

AMERICAN STUDIES 401T
Culture and Commerce of American Music
Spring 2018

“Is it so wrong, wanting to be at home with your record collection? It’s not like collecting records is like collecting stamps, or beer mats, or antique thimbles. There’s a whole world in here, a nicer, dirtier, more violent, more peaceful, more colorful, sleazier, more dangerous, more loving world than the world I live in; there is history, and geography, and poetry, and countless other things I should have studied at school, including music.”

--Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity*

“In the United States, popular music has always offered accessible, everyday cultural spaces where strangeness and familiarity are actively negotiated, where difference and community are actively experienced and imagined, and where opposition and consensus actively butt heads... music is a mode of relation, a point of contact.”

--Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America*

AMST 401T-04, #21636

California State University, Fullerton

Wednesdays 4:00-6:45 • EC-11

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Office Hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30, Wednesdays 11:30-12:30, and by appointment

Course Description

In this upper-division American Studies seminar, students will learn a variety of approaches to studying music as an expressive form in American culture. The primary goal of this course is to guide students through the process of researching and writing a 15-20-page interdisciplinary research paper on a topic of their choice related to music. For the purposes of this seminar, we will focus on a few select genres across multiple time periods—primarily jazz, rock and roll, disco, and hip hop. Readings and discussions will be organized around key themes in the study of music and culture: artist, sound, image, performance, audience, aesthetics, and identity. Throughout, we will focus on the importance of studying sound in context by exploring the relationship between music and history, memory, politics, consumerism, technology, sexuality, gender, race, age, and taste cultures.

Course Prerequisites: AMST 201 and ASMT 301.

Required Texts

Books

John Szwed, *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth* (Penguin, 2015)

Erika Doss, *Elvis Culture: Fans, Faith, and Image* (Kansas, 1999)

Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (Norton, 2010)

Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Duke, 2004)

All books are available for purchase at Little Professor bookstore, 725 N. Placentia Ave (near the corner of Nutwood and Placentia).

Required Film:

Saturday Night Fever, dir. John Badham, 1977

American Studies Learning Goals

Develop a rigorous concept of culture and cultural process as well as an interdisciplinary sensibility, becoming aware of connections among the social sciences and the humanities.

- Develop an interdisciplinary interpretive framework for studying American culture, cultural diversity, and cultural processes in ways that will enable students to solve practical and theoretical problems

Gain a thorough understanding of cultural diversity by examining the creative tension between unity and multiplicity in American experiences.

- Identify a variety of examples of cultural diversity and commonality in America's past and present, demonstrating an awareness of the similarities, differences, and relationships among the multitude of American groups
- Explain how categories of difference—including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality—are culturally constructed and vary according to historical, regional, and social contexts
- Understand and demonstrate how cultural beliefs and practices have played a role in both the exercise of and resistance to power throughout American history

Understand and interpret the ways in which culture creates meaning and guides behavior.

- Critically analyze and interpret a spectrum of cultural documents and expressive forms, ranging from popular to folk to elite expressions, from mass media to material culture
- Employ both historical and contemporary perspectives in order to situate these documents in relevant individual and social as well as local, national, and global contexts

Learn research, writing, and expressive skills to see connections among complex materials and to clearly communicate an understanding of the underlying meanings and causes of cultural/historical events.

- Design and carry out an original interdisciplinary research project on American culture
- Discover primary and secondary sources (hard copy as well as digital) using the library's resources
- Analyze and synthesize material from primary and secondary sources in order to create a coherent argument based on evidence
- Develop an original thesis and support that thesis through the thoughtful use of a variety of properly cited sources
- Communicate their research findings through clear, well-organized written and oral presentations
- Develop critical thinking, writing, and interpretive skills

Become informed and engaged American citizens, able to situate current political and social issues within their historical and cultural contexts.

- Understand the historical origins and cultural significance of current movements for social change.
- Situate the historical and contemporary study of American culture in a global context, demonstrating an understanding of the ways American culture has been shaped by diaspora, colonialism, and globalization

Course Assignments and Grading Standards

Assignments

The major writing assignment for this course is a 15-20-page research paper on a topic of your choice related to music and American culture. You are expected to formulate a research project, progressively fine-tune your topic; conduct research using primary and secondary sources; formally present your findings to the class; and write a paper in which you lay out a clear argument supported by ample evidence. Because 401T is the capstone for the American Studies major and minor, you should view this process as an opportunity to demonstrate your acquired abilities in cultural analysis and interdisciplinary thinking. The goal is to write a paper that includes *close readings of primary sources in context* and that makes an *argument about the cultural work of music*.

