

AMERICAN STUDIES 401T Culture and Commerce of American Music

AMST 401T-01, #15120
California State University, Fullerton
Spring 2015
Mondays/Wednesdays 11:30-12:45
Room: MH-406

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Office Hours: Mondays 4:00-6:00 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. 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 and time periods—primarily blues, jazz, *rock en español*, hip-hop, 19th century musical stage and theater, the disco era, and club culture. Readings and discussions will be organized around four themes in the study of music and culture: 1) exploring the relationship between sound and identity; 2) analyzing music as cultural document and cultural aesthetic; 3) locating music cultures in historical context; and 4) studying changes over time in American listening practices and taste cultures.

Course Prerequisites: AMST 201 and ASMT 301.

Required Texts

Books

Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (2005)
Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (1995)
Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (2011)
Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues* (1976)
Alice Echols, *Hot Stuff: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture* (2010)

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

Articles

There will be several assigned articles for this course, available for download on the course Titanium site. Consult the course schedule for the list of readings.

Films

High Fidelity (dir. Stephen Frears, 2000)

Saturday Night Fever (dir. John Badham, 1977)

Twenty Feet From Stardom (dir. Morgan Neville, 2013)

Searching for Sugar Man (dir. Malik Bendjelloul, 2012)

You are required to view these films in advance of our scheduled discussions [see course schedule]. They are available on reserve in the CSUF library (and many are available in public libraries for free loan), or you may acquire them on your own through DVD-rental or digital streaming services.

Recordings

In addition to reading, I will periodically ask you to listen to select recordings outside of class. You can access these recordings via Titanium. A listening schedule will be provided separately.

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 that is related to music and American culture. You are expected to formulate a research question, 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.

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

• **Research Proposal**

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

- 1) frame a question that you want to answer in your research paper;
- 2) describe the focus of your paper (the topic) and explain the connection between your topic and your question. In other words, how will this topic help you answer your question?
- 3) discuss how your topic relates to and will address our four course themes: identity, analysis, context, and change over time;
- 4) list at least 3 primary and 6 secondary sources (secondary = scholarly articles and/or books) you plan to consult as you conduct your research. Note: your final paper must include research into at least 12 sources. At least 2 of those sources must be full-length scholarly books NOT including course books.

• **Project Update**

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

- 1) How have your question and your topic evolved since your proposal?
- 2) A rough draft of an introduction to your paper
- 3) A detailed outline of the rest of your paper
- 4) An updated bibliography of your primary and secondary sources

• In-Class Presentation

You are required to give a 10-15-minute in-class presentation of 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. Reading from bullet points on a PowerPoint presentation is greatly discouraged.

• Research Paper

Your final research paper should be 15-20 pages long, double-spaced, 12-point font. You may format the paper in either MLA or Chicago style; just be consistent.

There are two short essays in addition to the research paper, designed to help you reflect on the course content and practice your analytical skills.

• Paper #1: Songs of Myself (4-5 pages)

Write an essay in which you reflect on the role of music and sound in shaping your identity. Your paper should describe your “musical blueprint,” your “audiotopias,” and the extent to which music is part of your “cultural agenda” and “cultural capital.” As you narrate your musical memoir, be sure to explain how Kun and Thornton define these concepts.

• Paper #2: On the Margins of Music (4-5 pages)

Write an essay in which you analyze *Searching for Sugar Man* and *Twenty Feet From Stardom* as stories about music, race, and nation. You should articulate your own argument about the two films, using concepts from Kun and any other course readings. Your paper should also address the historical/cultural context in which the two films appeared (and the fact that both won Academy Awards for Best Documentary). What do these two films—these two stories about music—tell us about music and American culture in the 21st century?

Grading Standards

Proposal	10%
Paper #1 Songs of Myself	10%
Paper #2 On the Margins of Music	10%
Project Update	10%
In-class Presentation	10%
Final Research Paper	40%
Participation	10%

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 music and culture; 6) relate the reading to your own experience and/or areas of expertise.

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 657-278-3117. <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 academic integrity guidelines found in the current student handbook. [<http://www.fullerton.edu/handbook/>]. Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means, or helping someone commit an act of academic dishonesty. (UPS 300.021). Examples include, but are not limited to:

Unacceptable examination behavior: communicating with fellow students, copying material from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from an exam, possessing or using unauthorized

materials, or any behavior that defeats the intent of an exam.

Plagiarism: taking the work of another and offering it as one's own without giving credit to that source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

Unauthorized collaboration on a project, homework or other assignment where an instructor expressly forbids such collaboration.

Documentary falsification, including forgery, altering of campus documents or records, tampering with grading procedures, fabricating lab assignments, or altering medical excuses.

Campus Emergency Procedures

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

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic / Assigned Texts (Due Monday unless otherwise noted)	Writing Assignments (Due Wednesday)
Week 1 Jan. 19, 21	Introduction to Course NO CLASS Jan. 19	
Week 2 Jan. 26, 28	Sound, Space, and Subcultural Capital • Kun, <i>Audiotopia</i> , Intro and Ch. 1 • Thornton, <i>Club Cultures</i> , Ch. 1	
Week 3 Feb. 2, 4	--Audiencing in the 19th Century --Analyzing Music as Cultural Document and Cultural Aesthetic • Cavicchi, <i>Listening & Learning</i> , Intro and Ch. 1 • Murray, <i>Stomping the Blues</i> , Chs. 1, 2, 3	
Week 4 Feb. 9, 11	The Rise of Commodified Listening • Cavicchi, <i>Listening & Longing</i> , Ch. 2, 3 • Watch <i>High Fidelity</i>	• Paper #1: Songs of Myself
Week 5 Feb. 16, 18	The Struggle for Musical Feeling NO CLASS Feb. 16 • Cavicchi, <i>Listening & Longing</i> , Ch. 4, 5, Epilogue	

Week 6 Feb. 23, 25	Music, Race, and Nation • Kun, <i>Audiotopia</i> , Ch. 3, 5, 6, Conclusion	
Week 7 Mar. 2, 4	The Disco Era • Echols, <i>Hot Stuff</i> , Intro, Ch. 1, 2, 3 • Watch <i>Saturday Night Fever</i>	
Week 8 Mar. 9, 11	Sexual Politics on the Dance Floor • Echols, <i>Hot Stuff</i> , Ch. 4, 5	• Research Proposal Due
Week 9 Mar. 16, 18	The Media and Taste Cultures • Echols, <i>Hot Stuff</i> , Ch. 6, Epilogue • Thornton, <i>Club Cultures</i> , Ch. 3, 4, Epilogue	
Week 10 Mar. 23, 25	On the Margins of Music • Watch <i>Searching for Sugar Man</i> • Watch <i>Twenty Feet From Stardom</i>	• Paper #2: On the Margins of Music
Week 11	<i>No Class: Spring Recess</i>	
Week 12 Apr. 6, 8	The Blues Idiom • Murray, <i>Stomping the Blues</i> , Chs. 4-8	
Week 13 Apr. 13, 15	Hip-Hop Culture • Tricia Rose, “Flow, Layering, and Rupture in Postindustrial New York” • Questlove, “When the People Cheer: How Hip-Hop Failed Black America” • Mark Anthony Neal, “Up From Hustling:	• Project Update

	Power, Plantations, and the Hip-Hop Mogul”	
Week 14 Apr. 20, 22	Student Presentations	
Week 15 Apr. 27, 29	Student Presentations	
Week 16 May 4, 6	Student Presentations	
Finals Week		• Research Paper Due