

Music and Culture: Studies in Popular Music

MUHI 4355, January Term 2019
Meeting Time/Place: TBD
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DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the cultural history of popular music in the English-speaking world, focusing on the period of 1950 to the present. Students will engage with primary sources and current scholarship on pop music, along with a substantial writing and listening component, in order to better understand how pop music articulates shifting values and identities in American society. Topics include the intersection of popular music with race, gender, and sexuality; technology; politics; the music industry; counterculture, and more. The class will culminate in a final research project and presentation.

Although this course will focus on the musical aspects of Anglophone popular genres, no formal musical training is required: we will engage in close readings of musical texts (recordings and videos), but interpretive perspectives will all be introduced in class. However, students with musical training are encouraged to bring this skillset to bear on their work for the class.

GOALS

By the end of the course, the successful student will:

- Understand more deeply and critically how popular music has both reflected and shaped American culture
- Develop a sense for how popular genres work *as music*
- Research a topic in popular music studies, including crafting his or her own research question and engaging primary and secondary sources to answer it
- Listen to approximately 100 songs in a range of genres and be able to identify them, categorize them, and discuss their social significance
- Emerge as a more astute and informed performer and listener through greater awareness of the cultural history of popular music in America

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Individuals, Institutions, and Cultures (Level 2):

- Students will be able to analyze different theoretical or interpretive perspectives in the study of individual, social, cultural, political, or economic experiences. Readings will be drawn from scholarship in musicology and cultural theory, in addition to seminal primary source readings (music critics, musicians, public intellectuals, etc.) in order to explore how music points a mirror onto processes of culture formation.
- Students will be able to evaluate critically the research outcomes and theoretical applications in the study of individual, social, cultural, political, or economic experiences through investigation of the link between popular musical production, consumption, and social organization.

PROFICIENCIES AND EXPERIENCES

Writing

- Through multiple opportunities supervised and/or directed by a professor, an editor or other authority, students will demonstrate proper use of language through completion of a substantial amount of purposeful writing appropriate for a specific or targeted audience. In this course this will take the form of a research project requiring two consultations with the professor, a proposal, annotated bibliography, and final paper. Development of writing skills will also be facilitated through two short writing assignments and weekly response journals.

Oral Communication

- Students will be able to select, organize and use appropriate evidence or information to suit a specific or targeted audience. Research for final projects will culminate in a 15-20 minute presentation for your peers.
- Students will be able to use appropriate vocal and visual cues to deliver a presentation to a specific or targeted audience.

REQUIRED TEXT

There is no required text for this class. Individual readings will be made available to you electronically on Canvas. *Please print and bring to class all PDF readings in hard-copy form.*

Recordings will be distributed as Spotify playlists: please “follow” me on Spotify (username: Zach Wallmark) to be notified of new playlists and updates.

Note that focused, engaged listening is a core component of this class. You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the materials listed for that day in the schedule. Please read/listen in the order presented in the schedule.

CLASS LOGISTICS

Professionalism. *Attendance, Participation, Meetings, and Timeliness:* Although I will be doing some lecturing, this is primarily a discussion-based course. On-time attendance is mandatory at all class meetings, as is students' participation in discussions and activities. Students are also expected to visit me during office hours *at least twice* over the course of May term to discuss your projects. Any anticipated excused absence should be communicated in advance. Unexcused absences will negatively affect students' final grades. Similarly, unless cleared with me in advance, late work will be deducted 1/3 letter grade per 24 hours late (e.g., A becomes A-).

Classes will be divided in half, with a short break separating the two sections. Many topics are bipartite in structure, as reflected in the schedule below.

In-class Electronics: Laptops and tablets are permitted for engagement with course materials and note-taking **only**, though texts and notes in hard-copy are preferred. Cell phones are to be set on "silent" during the class. I trust students to use reasonable judgment and discretion when using technology in the classroom; if electronic distractions get to be a problem, I reserve the right to put into place a more punitive policy.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

In addition to *professionalism*, evaluation will be based on one *short writing assignment*, a *daily response journal*, *final exam*, and *final research project*.

Short writing assignment: In addition to your final research project, we'll watch two music films over the course of the class; you will write a short essay of 3-4 double-spaced pages structured as a review of the film from the perspective of a contemporary music critic. No additional research is required. Reviews should be submitted electronically (zwallmark@smu.edu) before the final day of class.

Daily response journal: Every day students will provide a brief, informal written response about the course materials for that day. Responses should put an argument made in a reading to the test by placing it in conversation with a song from that week's required listening. Responses are an opportunity for students to express their points of view about readings and listening: Does the author make a compelling point? Does song *x* illustrate the point? How? How not? Responses should be between 100-200 words. Students are encouraged to compile all responses in one Word document, then cut/paste into the body of an email for electronic submission to the instructor. Responses are due *before class* each day, corresponding to the topic of the response.