You must meet with me one-on-one to discuss your topic before you turn in your proposal.

In addition to the research paper, there are two short essays that are required. These essays are designed to help you practice your analytical skills in preparation for your final paper.

• **Research Proposal**

Your 4-5-page research proposal should...

- 1) identify the question or questions you hope to answer in your research;
- 2) describe the topic you have chosen to write about and explain why you chose this topic. How will this topic help you answer the questions you have about music and culture?
- 3) identify the evidence you plan to gather and analyze. Will you be analyzing a group of songs, an album, a particular performance, the representation of an artist in social media, a film, or a set of interviews that you conduct of fans, a variety of different sources, or what? What are the primary cultural texts that you plan to read closely and make sense of?
- 4) Discuss the context or contexts that are relevant for your research project. What time period (or periods) are you focusing on? What connections do you think you will need to make to the larger culture to help us understand your evidence and your topic? Your paper must connect your primary cultural texts to a larger context.
- 5) In a formal bibliography, list at least 3 primary and 6 secondary sources you plan to consult as you conduct your research. Secondary sources should be scholarly articles and/or books about your topic and about the broader historical context you are connecting it to. The primary sources should include any songs, videos, films, albums, interviews, or other sources that you plan to analyze. Note: your final paper must include research into at least 10 sources (for M.A. students, 15 sources). At least 2 of those sources must be full-length scholarly books (one of which may come from our reading list, if relevant).

• **Project Update**

You are required to turn in a project update that includes the following:

- 1) A section that describes how your topic has evolved since your proposal.

- 2) A rough draft of an introduction to your paper (not just a few sentences, but a fully developed, multi-paragraph introduction that describes your topic, articulates your thesis, and previews the organization of your paper,
- 3) A detailed outline of the rest of your paper
- 4) An updated bibliography of your sources

• **In-Class Presentation**

You are required to give a 10-minute in-class presentation on your research. Your presentation should include an audio, visual, and/or material source. Think of this as an opportunity to teach your findings to the class. I discourage reading from bullet points on a PowerPoint presentation.

• **Research Paper**

Your final research paper should be 15-20 pages long (M.A. students, 18-20+), double-spaced, 12-point font. You may format the paper in either MLA or Chicago style.

• **Practice Papers (2-3 pages each)**

In the first part of the course, you will write two short papers designed to help you practice analytical skills that you will need to use in your research paper.

For the first practice paper, you should select a music video of your choice and do a close reading of it. Describe and analyze the sound, the lyrics, and the images. What themes and issues are being explored in the video? What assumptions is it making? Whose perspective are we getting? And what are the silences here?

For the second practice paper, you will use the same video you selected for the first paper and place it in context. Based on the themes and issues you identified in the first paper, how could you connect this text to the larger culture? What year did it appear? How is the video in conversation with certain issues, ideas, and/or representations circulating in the broader culture? In what ways is the video resonating with its context?

• **Additional assignment for graduate students**

In keeping with university-wide requirements for graduate study, graduate students enrolled in this 400-level course will be expected to demonstrate, in both written and oral performance, quality higher than that expected of an undergraduate. Graduate students should demonstrate an advanced level of competence in interdisciplinary cultural analysis and synthesis.

M.A. students are required to read one additional book for the course, selected in consultation with the instructor from the list below, and write a 6-8-page response paper that...

- 1) summarizes AND evaluates the author's main argument and methodology (what is the author's approach to studying the relationship between music and culture?);
- 2) ties the book to larger themes/issues/questions examined in the course; and

3) imagines a creative way to either teach the book to college students OR share the material from the book with the public in some way, such as a documentary, museum exhibit, graphic novel, podcast, etc. (in a few paragraphs, describe in some detail what you have in mind).

The paper may be turned in anytime but is due no later than May 2.

Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (2011)

Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (2005)

Robert Walser, *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993)

Peggy Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004)

Steve Waksman, *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience* (1999)

Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit* (1999)

Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994)

Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (1995)

Dewar MacLeod, *Kids of the Black Hole: Punk Rock in Postsuburban California* (2010)

• Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required at every class meeting. Attendance and class participation make up 10% of your final grade. Upper-division seminars work best when students are actively engaged with the classroom community, concepts, and coursework. Please come to every class prepared to 1) describe the central argument or theme of the assigned reading; 2) assess the reading for its relative strengths and limitations; 3) raise questions about the reading; 4) connect the course readings to one another; 5) connect the reading to your broader understanding of contemporary and historical issues in American culture; 6) relate the reading to your own experience and/or areas of expertise.

