

MUSC 1420-003
Thinking About Popular Music
COURSE SYLLABUS

Semester: Spring 2024
Fridays 10:15 AM-1:14 PM
LERN 210
Fulfills – Arts & Letters Sector, Cultural
Diversity in the U.S. 1 C.U.

Instructor Contact Information
Amanda Scherbenske, PhD
Email: scherbea@sas.upenn.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Description & Objectives

Unapologetically, popular music is both central to and incidental in our lives. It vocalizes some of the most hard-hitting issues of the day, as much as it undulates as a care-free soundtrack to our daily routines and habits. Beyond entertainment, popular music expresses the values, dreams, grievances, politics and ideas of people and society. This course considers the meaning of twentieth-century popular music in the United States by examining the issues, questions and ideas that its sounds, musicians and audiences raise. The course begins by introducing a common vocabulary for discussing and writing about music. Then, it pursues several core questions in four modules: 1) How are styles and images harnessed to racial groups, “naturalizing” assumptions and ideas about “blackness” or “whiteness” in music? 2) When, how, and why is music considered political? 3) What makes music “popular” music as *opposed* to, e.g. “art” or “folk”? 4) How do specific places and communities inform and inspire popular music? We explore these questions by dissecting the musical traits of a variety of styles and genres, examining musicians’ biographies, considering some of dynamics and labor practices of the music industry, and locating topics in U.S. cultural history. This course is not a survey. Rather, it considers each of these questions in through case studies. The goals of the course are to become literate in the fundamentals of American popular music, to develop analytical listening skills, to consider popular music in its social context and to engage critically with popular culture. Classes consist of lecture, analytical viewing and listening and student-led collaborative work.

Assessment¹

Exams

MIDTERM (3/1/2024)	25%
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Participation & Preparation

ENGAGEMENT	30%
DEVELOPING CONCEPTS	8%

Projects & Assignments

MUSICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY	8%
FINAL PROJECT – Virtual Gallery Walk	29%

Graded in 4 Stages

- 1) Quick Start (4% of final grade)
- 2) Proposal with bibliography (5%)
- 3) Progress report (2%)
- 4) Gallery Walk with completion report (18%)

Grades will be assigned as follows: A+ (97-100) A (93-96). A- (90-92). B+ (87-89). B (83-86). B- (80-82). C+ (77-79). C (73-76). C- (70-72). D (67-69). F (66.9 and below)

¹ See Explanation of Assessment - also available on Canvas.

REQUIRED TEXTS:²

- 1) Covach, John and Andrew Flory. 2023. *What's That Sound? An Introduction to Rock and Its History, Sixth Edition*, EBOOK. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (OR PAPER. ISBN: 978-0-393-87245-3)
- 2) Orejuela, Fernando. 2022. *Rap and Hip Hop Culture, Second Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-085228-3.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Students are responsible for understanding the University's policy on academic integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. An explanation of what constitutes **plagiarism** can be found here:

<https://guides.library.upenn.edu/copyright/plagiarism>. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. The Code of Academic Integrity is found at <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/> and the Code of Student Conduct <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-student-conduct/>.

I do not anticipate any issues with this for this community. If, however, one should arise I will submit relevant materials to Penn's Office of Student Conduct (<http://www.upenn.edu/osc/index.html>) for adjudication.

Course Policies & Expectations

EMAIL & COMMUNICATION

- Email me only from your Penn email. Privacy laws preclude me from responding to emails from other accounts.
- Please include your full name in your email messages.
- I check my email regularly during working days (Monday – Friday) and hours.
- I am also available for office hours, during the class break, and after class.
- If you need support, please contact me for an appointment.

ATTENDANCE

Your regular attendance is essential to contributing our community of learners and getting the most out of this course. It also impacts your grade. Because this class meets once per week, you are *only* allowed two absences without penalty (1/3 letter grade per absence in excess of two). SAVE these absences for actual serious illness, emergency, religious observance.

MISSED OR LATE WORK

- Please **plan ahead** and turn your assignments in on time as assigned on the course schedule.
 - Late work will be docked by one letter grade.
- NO extra dates will be offered for the exam or final project progress report.
 - If you have a conflict with a date, you need to notify me **via email** within the first two weeks.
 - Life happens. If you have a medical or other emergency that precludes you from taking an exam, I may allow an exception. I will determine this on a case-by-case basis and may ask for written or other documentation.
- Ultimately, missed or late work will be assessed at the discretion of the instructor.

² **What's That Sound?* includes examples that correspond with the Listening Guides via Total Access. All listening examples may be purchased through a variety of streaming services or are largely available via YouTube. They are not available via Canvas for licensing reasons.

EXPECTATIONS

See *Explanation of Assessment* - ENGAGEMENT

ACADEMIC SUPPORT & OTHER RESOURCES The university provides the following resources to help students achieve excellence.