Final exam: The course will conclude with a final listening exam, in which students will be tested on knowledge of the entire course playlist (identification and categorization), along with brief explanations of the significance of each selected song in the context of the class. Students will also be asked to evaluate certain stylistic features of unfamiliar musical excerpts. The exam will take place the last day of class, **January 16th**.

Final research project: Drawing upon your music-analytic skills, course readings, discussion, and additional research, you will be asked to select a popular artist, song, album,

genre, scene, era, etc., and produce a close reading of its relationship to its social and cultural context. Topics must be selected in consultation with the instructor. The final paper should focus primarily on your *interpretation* of the music in conversation with broader cultural themes, rather than a rehearsal of historical or technical details. Example project topics/titles: “Ska and Chill: Representations of Slacker Culture in 90s American Ska Music,” “Contested Masculinity in the Music of Radiohead,” “Protest Music During the Iraq War, 2003-2007.”

Papers should be approximately 8–10 pages (double-spaced), formatted in [Chicago Style](#) (footnote citation), with a bibliography that includes *at least* 5 reputable sources. The final project should be viewed as a *process*, not just an end-result, unfolding as follows:

- **Thurs, 1/10:** Project proposal due (400-word *maximum*) and annotated bibliography (at least 5 sources)
- **Wed, 1/16:** Presentations (10 minutes); final paper due electronically **by 11:59pm**

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Professionalism (attendance, timeliness, participation)	25%
Short writing assignment	15%
Daily response journal	15%
Final exam	15%
Final project	30%
Proposal and annotated bibliography	(5%)
Presentation	(5%)
Final paper	(20%)

SMU POLICIES

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Per the SMU Student Code of Conduct, academic dishonesty of any form will result in disciplinary action and a failing grade.

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the

opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

SCHEDULE

Note: Reading and listening assignments listed for each day should be completed before the beginning of class each day. This means that materials listed for the first day of class (1/7) should be completed in “Week 0” prior to arriving at the first class meeting. Schedule subject to change.

M 1/7

AM

Introduction

Chuck Klosterman, [“Which Rock Star Will Historians of the Future Remember?”](#) *New York Times Magazine*, 23 May 2016.

The pop “problem”: What is popular music? How do you study it?

Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (1990), 3-7.

David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (1995), 17-31.

Listen

[Billboard Hot-100](#): top five singles last week (use Spotify link for full tracks)

PM

Grammar of Pop. I: Rhythm in going to get you: Groove, beat, “feel”

Theodore Gracyk, “Jungle Rhythms and the Big Beat,” in *Rhythm and Noise* (1996), 125-147.

Anne Danielsen, [“A Fabric of Rhythm,”](#) in *Presence and Pleasure* (2006), 43-60.
Skim for gist.

Watch/listen

[Agbekor dance-drumming](#) (Ewe people, Ghana)

Babatunde Olatunji, “Jin-Go-Lo-Ba” (1960)

James Brown, “Super Bad” (1971)

II. The blues

LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (1963), 60-70.

Susan McClary, “Thinking Blues,” in *Conventional Wisdom* (2000), 32-53.

Listen

Bessie Smith, “St. Louis Blues” (1925) and “Thinking Blues” (1928)
Robert Johnson, “Crossroad Blues” (1936)
Cream, “Crossroads” (1968)

T 1/8

AM **Grammar lesson, con’t. III: Sound: Timbre, texture, technology, space**

Albin Zak, “Sound as Form,” in *Poetics of Rock* (2001), 48-70; 76-85.

Listen

Bing Crosby, “I Can’t Give You Anything But Love” (1953)
The Ronettes, “Be My Baby” (1964)
Dick Dale, “King Of The Surf Guitar” (1963)
The Kinks, “You Really Got Me” (1964)
Kraftwerk, “Computer World” (1981)
Cher, “Believe” (1998)

IV. Going somewhere: Form, harmony, and “drive”

Leonard Meyer, “Some Remarks on Value and Greatness in Music,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 17/4 (1959): 486-500.

Robert Fink, “Do It (‘Til You’re Satisfied),” in *Repeating Ourselves* (2005), 31-47; 55-61.

Robert Walser, “Eruptions,” in *Running with the Devil* (1993), 57-63; 67-78.

Listen

Van Halen, “Eruption” (1978)
Donna Summer, “Love To Love You Baby” (1975)
The Temptations, “Cloud Nine” (1969)

PM **Hip vs. square**

Norman Mailer, [“The White Negro.”](#) *Dissent* (1957), section 2.

