Overview

Has the role of popular music and related forms of expressive culture changed in the twenty-first century? What are the implications of music and music-making increasingly being mediated through and realized within global networks of circulation and exchange? Have capitalist interests compromised music’s ability to be a meaningful vehicle for social critique and contestation? Can new technologies and ways of making music empower marginalized communities or are they the new “opiate of the masses”? What happens when popular music is reconceptualized primarily as an economic resource, in theory harnessing the power of capitalism on behalf of the subaltern?

This seminar will explore how different schools of thought and intellectual traditions have sought to grapple with these questions, ultimately evaluating the potential contribution that each can make to the ethnographic study of music and popular culture. We will begin by examining several foundational texts, including works by Marx, Gramsci, Williams, Bourdieu, and the Frankfurt and Birmingham Schools. Attention will then shift to contemporary popular music research in the fields of ethnomusicology, musicology, popular culture studies, anthropology, communications, and folklore. We will place particular emphasis on issues concerning the production and consumption of popular culture, the impact of globalization on local forms of music making, the relationship of popular music to the so-called creative industries, the implications of the emergence of new media technologies, and the commodification of musical forms of knowledge under neoliberalism.

Course Objectives

- To gain an increased understanding of the challenges associated with the study of popular music and culture at the turn of the twenty-first century.
- To introduce students to some of the seminal social theory texts dealing with popular culture and cultural production under late capitalism.
- To analyze the potential usefulness of these texts towards the ethnographic study of music and other forms of expressive culture.
- To improve critical reading and writing skills as well as the ability to synthesize complex ideas both in written and oral forms.
- To learn how to evaluate, adapt and apply some of these theoretical frameworks to case studies related to each student’s intended research area.
Course Website

This course has an Oncourse website. In this site you will find all the readings, assignments, and other supplemental materials needed for the class. Class grades will also be posted in this site.

Attendance

Given the small number of class meetings during the semester and the fact that each one is designed to build onto the next one, class attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than two classes during the semester will have their attendance/participation score lowered by half (50%). Students who miss four or more classes will receive a zero for their attendance/participation grade.

Note: If a student cannot attend class it is his or her responsibility to make arrangements so that any assignments due be turned ahead of time.

Reading and Writing Assignments

Each week, students are responsible for thoroughly reading all of the scheduled pieces and come to class ready to discuss them. Throughout the semester, there will be three different types of writing assignments.

Position Statements: In weeks when we will have multiple articles assigned, students will prepare a 250-300 word Position Statement. These statements will be in response to a weekly question that will be posted or issue that will be raised at the end of the previous class. Position Statements will be due at the start of each class without exceptions and will be scored on a five-point scale. The final Position Statement grade will be the percentage obtained by dividing the total number of points received by the total number of possible points. Guidelines for writing the Position Statements will be posted in the Oncourse site.

Book Reviews: In the weeks that we will be reading a single book, students will be asked to write a short (4 - 5 pages) journal-style book review. These papers should be an expanded version of the Critical Abstract and will: a) identify and synthesize the central argument of the book; b) briefly show how the various chapters contribute to support the author’s central point; and, c) provide an evaluation of how successfully the author realized his/her argument with particular reference to the body of literature, issues and ideas discussed throughout the semester. Each Book Review will be graded on a 100 point scale.

Final Assignment: Students will be asked to submit a Final Assignment at the end of the semester, choosing from one of the following three options: a) research paper that applies some of the ideas covered in the semester to a particular case study or theoretical issue; b) a literature review which provides an in-depth analysis of 6 – 8 key works not covered at length during the course; c) an annotated bibliography on a particular issue or topic associated with the course that includes a brief critical analysis of 15-20 sources as well as an introductory overview mapping out particular themes and trends within that particular body of works. Regardless of option chosen, Final Assignments should be 16-18 pages in length. A three-page proposal that includes a prospective bibliography will be due in class Mon. March, 5. The completed assignment will be due in my mailbox (in 504 N. Fess) by 5pm on Wed., May 2, 2012.
Grading

The grade for this course will be distributed as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation/Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position Statements</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Final Grade</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Students are encouraged to keep track of their own performance in the class through the Oncourse site. Failure to turn in written work on time will result in a lowering your score by 3 points per day; assignments that are more than a week late will not be accepted.

