HIS 330
American Popular Music and Social Change Since 1900
Spring 2014

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00-12:15
Classroom: School of Education Building (SOEB) room 108

Professor Benjamin Filene
office hours: Tuesdays: 3:30-5:00 and by appointment,
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Credit structure: 3:3
Prerequisites: None
For Whom Planned: This course is designed for undergraduate students. Although the history department does not formally restrict admission to its courses, it recommends its 300-level courses to sophomores and above.

Catalog Description: Explores how musical movements—including jazz, folk, soul, rock, and hip hop—shaped new visions of America, from the Great Depression to the Civil Rights movement to the present day.

Course Description:
Popular music is often described as the soundtrack of our times, but can it shape our times as well? This course explores the relationship between music and resistance, reform, and rebellion across twentieth-century America. We will consider key historical moments when change was in the air—the Jazz Age, the Great Depression, the Civil Rights movement, and on to the present day—and explore musical genres linked to these moments, including jazz, blues, folk music, soul, rock, punk, and hip hop. Throughout, we will trace not only changes in musical genres but, centrally, the historical context from which the new sounds emerged and the music’s broader social impact. We will consider music written expressly to spark social or political movements and music appropriated by such movements. Core subjects will include how music has, historically, shaped the culture and politics of race, class, and gender.

In tracing the relationship between music and rebellion, the course becomes an exploration, more broadly, of the links between culture and power. The class tells stories of how individuals reimagined their world and found ways to express their visions; in doing so, it invites students to consider how change occurs in American society.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to
1. identify key moments in the history of American popular music and American social movements;
2. explain connections between musical trends and their broader historical contexts;
3. **analyze** primary sources (including music and images) for cultural and historical meanings; and
4. **compare and contrast** the relationship between popular music and social change in different historical eras.

**Teaching Methods:**
This is a lecture course with regular opportunities for discussion and collective exploration. In addition to learning a body of content, we will be exploring how to “read” music and other cultural texts to glean historical insights. In every class period, time will be reserved for group consideration of a piece of music, a set of lyrics, photographic images, or video. Frequently students will form smaller groups in the classroom to consider a question, an article excerpt, or a primary source.

**Assignments and Evaluation:**

- **Midterm exam (February 25):** 25%—including short-answer identifications and an in-class essay that involves interpreting a primary source (learning outcomes #1, 2, and 3)

- **Analytical Essay (due April 1):** 25%
  
  “Sounds of Protest in the Air”
  How has the legacy of protest songs evolved, thrived, or dwindled in the present day? Consider these questions through the examination of a single song, written in the last five years. How does the song seem similar and different from the historical examples we have considered this semester? A list of potential song candidates to consider will be provided, and students will be invited to contribute additional titles to that list during the semester. (learning outcomes #2, and 3)

- **Final exam (May 1):** 35%—including short-answer identifications and an in-class essay that invites synthesis of themes across different historical eras. (learning outcomes #1, 2, and 4)

- **Reader Responses:** 5%—Each week, I will ask you to write a short response to the most recent readings, to assess reading comprehension and to ensure that each student is prepared to participate fully in our in-class discussions. For each student, I will drop the term’s lowest reader-response grade. (learning outcome #1)

  **Note:** Reader responses will only be accepted on the day they are due; if you miss a class, you must email the reader response to me that same day to receive credit.

- **Class attendance:** 5%—I will take attendance each class period. You will earn an attendance grade on the following scale:
  
  0-1 absences: A
  2 absences: A-
  3 absences: B+
  4 absences: B
Note: This scale applies even in the case of minor illness, outside activities, or conflicts with other classes because one cannot succeed in this course without attending the lectures and taking notes. The only exceptions will be illnesses or absences documented with a doctor’s note or a dean’s excuse.

- Class participation: 5%—attentiveness and engagement with in-class discussions and collaboration and generosity with your “Course Partner” (described below).
  - A Course Partner is a fellow student, assigned to you in the first week of class, who will be your initial contact if you need to acquire notes from a missed lecture, to clarify deadlines, or to address confusion about a course assignment or content. Beyond these minimal mutual services, you and your partner may be in as much or little contact as you like. For instance, you might choose to serve as study partners or peer reviewers of each other’s essays.

Grading scale:
A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72;
D+=67-69; D=63-66; D-=60-62; F=59 and below

If things go awry…
…it’s your responsibility to tell me—right away.

Lateness Policy:
It is important to turn in assignments on time so as to be fair to other students and to ensure timely grading. I am receptive to advance requests for extensions. However, if an assignment is turned in late without an agreed-upon extension, I will deduct 1/3rd of a letter grade per day (e.g., A to A-) unless an appropriate written excuse (e.g., medical, counselor’s, dean’s) is provided.

Special Needs
If you require accommodations for special learning needs, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Disability Services, located within the Elliot University Center (334-5770)—and please let me know!

Required Texts:
Across the semester, short excerpts will be assigned from this textbook, which may be purchased at the UNCG bookstore:
**E-reserves:** In addition to the textbook, the discussion for each class session will also draw on required primary source readings and articles. All of these materials are on electronic reserve on Blackboard.

**Attendance policy:** Students need to attend all class meetings and are encouraged to meet individually with the instructor as needed. See “Class attendance,” above.

