African Drumming

Exploring the Traditionalistic Music of Ghana

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Music Appreciation
MUS 110
African Drumming - Exploring the Traditionalistic Music of Ghana

DESCRIPTION

This module, *African Drumming - Exploring the Traditionalistic Music of Ghana*, provides the student opportunities to hear and explore music outside of the narrow Western musical perspective. This module is part of the Music Appreciation Course (MUS 110) in which examples of “Non-Western Music” are introduced and expanded against a backdrop of the Western tradition. By discussing the political and socioeconomic factors behind the African culture, while simultaneously re-evaluating the hierarchical arrangement of musical elements, students learn to further engage their musical sensibilities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of African musical heritage and the direct influence of African civilizations on music, and drumming in particular.
2. Explore and discuss how African music in Ghana is utilized for various political, social, or occupational purposes and compare those to the “Western” musical practices.
3. Understand how the music is reflective of parallel cultural thematic patterns found in visual art, literature and dance.
4. Listen to varying styles of music that are inclusive of the Republic of Ghana.
5. Compare and contrast the use of musical elements as a means towards artistic achievement, and how they contribute to it’s regions’ characteristic genre. (i.e. melodic polyphony versus rhythmic polyphony.)
6. Analyze the drumming techniques in a historical and global context demonstrating how the musical styles and practice compares to the “Western” approach to musical training.

7. Understand and demonstrate the significance and techniques involved in cooperative team building through musical performance.

METHODOLOGY

• **Discussion/Cooperative Learning:**
  Lectures will provide students with a working knowledge of historical perspectives on West African drumming and how the political and socioeconomic factors highly influence the art form.

  Discuss how West African music has melded with western archetypes contributing to various forms of American music, such as rock, jazz, and other popular styles. This will help facilitate broader discussions on music as a universal language.

• **Audio-Visual Teaching Aids:**
  Students will be given an opportunity to view portions of *The World Music Drumming Video* to assist in understanding how to hold and play the designated instruments as well as get a sense for the experience as a whole. In addition, mp3’s and other musical examples will be provided as demonstrative models.

• **Presentation by Guest Artist**
  If possible, invite or highlight at least one specific performance artist who can share his/her gifts and talents with the students by providing them with historical and practical information regarding drumming as well as directing them through a series of exercises utilizing the instruments and techniques discussed in the lectures. (Ibrahim Sylla, renowned Djembe and Percussion Artist facilitated this for Johnston Community College.)
• **Assignments**

Students will be required to view a performance of a World Drumming Ensemble and write a responsive, interpretive analysis of the performance demonstrating how the music performed reflects the perspectives discussed in the lectures and how/if the musical selections presented by the ensemble illustrate the musical language established through the political and socioeconomic influences.

Students will submit a Listening Guide Project demonstrating a connection between traditional African music and its current popular chart toppers, by discovering at least one example of music that is currently popular among young people in the Republic of Ghana.

Students will actively participate in drum circle activities utilizing various rhythmic patterns that are indicative of the musical language used to communicate socially. (Instruments can be imagined, improvised, or even crafted.)

**EVALUATION**

The module represents 10% of the final grade and will be evaluated through the responsive analysis, listening guide completion, and drum circle participation.

**RESOURCES**

**Books**


Websites

People and Culture of Ghana
http://www.africaguide.com/country/ghana/culture.htm

Popular Trends in the Music of Ghana

Drumming in Ghana
http://www.gapyearghana.com/ghana/drums.html

http://www.dancedrummer.com/trad.html

Abadja Rhythm: Music of Ghana
http://www.aviarts.com/demos/flash/abadjarhythm/