daughter who became obsessed with finding a lifestyle that would lead to the healthiest, happiest person.

This obsession with finding a holistically healthy lifestyle started in high school. In highschool I was a part of activities that explored the needs of the whole person. These included: leading a mental health club and an environmental club at my high school. Running track and cross country and volunteering for a Co-op and Democrats group in my hometown. More recently, the past three years here at St. Olaf College, I’ve been a member of Climate Justice Collective. An organization that questions and challenges the capitalistic, consumeristic and individualistic nature of a large part of our world and explores how these systems affect certain individuals. The past two years here at St. Olaf College I have been working at Stav Cafeteria as well as building a team of Stav workers to address systemic issues that affect the lives of workers. Finally, one can see through my pursuit of world-wide travel (All over the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Israel, Soon to be Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda) that I have a lot of experience interacting and observing different ways of living and different health philosophies.

If there is one thing that I can see from all of this experience it's that a lot of factors contribute to wellbeing. Now I have a fire in my belly that's pushing me to explore all of these factors.

**6. Preliminary Descriptions of two Potential Senior Integrative Projects**

For my Senior Integrative Project, I would like to look at the manner in which different holistic health operates in different cultures. Two preliminary project ideas are listed below:

● Research Paper on Dance as embodied wellness practice in Maasai Villages One project I imagine for my senior project could be analyzing the information I gather from my independent research on the Maasai during Spring ‘24 in order to develop of framework or understanding of how dance operates as a holistic wellness practice in Maasai villages, or possibly one village. How dance operates to encompass physical, spiritual, emotional and social wellness.

* This project will require guidance from my independent research advisor, Professor Joseph Mbele, guidance from my major advisor Andrea Conger, guidance on research methods from other professors, as well as extensive use of the college’s databases.
* For this project I plan to present my findings and work via a research paper accompanied by a public presentation with a google powerpoint and small voice presentation.
* For evaluation, I imagine the following criteria:
  + Engagement with existing literature and theory around subject
  + Inclusion of tools, methodology and conceptual framework learned from previous courses
  + Clearly presented ideas and framework in research paper
  + Clearly presented working definition of wellness
  + Clear display of findings from research, analysis and paper writing in public presentation
  + Ethical representation of cultures
  + Clear representation of the importance of dance in embodying wellness

● Embodied Wellness, Agbadza Dance Project: A second project idea I had is similar to the first, but substitutes the studying of others to the study of myself. For this project I would learn through my body as well as through research of the Ewe people of West Africa through the Agbadza. Like the previous project, I would like to explore how this dance operates to encompass physical, spiritual, emotional and social wellness. For this project I plan to do research around how Agbadza operates in contemporary time. This project will require guidance from my independent research advisor, Professor Joseph Mbele and guidance from my major advisor Andrea Conger.

* For this project I plan to present my findings and work via a research paper accompanied by a public presentation of the dance with a google powerpoint and small voice presentation.
* For evaluation, I imagine the following criteria:
  + Engagement with existing literature and theory around subject
  + Inclusion of tools, methodology and conceptual framework learned from previous courses
  + Ethical considerations around methodology
  + Clearly presented ideas and framework in research paper
  + Clearly presented working definition of wellness
  + Clear display of findings from research, analysis and paper writing in public presentation
  + Ethical representation of cultures
  + Clear representation of the importance of dance in embodying wellness
  + Clear explanation of the importance of embodying the dance

**7. Consultations**

**Research Consultation with Librarian Ann Schaenzer**

On Thursday, May 11th, 2023, I met with Research Librarian Ann Schaenzer. During my consultation with Ann we mainly discussed different databases. I told her that currently I don’t have any questions about specific research as I am not in a spot where I am working on my senior project yet. Ann told me about specific databases that would be useful to my topic, mainly Sociology/Anthropology databases. She also showed me some of the benefits of using databases rather than Catalyst, including the ability of applying different subjects. Previously, over email, I had mentioned in an email to Anne a holistic health at St. Olaf ethnography I was doing for a course and wanted to research discourse around this. In this consultation, she mentioned resources that I could use for this project, like [Wellness Center](https://wp.stolaf.edu/wellness/), [Boe House](https://wp.stolaf.edu/counseling-center/), [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](https://wp.stolaf.edu/equity-inclusion/), [Campus Ministry](https://wp.stolaf.edu/ministry/about-us/), [The Olaf Messenger](https://www.theolafmessenger.com/), [College Archives](https://wp.stolaf.edu/archives/) If I my final project on holistic health at St. Olaf, expanding on my ethnography from my SOAN 373 course, these resources would be very useful.