Grading Standards

	<u>Undergraduates</u>	<u>M.A. Students</u>
Proposal	10%	5%
Practice Papers 1 & 2	20% (10% each)	20% (10% each)
Project Update	10%	10%
In-class Presentation	10%	10%
Final Research Paper	40%	40%
Participation	10%	10%
Book Analysis (M.A. students)	N/A	5%

Late Assignments

An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Late assignments will be lowered one mark **per day** (NOT per class meeting) after the due date (for example, C to C-). Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis for legitimate reasons and only when a student asks for an extension at least 24 hours before an assignment is due.

Grading

For this course, +/- grading will be used. No extra credit will be offered. Keep all graded work so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

Community Policies

- It is unacceptable to arrive late or leave class early. If you must leave class early because of an appointment that cannot be missed, make sure that you tell me before class begins.

- Cell phones must be on silent (not vibrate), or preferably turned off. They must be stowed away out of sight.
- Laptops may only be used for notetaking; going online with your laptop is not permitted in class.

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; D 63-66; D- 60-62; F 0-59

Student Accommodations

CSUF complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing a process for disclosing disabilities and arranging for reasonable accommodations. On the CSUF campus, the Office of Disability Support Services has been delegated the authority to certify disabilities and to prescribe specific accommodations for students with documented disabilities. DSS provides support services for students with mobility limitations, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, and other disabilities. Counselors are available to help students plan a CSUF experience to meet their individual needs. Prior to receiving this assistance, documentation from a qualified professional source must be submitted to DSS. For more information, please contact DSS in UH 101; phone 657-278-3112. <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS/>

Academic Integrity

Integrity is an essential component of all students' academic experience. Students who violate university standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the university. Since dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the university, policies on academic integrity are strictly enforced. I expect that you will familiarize yourself with the CSUF academic integrity guidelines: <http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/documents/PDF/300/UPS300-021.pdf>

Campus Emergency Procedures

Students should be familiar with campus **emergency procedures**: <http://prepare.fullerton.edu>

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic	Due
W, Jan 24	Introduction to Course	
W, Jan 31	Writing About Music: Artist, Audience, Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debra Rae Cohen, “David Bowie Eats His Young,” <i>Rolling Stone</i>, December 25, 1980 • Cheryl Keyes, “Empowering Self, Making Choices, Creating Spaces: Black Female Identity via Rap Music Performance,” <i>The Journal of American Folklore</i> 113:449 (Summer 2000) • Robert Walser, “Can I Play With Madness? Mysticism, Horror, and Postmodern Politics,” from <i>Running With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music</i> (1993) • Daniel Cavicchi, “Ignoring the Music Business,” from <i>Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans</i> (1998)
W, Feb 7	Listening to Billie Holiday: Analyzing Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Billie Holiday</i>, Introduction, Chapter 4, Chapter 5 (97-108 only), Chapter 7 (154-170 only), Chapter 8 (196-198 only) • Listen to “Strange Fruit” and 9 other Billie Holiday songs (your choice)
W, Feb 14	Reading Billie Holiday: Analyzing Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Billie Holiday</i>, Chapter 1, Chapter 3 • DUE: Practice Paper #1: Close Reading
W, Feb 21	Collecting Elvis: Fandom and Material Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Elvis Culture</i>, “Images of Elvis” and “Paying Homage to Elvis” • Listen to 10 Elvis songs (your choice)

W, Feb 28	Locating Elvis: Fandom and Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Elvis Culture</i>, read “Elvis is America” and <u>two</u> of the following: “Saint Elvis,” “Sexing Elvis,” “All-White Elvis,” “Who Owns Elvis”
W, Mar 7	The Disco Era: Music and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hot Stuff</i>, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3 • Listen to 10 songs from the “Playlist” on pgs. 304-305 (your choice)
W, Mar 14	“The Little Disco Movie”: Music and Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUE: Project Proposal • <i>Hot Stuff</i>, Chapter 5 • Watch <i>Saturday Night Fever</i> (link available on Titanium)
W, Mar 21	Bodies in Motion: Sexual Politics on the Dance Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hot Stuff</i>, Chapter 4, Chapter 6 • DUE: Practice Paper #2: Context
W, Mar 28	NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS	
W, Apr 4	The Language of Hip Hop: Music as Idiom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prophets of the Hood</i>, Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and <u>two</u> of the following: Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7 • Listen to songs by 10 artists mentioned in the book (your choice)
W, Apr 11	Guest Speaker	
W, Apr 18	Writing Workshop	DUE: Project Update
W, Apr 25	Presentations	

W, May 2	Presentations	
W, May 9	Presentations	
TBA	Research Paper Due	