The proposal for a new minor in Creativity, the Arts and Social Transformation attached to this meeting’s agenda reflects the thinking of members of the faculty in the creative arts, social sciences and humanities. It proposes a curricular coherence to support Brandeis undergraduates with, on the one hand, interests in the arts and creative expression, and on the other, commitments to understanding and advancing social justice and the transformation of conflict. It brings together the global network of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life and the local resources of Brandeis faculty members from many departments.

It is designed to engage students intellectually and creatively with phenomena such as

- the roles of music in the American civil rights movement and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa -- and in opening people’s hearts and minds to cultures other than their own, as we witness here each semester through MusicUnitesUS;

- the contributions of performance to both liberation and reconciliation, as manifested in global movements of Theatre of the Oppressed and Playback Theatre – forms that are taught here in the Theatre Department;

- the power of iconic works like Picasso’s Guernica as well as the community mural-making projects that engage people on opposite sides of sectarian divides in Northern Ireland;

- the indigenous rituals that laid the groundwork for the apology of the prime minister of Australia to members of the “stolen generation;”

- the poetry carved into Styrofoam cups in the cells of Guantanamo and spoken in slams where marginalized communities construct narratives of self-definition essential for participating in democracy.

The borderland between human suffering and human possibility is filled with creative expressions, some virtuosic, some inclusive; some enduring and some ephemeral; some direct and content-driven, others that invite us into qualities of presence that subtly open us to new perceptions of ourselves, each other, and the world.
The minor will
- paint a broad picture of the field creativity, the arts and social transformation
- engage students deeply in a few of its manifestations
- require students to experience and compare different modes of inquiry and presentation, linking theory and practice
- introduce them to the paradoxes inherent in such initiatives, the risks of doing harm, and ways to minimize them.

Whether in the future they choose to engage as witnesses, participants, artists, facilitators, administrators, educators or policymakers, they will be aware of the multiple modes of understanding and engagement required for effective work in this area.

The details of the course requirements for the minor are laid out in the proposal; we’re happy to address them if you have questions. The resources required are minimal, because the minor draws primarily on teaching, advising and presenting activities that already take place. We do, believe, however, that this minor could become a platform for raising new revenues, which could benefit the university as a whole.