John Leland, *Hip: A History* (2004), 4-16

Phil Ford, “The Square,” in *Dig* (2015), 118-121.

Listen

Patti Page, “Tennessee Waltz” (1950)
Mitch Miller, “The Yellow Rose Of Texas” (1952)
Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, “Hot House” (1953)

Roll over Beethoven: R&B, rock ‘n’ roll, and race

Charlie Gillett, “The Five Styles of Rock ‘n’ Roll,” in *The Sound of the City* (1970), 29-44.

Listen

The Chords, “Sh-Boom” (1954)
The Crew-Cuts, “Sh-Boom” (1954)
Big Joe Turner, “Shake Rattle and Roll” (1954)
Bill Haley and The Comets, “Shake Rattle and Roll” (1956)
Chuck Berry, “Maybellene” (1955)
Little Richard, “Long Tall Sally” (1957)

W 1/9

AM

Elvis

Greil Marcus, “Elvis: Presliad,” in *Mystery Train* (1975), 128-157; 171-175.
Robert Fink, “Elvis Everywhere: Musicology and Popular Music Studies at the
Twilight of the Canon,” *American Music* 16/2 (1998), 167-174.

Listen

Mama Thornton, “Hound Dog” (1952)
Elvis Presley, “Shake Rattle and Roll,” “Mystery Train,” and “Hound Dog”
(1956-57)

People get ready: Motown, soul music, and civil rights

Gerald Early, “Crossing Over,” in *One Nation Under a Groove* (1995), 79-105.
Mark Anthony Neal, “Soul Music as Struggle,” in *What the Music Said: Black
Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (1999), 1-19; 36-53; 61-72.
Albert Murray, “The Blue Devils and the Holy Ghost,” in *Stomping the Blues*
(1976), 21-42.

Listen

Barrett Strong, “Money (That’s What I Want)” (1959)
The Supremes, “Stop! In the Name of Love” (1965) and “You Can’t Hurry
Love” (1966)
The Impressions, “People Get Ready” (1964)
James Brown, “Say It Loud—I’m Black And I’m Proud” (1968)
Gil Scott-Heron, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” (1970)
Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On” and “What’s Happening Brother” (1971)
Stevie Wonder, “Living For The City” (1973)
Parliament, “Mothership Connection” (1976)

PM

The hippie counterculture: *Monterey Pop* (1967) film viewing

Susan Sontag, “One Culture and the New Sensibility,” from *Against
Interpretation* (1965), 293-304.
Albert Goldman, “Why Do Whites Sing Black?” *New York Times* (1969).

How to research popular music

Th 1/10

AM

Tripping: Psychedelia and the quest for musical transcendence

Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock* (1999), 58-74.

Russell Reising, “‘It Is Not Dying’: Revolver and the Birth of Psychedelic Sound,” in *Every Sound There Is* (2002), 234-53.

Listen

Jimi Hendrix, “Voodoo Child (Slight Return)” (1968)

Quicksilver Messenger Service, “Who Do You Love?” (1969)

The Beatles, “Strawberry Fields Forever” (1967) and “Tomorrow Never Knows” (1966)

Rock becomes capital-A-Art: The Beatles and the album concept

William Mann, “What Songs the Beatles Sang,” *The Times of London* (1963).

Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory* (1996), section on *Sgt. Pepper*, 153-163.

Elijah Wald, “Say You Want a Revolution...,” in *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock ‘n’ Roll* (2009), 230-247.

Listen

The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Heart’s Club Band* (1967)

PM

Twang: Cultural politics of country music

Aaron Fox, “Voicing Working-Class Culture,” in *Real Country* (2004), 20-45.

Richard Leppert and George Lipsitz, “Everybody’s Lonesome for Somebody’: Age, the Body, and Experience in the Music of Hank Williams,” *Popular Music* 9/3 (1990): 259-274.

Listen

Hank Williams, “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” (1949) and “Your Cheatin’ Heart” (1952)

Merle Haggard, “Okie From Muskogee” (1969)

Gretchen Wilson, [“Redneck Woman”](#) (2004)

Tim McGraw, [“Truck Yeah”](#) (2012)

My band could be your life: Punk, both sides of the pond

Lester Bangs, “James Taylor Marked For Death,” *Who Put the BOMP! Fanzine* (1971), 63-81.

Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* (1989), 1-24.

Listen

The Troggs, "Wild Thing" (1966)
Patti Smith, "My Generation" (1975)
Sex Pistols, "Anarchy In The UK" (1976)
The Ramones, "Sheena Is A Punk Rocker" (1977)
The Germs, "Forming" (1982)
Black Flag, "TV Party" (1982)

DUE: Project proposal and annotated bibliography

F 1/11

AM

Headbangers: Heavy metal's ritual of energy and pain

Robert Duncan, *The Noise: Notes from a Rock 'n' Roll Era* (1984), 36-55.
Glenn Pillsbury, "Thrashing All Around," in *Damage Incorporated* (2006), 1-17.

