

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**

5 absences: B-
6 absences: C
7 absences: D
More than 7: F

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:

Starr, Larry and Christopher Alan Waterman. *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MTV* (fourth edition, 2013).

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.

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, Rock, and Soul Reader* (2009): 24 pp.

Primary Source:

Joplin, Scott. *School of Ragtime: 6 Exercises for Piano* (1908): 5 pp.

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:***

Lomax, John and Alan. "Preface," In *Our Singing Country* (1941): ix-xvi.

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

Starr: 151-153.

Primary/Secondary Source:

"Revolutionary Music." In *Singing Out: An Oral History of America's Folk Music Revivals*, David King Dunaway and Molly Beer, eds. (2010): 37-48.

Primary Source:

Guthrie, Woody. "Workers of the World..." (ca. 1939). In *Woody Sez* (1975): 152-154.

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:***

House Un-American Activities Committee, testimony of Pete Seeger (August 18, 1955): 15 pp.

Seeger, Pete. "Letter to My Grandchildren" (1956). In *Pete Seeger in His Own Words*, Rob Rosenthal and Sam Rosenthal, eds. (2012): 99-102.

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

Starr: 199-209; 220-231.

Primary Sources:

Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, David Brackett, ed. (2009), *Excerpt A*: 23-26.
(Martha Weinman Lear, "The Bobby Sox Have Wilted, but the Memory Remains Fresh" [1995])

Sinatra, Frank. "What's This About Races?" (1945), In *Frank Sinatra and Popular Culture: Essay on an American Icon*, Leonard Mustazza, ed. (1998): 23-25.

February 18: Elvis and Rock 'n' Roll**Secondary Source:**

Starr: 240-245; 258-273.

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:**

Mailer, Norman. "The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster," *Dissent* 4 (summer 1957). In *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, Robert Walser, ed. (1999): 242-246.

Baldwin, James. "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy." *Esquire* (May 1961). In *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, eds. (2011): 23-26.

Hughes, Langston. "Bop" (1961). In *Riffs & Choruses: A New Jazz Anthology*, Andrew Clark, ed. (2001): 223-225.

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:**

Appleton, Clyde R. "Singing in the Streets of Raleigh, 1963: Some Recollections" (1975). In *From Jubilee to Hip Hop: Readings in African American Music*, Kip Lornell, ed. (2010): 188-193.

March 4: Bob Dylan and the Folk Revival**Secondary Source:**

Starr: 339-345.

Primary Sources:

Dylan, Bob. "River of Ice." In *Chronicles: Volume One* (2004): 225-248 and 280-286.

Turner, Gil. "Bob Dylan—A New Voice Singing New Songs" (1962). In *The Dylan Companion*: 62-66.

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:

Anderson, Chester. "Rock and the Counterculture" (1967), In *The Rock History Reader*: 99-102.

Silber, Irwin. "An Open Letter to Bob Dylan" (1964). In *The Bob Dylan Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*: 26-28.

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

Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, Excerpt H: 507-510.]
("riot grrrl" [1991])

March 25: The Counterculture II: Woodstock, Altamont, and "Waist Deep in Big Muddy"**Secondary Source:**

Starr: 362-366.

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:

Starr: 334-336.

Primary Source:

Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, Excerpt E: 202-207.

(Phyl Garland, "Aretha Franklin—'Sister Soul': Eclipsed Singer Gains New Heights" [1967])

April 1: The Politics of Funk

(Analytical Essay due)

Secondary Source:

Starr: 332-334; 434-437.

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

Look 33 (February 18, 1969): 56-62.

Part V

The 1970s-2000s: Searching for Sounds of Change "After the Revolution"

Did politics die with the 1960s?

April 3: Sounds of Feminism/Domestic Revolutions

Secondary Source:

Starr: 368-373.

Primary Source:

Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, Excerpt F: 279-283.

(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:

Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, Excerpt G: 362-373.

(James Wolcott, "A Conservative Impulse in the New Rock Underground" [1975]; Caroline Coon, "Rebels Against the System" [1976])

April 10: The Reagan Era: Boom and Backlash

Secondary Source:

Starr: 450-454; 467-470.

Primary Source:

Will, George F. “Bruuuuuce” (September 13, 1984). In *Racing in the Street: The Bruce Springsteen Reader*, June Skinner Sawyers, ed. (2004): 107-109.

Paglia, Camille. “Madonna: Finally a Real Feminist” (1990) and Barbara Grizzuti Harrison, “Can Madonna Justify Madonna?” (1991). In *The Rock History Reader*: 259-263.

April 15: Hip Hop I:

“Black America’s CNN”?

Secondary Source:

Starr: 491-509.

Primary Source:

Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader, Excerpt I: 457-462.

(Harry Allen, “Hip Hop Madness: From Def Jams to Cold Lampin’, Rap Is Our Music” [1989])

April 17: 9/11 and the Sound of Patriotism

[no readings]

April 22: Hip Hop II: Is Hip Hop Still Political?

Secondary Sources:

Dyson, Michael Eric and Kevin Powell. “Is Hip-Hop Dead? Two Sides” *Ebony* 62 (June 2007): 60-61.

Tanz, Jason. “Selling Down: The Marketing of the Hip-Hop Nation.” In *Other People’s Property* (2007): 178-199.

Rose, Tricia. “Six Guiding Principles for Progressive Creativity, Consumption, and Community in Hip Hop and Beyond.” In *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—and Why It Matters* (2008): 261-273.

April 24: Contemporary Resonances

Primary Sources:

Senator Barack Obama, speech re: race (March 18, 2008)

- transcript: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467>
- video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWe7wTVbLUU>

President Barack Obama, speech re: Trayvon Martin (July 19, 2013):
<http://www.businessinsider.com/obama-trayvon-martin-race-speech-video-text-2013-7>.

April 29: [no class]

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