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**Academic Integrity Policy**

All students have a responsibility to uphold the standards of “Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, and Responsibility” detailed in the Academic Integrity Policy. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, misuse of academic resources, falsification of information, and facilitating of academic dishonesty are treated with utmost seriousness by the history department and dealt with severely by the University administration. The full policy appears in the Student Calendar/Handbook and at academicintegrity.uncg.edu. Per university policy, you will be asked to sign a copy of the Academic Integrity Pledge for each major assignment in this class.
Outline/Calendar:

Setting the Stage:
January 14: Listening to Learn/Learning to Listen:
   “This Land is Your Land”

January 16: Love and Theft: Minstrelsy
   Secondary Source:
      Starr: 45-50.
   Primary Source:
      Nevin, Robert P. "Stephen C. Foster and Negro Minstrelsy.” Atlantic
      Monthly 20, no. 121 (November 1867): 608-610 [excerpt].

Part I
Resisting Between the Lines, 1890-1920s
   Can making and listening to music be political acts even if the musicians and
   audiences don’t think they are being political?

January 21: Ragtime
   Secondary Sources:
      Starr: 7-9; 57-68.
      Brackett, David. “Music Basics,” In the online companion to The Pop,
   Primary Source:

January 23: The Blues, Spirituals, and Jim Crow
   Secondary Source:
      Starr: 126-129, 134-143.

January 28: The Jazz Age, Youth Culture, and Flappers
   Secondary Source:
      Starr: 78-81; 85-98.
   Primary Source:
      Street, Julian. “‘The Jazz Baby.’” Saturday Evening Post (July 15, 1922):
      6-7, 73-81.
Part II
Reconstructing American Culture during the Great Depression

Can music reshape a country’s sense of itself and make a more equitable society or is that as silly as dreaming of a Big Rock Candy mountain?

January 30: The Lomaxes and Lead Belly
Primary Source:

February 4: The Labor Movement and the Folk Revival:
Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Paul Robeson
Secondary Source:

Primary/Secondary Source:

Primary Source:

February 6: Testing Racial Barriers: “From Spirituals to Swing,”
Café Society, and Marian Anderson
Primary Source:
Dugan, James and John Hammond. “An Early Black-Music Concert: ‘From Spirituals to Swing.’” The Black Perspective in Music 2 (autumn 1974) [1938]: 191-196 [NOTE: This is only an excerpt from what appears on e-reserve].

Part III
Finding Countercultures in the 1950s
Can music help us find seeds of resistance in an “apolitical” time?

February 11: Cold War Tunings: Pete Seeger, McCarthyism, Van Cliburn
Primary Source:


February 13: Preludes: Frank Sinatra, Rhythm and Blues, and the Creation of Teen Culture
Secondary Source:
Primary Sources:

(Martha Weinman Lear, “The Bobby Sox Have Wilted, but the Memory Remains Fresh” [1995])


February 18: Elvis and Rock ’n’ Roll

Secondary Source:

Primary Sources:
Listen to the “Elvis” playlist on Blackboard

February 20: The Beats and Bebop—NOTE: Class meets at the Weatherspoon Museum (Dillard Room), 500 Tate St.

Primary Sources:


February 25: Midterm Exam

Part IV
Singing at the Front Lines of the 1960s
Can music overthrow the powers that be and make a new world?

A. The Civil Rights Movement
February 27: Spirituals, Gospel, and the Civil Rights Movement

Primary Source:
March 4: Bob Dylan and the Folk Revival

Secondary Source:
Starr: 339-345.

Primary Sources:


March 6: Bob Dylan as Traitor?

Primary Sources:
New York Times articles about the deaths of Hattie Carroll and Medgar Evers (1963)

Listen to “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll” and “Only a Pawn in Their Game” on Blackboard

[spring break]

B. The Counterculture

March 18: The Counterculture I

Secondary Source:
Starr: 348-352.

Primary Source:


March 20: [Film: Grrrl Love and Revolution: Riot Grrrl NYC]

Primary Source:
(“riot grrrl” [1991])

March 25: The Counterculture II: Woodstock, Altamont, and “Waist Deep in Big Muddy”

Secondary Source:

Primary Source:
Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, Excerpt D: 264-270.
(J.R. Young, “Review of Various Artists: Woodstock [1970];
George Paul Csicsery, “Altamount, California, December 6, 1969” [1970])

C. Black Pride/Black Power
March 27: The Politics of Soul
   Secondary Source:

   Primary Source:
   (Phyl Garland, “Aretha Franklin—‘Sister Soul’: Eclipsed Singer Gains New Heights” [1967])

April 1: The Politics of Funk
   (Analytical Essay due)
   Secondary Source:

   Primary Source: Barry, Thomas. “The Importance of Being Mr. James Brown”

Part V
   Did politics die with the 1960s?

April 3: Sounds of Feminism/Domestic Revolutions
   Secondary Source:
   Starr: 368-373.

   Primary Source:
   (Robert Windeler, “Carole King: ‘You Can Get to Know Me through My Music’” [1973])

April 8: Punk I
   Secondary Source:
   Starr: 423-432.

   Primary Sources:

April 10: The Reagan Era: Boom and Backlash
   Secondary Source:
Starr: 450-454; 467-470.

**Primary Source:**


**April 15: Hip Hop I:**  
“Black America’s CNN”?  
*Secondary Source:*  
Starr: 491-509.

**Primary Source:**  

**April 17: 9/11 and the Sound of Patriotism**  
[no readings]

**April 22: Hip Hop II: Is Hip Hop Still Political?**  
*Secondary Sources:*  


**April 24: Contemporary Resonances**  
*Primary Sources:*  
Senator Barack Obama, speech re: race (March 18, 2008)  
- video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU)

April 29: [no class]

May 1, 12:00-3:00 p.m.: Final Exam