Listen

Black Sabbath, "War Pigs/Luke's Wall" (1970)
Metallica, "Master Of Puppets" (1986)

Same as it (n)ever was: Nostalgia and the writing of pop history

Simon Reynolds, *Retromania* (2011), ix-xxxvi; 276-294.
Jon Landau, ["Growing Young with Rock 'n' Roll,"](#) *The Real Paper* (1974).

Listen

Grease, "Greased Lightning" (1971)
Bruce Springsteen, "Thunder Road" and "Born To Run" (1975)
Christina Aguilera, "Back In The Day" (2006)
Amy Winehouse, "Back To Black" (2007)
DJ Dangermouse, ["What More Can I Say?"](#) (2004)

PM

Video killed the radio starlet: MTV and the negotiation of gender

Susan McClary, "Living to Tell," in *Feminine Endings* (1991), 148-166.
Melissa Click, Hyunji Lee and Holly W. Holladay, "Making Monsters: Lady Gaga, Fan Identification, and Social Media," *Popular Music & Society* 36/3 (2013): 360-379.

Watch

Cyndi Lauper, ["Girls Just Want to Have Fun"](#) (1983)
Madonna, ["Open Your Heart"](#) (1986) and ["Like A Prayer"](#) (1989)
Salt-N-Pepa, ["Let's Talk About Sex"](#) (1990)
Björk, ["Human Behavior"](#) (1993) and ["Pagan Poetry"](#) (2001)
Lady Gaga, ["Paparazzi"](#) (2008) and ["Born This Way"](#) (2011)

M 1/14

AM

The birth of hip-hop: *Wild Style* (1982) film viewing

Keepin' it real: Sample-based hip-hop, between party and protest

Tricia Rose, "Voices from the Margins" and "Soul Sonic Forces," in *Black Noise* (1994), 1-20; 62-96.

Robert Walser, "Rhythm, Rhyme, and Rhetoric in the Music of Public Enemy," *Ethnomusicology* 39/2 (1995), 193-217.

Imani Perry, "Bling Bling... And Going Pop," in *Prophets of the Hood* (2004), 191-203.

Listen

Sugarhill Gang, "Rapper's Delight" (1979)

Grandmaster Flash, "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" (1981)

Public Enemy, "Fight The Power" (1989)

Notorious B.I.G., "Everyday Struggle" (1994)

Kanye West, "We Don't Care" (2004)

Watch

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "[The Message](#)" (1982)

Dr. Dre, "[Let Me Ride](#)" (1993)

Jay Z, "[Roc Boys \(And The Winner Is...\)](#)" (2007)

PM

Clubbers: EDM and the aesthetics of ecstasy

Simon Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy* (1999), 3-11; 80-86.

Ragnhild Torvang Solberg, "'Waiting for the Bass to Drop': Correlations Between Intense Emotional Experiences and Production Techniques in Build-up and Drop Sections of Electronic Dance Music." *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 6/1 (2014): 61-82.

Listen/Watch

Paul Oakenfold, *Tranceport* (1998), first 3-4 tracks

Cinnamon Chasers, "Body" (2013)

Dodge and Fuski, "Alien" (2015)

[Dodge and Fuski dubstep production tutorial: Structure](#)

Sincerely ironic: Indie music and hipster culture in the aughts

Christy Wampole, "[How to Live Without Irony,](#)" *New York Times* (2012).

Carl Wilson, "Let's Talk About Who's Got Bad Taste," in *Let's Talk About Love* (2007), 87-98.

David K. Blake, "[Timbre as Differentiation in Indie Music](#)," *Music Theory Online* 18/2 (2012), focus on music analyses (skim sections 1-4)

Listen:

My Bloody Valentine, "Only Shallow" (1992)

Neutral Milk Hotel, "King Of Carrot Flowers, Part 1" (1998)

T 1/15

AM

Postlude: Popular music and the 21st-century racial imagination

Sascha Frere-Jones, "[A Paler Shade of White](#)," *The New Yorker* (2007).

Loren Kajikawa, "Enimen's 'My Name Is': Signifying Whiteness, Rarticulating Race," *Journal for the Society of American Music* 3/3 (2009): 341-363.

Listen

Arcade Fire, "Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels)" (2004)

Eminem, "My Name Is" (1999)

Beyoncé, "Formation" (2015)

Kendrick Lamar, "The Blacker The Berry" (2015)

PM

Final project workshop

DUE: *Wild Style* review

W 1/16

Final listening exam

Presentations

DUE: Final research paper (by midnight)