

History 3713, Spring 2023



Clockwise from top left: Miriam Makeba, Ronnie Gilbert, Victor Jara, Victor Tsoi, Phil Ochs, Mercedes Sosa, the SNCC Freedom singers (Charles Neblett, Bernice Johnson, Cordell Reagon and Rutha Harris), Pete Seeger (with Banjo), Hamza El Din (with Oud), Sothira Pheng (middle), Bob Marley.

Ann Farnsworth-Alvear

This seminar considers the overlapping political worlds of singers who used lyrics and performance as a platform during the decades of the Cold War. We will treat their songs as primary source material while also familiarizing ourselves with research tools that allow historians to track down examples of the broad range of material used by historians of the 20th century, from press clippings to FOIA documents.

Our discussions will make time for listening to audiovisual recordings of performers like Paul Robeson (b. USA, 1898), Violeta Parra (b. Chile 1917), Pete Seeger (b. USA 1919), Miriam Makeba (b. South Africa 1932), Vladimir Vysotsky (b. USSR 1938), Bernice Johnson Reagon (b. USA 1942), Chico Buarque (b. Brazil, 1944), Bob Marley (b. Jamaica 1945), Silvio Rodríguez (b. Cuba 1946), Waldemar Bastos (b. Angola 1954), Viktor Tsoi (b. USSR 1962), and others. We will have shared readings about youth-identified musicians who brought their politics on stage with them, as well as about the activism of musicians who identified as anti-Stalinists or pacifists, or who became symbols of tolerance in the context of so-called culture wars about gender and sexuality, such as Holly Near (b. USA 1949) and Juan Gabriel (b. Mexico 1950).

Because two goals of the seminar are exploring the transnational context that inspired politically-aware performers in the 1960s and 70s and deepening intergenerational dialogue, we'll extend weekly invitations to people over 50 years of age, who may be able to share their own memories of listening to recordings that were understood as "political" (whether Leftist, Rightist, or other). Guests may join us in person or via Zoom, and may include grandparents, retirees, scholars, or even (hopefully) musicians.

Seminar participants will choose a performer, a genre, or a specific song to research, with the aim of identifying primary sources, contextualizing them as much as possible, and communicating an argument.

Finished research projects in this course will:

- explore music and lyric in historical context
- generate formal citations for material compiled
- include an annotated bibliography
- demonstrate attention to grammar and organization

Contacting the instructor:

Please email me at farnswor@sas.upenn.edu. If you need to text me, use my cell number (215-459-8649) and try to stay within the hours of 8am and 6pm. Be a bit patient—I will not respond immediately, but I'll try to get back to you within 24 hours. Messages can also be left at the History Department office: 215-898-8452. Note: please don't contact me via Canvas.

About Canvas: please set your notification preferences for immediate announcement forwarding, as that can help ensure good communication. Also, if a .pdf or .mp3 cannot be downloaded or an assignment appears as 'unpublished,' please let me know right away.

Course Goals:

- I hope that students become more aware of the transnational dimension of the so-called Cold War, which was “hot” in many parts of the world.
- One explicit objective is helping students gain experience with a broad variety of research strategies.
- A theoretical subfield that students will be exposed to is that of “history of emotions.”
- Another goal is to foster intergenerational dialogue so that participants have starting points from which to ask older people about political experiences during 1954-1989.

Note: All readings and videos/podcasts will be posted on our Canvas site.

Grading:

Attendance, in-class work, and short on-line responses	40%
1 st Primary source paper, with context and analysis (600-800 words)	10%
2 nd Primary source paper, with context and analysis (600-800 words)	10%
Annotated bibliography	10%
Research paper (non-majors may elect an alternative assignment)	30%

Note: Students are responsible for adhering to the [Penn Code of Academic Integrity](#)

Schedule: Note that we will use Arne Westad's [The Cold War: A World History](#) as a shared overview text.

Thu., Jan. 12	Introduction *Remember that irony and levity are key, so listen for both whenever possible... here's a Tom Lehrer track that's pretty funny!
Prior to Jan. 19	View " Here I Stand ," a documentary about Paul Robeson, and review his HUAC testimony, in transcript or this audio file . Also relevant: this 1958 interview , in which he discusses both domestic and international politics. (And see Westad excerpts on canvas, with other short readings.). **Listen also to Paul Robeson sing " John Brown's Body " and " Joe Hill ." Discussion with Professor Kathy Brown.
Prior to Jan. 26	Two documentaries this week: View " The Power of Song ," and also " Soundtrack for a Revolution ." Listen, if you can, to this oral history interview or another , or choose sections of interest to you in The Pete Seeger Reader . Listen to Seeger playlists as much as possible and at least: " Waist Deep in the Big Muddy ," and " What did you learn in school today? " In addition, review interviews with Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, such as this one (also this one), and hear her with singing group Sweet Honey in the Rock in " Ella's Song ," with lyrics . Discussion with Professor Ramya Sreenivasan.
Prior to Feb. 2	Independent research: see Canvas assignment. For shared reading, see excerpts from Jan Plamper, History of Emotions , and Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History." Discussions with post-doctoral researcher Juan Pablo Ardila and Penn graduate Eva Karlen.
Prior to Feb. 9	Discussion of " Devil's Anvil ," with Professor Seçil Yilmaz (Westad excerpts and additional readings TBA). First primary source due.
Prior to Feb. 16	Our focus is Miriam Makeba. Please view Mama Africa , and read Quintina Carter-Ényì & Aaron Carter-Ényì, "Decolonizing the Mind Through Song," as well as Lindelwa Dalamba, "Storing and Storying Lives: The Biographical Illusion in Three Musicians' Autobiographies," with selected pages from Westad and from Carol Muller, Focus: Music of South Africa .
Prior to Feb. 23	We will concentrate on Vladimir Vysotsky in the USSR. Reading TBA.
Prior to Mar. 2	We are listening to both Violeta Parra and Victor Jara this week. Please watch this documentary and read Ericka K. Verba, "To Paris and Back: Violeta Parra's Transnational Performance of Authenticity," and Leith Passmore, "The Apolitics of Memory."
Thu., Mar. 16	Please watch this documentary on Bob Marley and see Canvas for readings. Also, this presentation may be interesting and please listen to this NPR discussion with Marlon James , about his novel (recommended, not required) A Brief History of Seven Killings
Thu., Mar. 23	We turn to Punk-inflected political songs: Crucifix , " Stop the Torture ," Los Prisioneros , " La Voz de los 80 ." (Reading TBA). Second primary source paper due.
Thu., Mar. 30	Our focus is Viktor Tsoi, in the late Soviet period. Discussion with Professor Peter Holquist--Readings/Playlist TBA. *Bibliography draft due.
Thu., Apr. 6	Readings/Playlist TBA: Discussion with Professor Tim Rommen.
Thu., Apr. 13	We will focus on the "Singing revolutions" in Estonia / Latvia, and music of Alo Mattiisen. Readings/Playlist TBA. Discussion with dissertation researcher Allison Brooks-Conrad.
Thu., Apr. 20	Geographies of sexual politics: from Alix Dobkin's " Talking Lesbian " to Juan Gabriel's " Lo que se ve " to trans picketers at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and beyond.