Required Texts


Discussion/Reading Schedule (Subject to Modification)

**Week 1 (1/9) – Introduction: Definitions**
- “Can We Get Rid of the ‘Popular’ in Popular Music?” (International Advisory Editors 2005)

**Week 2 (1/16) – Marxist Foundations**
- Bourgeois and Proletarian (excerpt from *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*) (Marx and Engels 1978, 133–145)
  - The Commodity (Pt. I, Ch. 1)
  - The Process of Exchange (Pt. I, Ch. 2)
  - The Labour Process and the Valorization Process (Pt. III, Ch. 7)
  - Productive and Unproductive Labour (Appendix)
- Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State (Gramsci 2009)
- Culture; Hegemony; Ideology; Popular (Williams 1985, 87–93; 144–146; 153–157; 236–238)
Week 3 (1/23) – Theorizing Mass Culture
- On Popular Music (Adorno 2009)
- Culture Industry Reconsidered (Adorno 2005)
- The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (Benjamin 1969)
- Distinction & The Aristocracy of Culture (Bourdieu 2009)
- Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture (Jameson 2005)
- Notes on Deconstructing “The Popular” (Hall 2009)

Week 4 (1/30) – Poststructuralist and Postmodernist Reinterpretations
- What is Enlightenment? (Foucault 1984)
- The Precession of Simulacra (Baudrillard 2009)
- Feminism & the Principles of Postructuralism (Weedon 2009)
- “Postmodernism and ‘The Other Side’” (Hebdige 1986)
- Postmodern Blackness (hooks 2009)

Week 5 (2/6) – Theorizing Popular Music
- “‘The Magic that Can Set You Free’: The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community” (Frith 1981)
- “Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice” (Tagg 1982)
- “A Theoretical Model for the Sociomusical Analysis of Popular Musics” (Shepherd 1982)
- Perspectives on the Study of Non-Western Popular Musics (Manuel 1988)
- “Popular Music Analysis and Musicology: Bridging the Gap” (Middleton 1993)
- Talk and Text: Popular Music and Ethnomusicology (Stokes 2003)

Week 6 (2/13) – Authenticity, Legitimacy and the Popular Music Canon
- “The Good, the Bad, the Indifferent: Defending Popular Culture from the Populists” (Frith 1991)
- “Is 'World Music' the 'Classic Music' of Our Time?” (Ling 2003)
- “Authenticity as Authentication” (Moore 2002)
- “‘Must Be Born Again’: Resurrecting the ‘Anthology of American Folk Music’” (Skinner 2006)
- “‘Loaded’: Indie Guitar Rock, Canonism, White Masculinities” (Bannister 2006)
- “Like Old Folk Songs Handed Down from Generation to Generation’: History, Canon, and Community in B-Boy Culture” (Schloss 2006)
- “Middlebrow Knowingness in 1950s San Francisco: The Kingston Trio, Beat Counterculture, and the Production of ‘Authenticity’” (Bareiss 2010)

Week 7 (2/20) – Case Study 1
- Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow (K. H. Miller 2010)
Week 8 (2/27) – Music Industry, Technology and Creativity
- “The Structure of Hip Consumerism” (Heath 2001)
- “Ethnomusicology and the Music Industries: An Overview” (Cottrell 2010)
- “Rampant Reproduction and Digital Democracy: Shifting Landscapes of Music Production and ‘Piracy’ in Bolivia” (Stobart 2010)

Week 9 (3/5) – Case Study 2

SPRING BREAK (3/12)

Week 10 (3/19) – Subculture
- Subculture (Hebdige 2005)
- The Media Development of “Subcultures” (or the Sensational Story of “Acid House”) (Thornton 2005)
- “Rules of Rebellion: Slamdancing, Moshing, and the American Alternative Scene” (Tsitsos 1999)
- “Subcultures or Neo-Tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste” (Bennett 1999)
- Dark Admissions: Gothic Subculture and the Ambivalence of Mysogyny and Resistance (Gunn 2007)
- “Living the Punk Lifestyle in Jakarta” (Wallach 2008)

Week 11 (3/26) – Case Study 3
- Dangdut Stories: A Social and Musical History of Indonesia’s Most Popular Music (Weintraub 2010)

Week 12 (4/2) – Gender Politics and Performativity
- “The Gendered Carnival of Pop” (Railton 2001)
- “‘I Want Muscles’ - House Music, Homosexuality and Masculine Signification” (Amico 2001)
- “Glamour and Evasion: The Fabulous Ambivalence of the Pet Shop Boys” (Maus 2001)
- “Gender and the Politics of Voice: Colonial Modernity and Classical Music in South India” (Weidman 2003)
- “Women Who ‘Do Elvis’: Authenticity, Masculinity and Masquerade” (Brittan 2006)
- “Gender Politics in Caribbean Popular Music: Consumer Perspectives and Academic Interpretation” (Manuel 1998)

Week 13 (4/9) – Case Study 4
- Tango and the Political Economy of Passion (Savigliano 1995)
Week 14 (4/16) – Politics and Poetics of Race and Representation
- “El Vez is ‘Taking Care of Business’: The Inter/National Appeal of Chicano Popular Music” (Habell-Pallán 1999)
- “Negotiating the Third Space: British Asian Independent Record Labels and the Cultural Politics of Difference” (Saha 2011)
- “O Brother, Let’s Go down Home: Loss, Nostalgia and the Blues” (Middleton 2007)
- “Jacking the Dial: Radio, Race, and Place in Grand Theft Auto” (K. Miller 2007)

Week 15 (4/23) – Politics and Poetics of Race and Representation
- Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America (Kun 2005)

References


Williams, Raymond. 1985. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Rev Sub. Oxford University Press, USA.