Weingarten Center: Center focused on academic support and disability services. The Weingarten Center offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. **To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235 or go to <https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/>.** The office is located in Hamilton Village at 220 S. 40th Street, Suite 260. They provide:

- **Learning consultations** which focus on academic skills and strategies such as test taking to time management <https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/learning-consultations/>
- **Academic Tutoring** which give students subject-specific peer tutoring services to supplement support from faculty, TAs, and instructors <https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/tutoring-services/>
- **Disability Services** The University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and received approval from Disability Services. Students can contact Disability Services and make appointments to discuss and/or request accommodations by calling 215-573-9235 or visiting <https://wlrc.vpul.upenn.edu/disability-services/>

Marks Family Writing Center: Provides expert help in writing for undergraduate and graduate students <https://writing.upenn.edu/critical/wc/>

Communication Within the Curriculum: Helps students express themselves orally with clarity and confidence <https://cwic.sas.upenn.edu/>

Language Direct: Provides tutoring for foreign languages <https://plc.sas.upenn.edu/languagedirect>

Van Pelt Library: Support for students in research and instructional technologies through a range of workshops and consultations <https://www.library.upenn.edu/research-teaching/research-services/vanpelt>

Weigle Information Commons: Offers students tutoring in use of digital media as well as technology rich group study rooms. Weigle can also provide customized programs for your classes <https://www.library.upenn.edu/wic>

Health & Wellness Resources <https://undergrad-inside.wharton.upenn.edu/health-wellness-resources/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Assignment Due	Topic	Reading	Listening
January 19, 2024		Course & Music intro	Introduction Covach & Flory (hereafter CF) pp. 1-34	
		Race, Style & Image	<i>Recommended</i> - Mahon (2004) pp. 231-56; Ramsey (2003) pp. 1-16	
January 26, 2024		American Popular Styles & Social Worlds, Racial groups	CF Ch. 1 pp. 35-74	Judy Garland, "Over the Rainbow"; Les Paul & Mary Ford "I'm Sittin' on Top of the World"; Howlin' Wolf, "Evil is Goin' On"; Hank Williams, "Hey Good Lookin'"; Big Joe Turner "Shake, Rattle & Roll"
February 2, 2024		Whitewashing culture: Sounds, Images & Representation	CF Ch. 2 pp. 75-111	Fats Domino, "Blueberry Hill"; Chuck Berry, "Johnny B. Goode"; Elvis Presley, "That's All Right" & "Heartbreak Hotel"; Little Richard, "Tutti Frutti"
February 9, 2024	Musical Autobiography Due	The "Blackness" of music in the Freedom Movement (Nationalism & Integration); Labor & Power in the business	CF Ch. 6 pp. 219-248	The Temptations, "The Way You Do the Thing You Do"; The Supremes, "Baby Love"; Wilson Pickett, "In the Midnight Hour"; Aretha Franklin, "Respect"; James Brown, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag, Pt.1"
		Music & Politics	<i>Recommended</i> - Manebe (2016) pp. 3-33	
February 16, 2024		Labor, Sexual Revolution & the Women's Movement Sweet Soul & Girl Groups	CF Ch. 3 pp. 113-152	Kingston Trio, "Tom Dooley"; Coasters, "Down in Mexico"; The Ronettes "Be My Baby"; The Drifters "There Goes My Baby"; The Everly Brothers, "All I Have to Do Is Dream"; Roy Orbison, "Only the Lonely"; Beach Boys, "Surfin' U.S.A."
February 23, 2024	Project Quick Start Due	Counterculture, drug culture & the Antiwar movement (psychedelia)	CF Ch. 7 pp. 251-290; Ch. 8 pp. 295-302	The Beatles, "A Day in the Life"; Jefferson Airplane, "White Rabbit"; Cream, "Sunshine of Your Love"; The Jimi Hendrix Experience, "Purple Haze"; Led Zeppelin, "Whole Lotta Love"
March 1, 2024	Midterm Exam	MIDTERM EXAM		
March 15, 2024		Exam Viewing & Final Projects Meetings/Planning		
		Musical Borders	<i>Recommended</i> - Washburne (2004) pp. 123-47; Carmichael (2017) NPR online; Coscarelli (2018) NYT online; Graham (2018) The Atlantic online	
March 22, 2024		From Pop to Art and back (British invasion)	CF Ch. 4 pp. 153-189	The Beatles, "I Want to Hold Your Hand" & "Tomorrow Never Knows"; The Rolling Stones, "Satisfaction"; The Animals, "House of the Rising Sun"; The Kinks, "You Really Got Me"
March 29, 2024	PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE	Folk revival & vernacular	CF Ch. 5 pp. 191-217	Bob Dylan, "Positively 4th Street"; The Byrds, "Mr. Tambourine Man"; The Beach Boys, "California Girls"; The Kingsmen, "Louie Louie"; The Monkees, "Last Train to Clarksville"
		Places & Communities	<i>Recommended</i> - Rose and Ross (1994) 71-88; Rose (1994) 21-61.	
April 5, 2024		Centering Blackness & Black urban culture	CF Ch. 9 pp. 335-363	Sly and the Family Stone, "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again)"; The Temptations, "Papa Was a Rolling Stone"; Stevie Wonder, "Living for the City"; Parliament, "Tear the Roof Off the Sucker"; Bob Marley & the Wailers, "Get Up, Stand Up"; Donna Summer, "Bad Girls"
April 12, 2024	PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT DUE	Urban disinvestment (NY) & the Components of HipHop	Orejuela Ch. 1-3, pp. 1-37	James Brown, "Give It Up or Turnit A Loose"; Jimmy Castor Bunch, "It's Just Begun."
April 19, 2024		Pan-African Roots of Hip-hop	Orejuela Ch. 4-5, pp. 38-53; 54-73	Sugarhill Gang, "Rapper's Delight"; Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "The Crossing-over: The New Wave Connection"
April 26, 2024	FINAL PROJECT DUE	Final Projects		