**Major Coursework Consultation with Professor Tom Williamson**

On Friday, May 12th, 2023, I met with Professor Tom Williamson to discuss my major. I’ve met with Tom many times before Friday to discuss my individual major plans, as he is my current professor and specializes in medical anthropology which holistic health studies stems from. Usually I chat with Tom when I have a realization about my subject area that I want to run by him. Tom often offers me advice from his time abroad in Malaysia.  
 The most valuable piece of advice he gave me for my individual major was at the beginning of this semester. During this time I was really diving deep into my major proposal and was feeling very overwhelmed by the task at hand and all that I was constantly discovering with my on-going classes. When I went to his office, Tom told me the golden piece of information that would really motivate me to keep pushing forward with the major proposal. He said something along the lines of “you know, Sophia, you don’t need to solve or answer your inquiry about the most holistically healthy lifestyle.” He said, “maybe this major is just about you raising questions, discovering what is out there in the world surrounding this topic, what is important to people.” This helped me to realize that I didn’t need to conquer the world, that I didn’t need to go into my classes, my research, my major proposal with the attitude that at the end of my four years here I need to have perfect answers to my questions. Rather this major is a door to open me to other opportunities to continue to study these questions I have.

Tom’s advice has really shaped my individual major via my holistic health at St. Olaf ethnography and framing for my individual major capstone. Rather than thinking at the end of these projects I need to have definitive findings about how our world works, Tom helped me realize that these projects are about exploring.

**8. Four Year Plan**

**Year 1** Semester 1 (2020)

Course #, Title, Maj., GEs

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DANCE 100 | Introduction to Dance |  | ALS-A ORC |
| FAMST 253 | Human Sexuality |  | ORC |
| REL 121 | Bible/Culture/Community | X | BTS-B |
| SPAN 231 | The U.S. and Spanish Speaking World |  |  |

**Year 1** Interim course (2021)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ENVST 137 | Introduction: Environmental Studies |  | IST |

**Year 1** Semester 2 (2021)

Course #, Title, Maj., GEs

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| RUSSN 250 | Topic: Queer Literature in Russia |  | ALS-L  WRI |
| WRI 111 | First- Year Writing |  | FYW |
| SPAN 232 | Latinx Experience in the United Studies |  | FOL-S  MCD |

**Year 2** Semester 1 (2021)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DANCE 141 | Topics: Hip Hop and History |  | SPM |
| PHIL 119B | Moral Psychology | X | HBS |
| RACE 252 | Sem: Race, Ethnicity and Indigenous St. |  | HBS  MCD |
| REL 126 | God at the Movies: Religion and Film |  | BTS-B |

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**Year 2** Interim course (2022)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| N/A |  |  |  |

**Year 2** Semester 2 (2022)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| AFAD 231 | Seminar: Africa/Americas |  | ALS-L  MCG |
| PHIL 231 | Philosophy of Mind | X | HBS |
| REL 220 | Genesis: God and Human Nature |  | BTS-T |

**Year 3** Semester 1 (2022)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DANCE 141 | Topic: Intermediate West African Dance | X | SPM |
| ENGL 280 | Muslim Women Writers |  | ALS-L |
| RACE 121 | Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies | X | MCD, ALS-L |
| RACE 252 | Seminar: Race, Gender and Indigenous Studies | X | HBS, MCD |
| STATS 212 | Statistics for Science |  | AQR |

**Year 3** Interim course (2023)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ENGL 200 | Topics: Afrofuturism |  | ALS-L, MCD |

**Year 3** Semester 2 (2023)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| REL 285 | What is Religion? | X | WRI |
| SOAN 128 | Introduction to Cultural Anthropology | X | HBS MCG |
| DANCE 141 | Topics: Dance Lab and Groove |  | SPM |
| DANCE  290 | Topic: Dance Forms of Africa | X |  |
| SOAN 373 | Ethnographic Research Methods | X | WRI |

**Year 4** Semester 1 (2023)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| BIO 397 | Forest Management for a Sustainable World (0.5 cr) | X | SED |
| SOAN 395 | Social Thought on the Natural World |  | HBS |
| ENVS 398 | Natural Sciences Perspective on the Human Person |  |  |
| POL 396 | Social Perspectives on the History of Political Thought |  | WRI |
| COMM 392 | Composition and Rhetoric (0 cr) |  | WRI |
| PEG 395 | Wilderness Recreation(0.5 cr) |  | SPM |
| ART 397 | Artistic Perspective on the Human Person |  | ALS-A |

(**Away at the Oregon Extension Program)**

**Year 4** Interim course (2024)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| DANCE 246 | Dance in the United States |  | WRI |

**Year 4** Semester 2 (2024)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| IS 392 | Holistic Health Studies | X | WRI |
| ID 241 | Health Challenges | X |  |
| REL 236 | How to Make A Life | X |  |
| ENGL 280 | Top: Folklore and Epic |  |  |