

[MU903-2A / Summer 2012]

POLITICS, POETRY, AND MUSIC

Instructor: Nick Reeder
M-F 12:45-3:35
Orwig 109

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Office hours: Wends. 10-12 am, and by appt.

In this class, you will gain experience reading and writing at the college level. We will compare music production in different countries from several vantage points, crossing geographical, political and cultural boundaries. Through each case study, we will examine a different music culture, focusing on folk, rock, roots music, hip-hop, and reggae from the Americas and Africa, and examining how these genres integrate sophisticated lyrical and musical practices with socio-political dialog. Through assignments that apply techniques of literary, historical, anthropological, and musicological analysis, you will learn how to critically evaluate a number of sources, and thus be exposed to interdisciplinary methodologies. Through making connections between cultural, historical, and technological developments in South America and those in the United States, you will be exposed to new ways of thinking about music in connection with global history and politics. We will be supplementing discussion by doing a number of hands-on, in-class projects. You will learn to use the library's digital resources to locate research materials. You will also learn some basic techniques of digital audio production using Brown's multimedia facilities. You will be responsible for developing and presenting an original research project using a combination of these skills and tools. Grading will be based on participation, attitude, and effort, and not on previous experience or writing ability.

The course will be taught as a seminar in which both students and the professor will be active participants in discussions and activities. You will be encouraged to incorporate your own musical interests into the classroom discussions and independent research projects. You will also be encouraged to contribute knowledge about musical and literary styles with which you are familiar.

COURSE GOALS

1. To develop a general framework for analyzing the relation between popular music and socio-political discourse.
2. To understand how national, global, and local politics affect the practices of musicians. To understand how musicians contribute to social and political change.
3. To develop a basic facility in identifying some major world musical styles, including the ability to describe their important features.
4. To connect world musical styles to central themes, such as the use of music in generating symbols of individual, national, cultural, and racial identity.
5. To help students make sense of complex socio-historical processes by learning how to interpret both primary and secondary sources critically, develop clear arguments, and become more effective and skilled

writers.

6. To make connections between the social histories of other nations to that of America, in order to encourage students to think deeply, critically, and coherently about American culture, social identities, and practices.

EXPECTATIONS

You will need to read one or two articles and/or book chapters before each class meeting. Each of you will be part of a *discussion-leading team* for one class meeting, to be assigned on the first day of class.

The following written assignments (described below) will be assigned, *critical reviews*, *short paper*, and *discussion questions*. You will be posting some of this material to the course wiki.

<https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/dashboard.action>

Rules:

The only rules for the class are that you show up *on time*, prepared to engage with the material, and that you are respectful of each other and of yourselves.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and conduct themselves in accordance with Brown's Academic Code. The Code is available at:

http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/documents/principles.pdf

Disability

Any student who requires accommodation due to a disability should contact the instructor to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible, and before the due date of any assignments that may be affected.

Attendance and Participation:

Active participation is a crucial aspect of this course. Further, an unexcused absence will prevent you from receiving your "certificate of completion" for this class. To be excused, you must obtain written permission from Dean Carron, in the summer studies office.

Reading:

Reading will average 30 pages per class session. In addition to the two texts you will purchase for the class, you will make use of Brown's Online Course Reserves (OCRA): the course reserves site is at <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/reserves/>

Students will be assigned chapters from the following books, and will also read articles, including those that students will be encouraged to locate in online journals. Some of the reading will be done in guided group sessions during class, to introduce students to methods for breaking down complex material and summarizing it clearly for others.

Please print your readings and bring them to class.

Required materials: The following three textbooks are required, and are available at the Brown bookstore.

Manuel, Peter. 2006. *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music From Rumba to Reggae*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Toynbee, Jason. 2007. *Bob Marley: Herald of a Postcolonial World?* Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Optional materials:

Smith, Suzanne E. 1999. *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Students could profitably read this before arriving, but the chapters we will read for class will be available on OCRA.)

Listening assignments will be posted on the wiki and located on the web by students.

Evaluation of Assignments:

Additional assignments may vary according to class size, but they should roughly correspond to the types of activities below. Note that a great deal of the evaluation is based on coming to class prepared to discuss the materials.

50% - Attendance, discussion, and nightly on-line assignments

Students should arrive having read, viewed, and listened to the assigned materials, and should be prepared to ask about difficult or unclear aspects of the materials, and to respond to other students ideas respectfully.

Critical Reviews and discussion questions are due by 11 pm the night before class.

Students will be required to post short reviews of the article assigned that night and to post questions and topics for that day's discussion via the course website. These will count toward the overall discussion grade.

Critical reviews: You will each write 2 brief reviews of assigned articles.* These should consist of 3-4 summary sentences plus a discussion question. The summary sentences should be about what struck you as the most important arguments or themes (they don't need to cover everything in the article). The discussion question should be one that could generate a conversation in class (not a question that only the author could answer). Post each review as a blog entry by 11:39 pm the night before before the reading is due and create a link to that entry from the "critical reviews" page on the course wiki.

*One of your critical reviews can be a scholarly source you have tracked down for use in your final project. But if you do this you still need to post a discussion question for class on the assigned reading.

25% - Presentation and discussion direction

Students will be responsible for leading discussion for part of one class. Because this can be an

intimidating prospect, students will do this in groups of four. Discussion leaders are also expected to provide key contextual background on the day's topic. They will begin with a 5-10 minute presentation summarizing major historical or social dynamics within the country or region under consideration, particularly as they relate to local musical styles and to the themes of the day's readings. Here you may delve deeper into musicians' biographies, provide historical context, offer contrasting and relevant case studies, etc. Each presentation should last about five minutes. Jointly, discussion leaders will be responsible for coming up with questions about the readings to spur discussion. These questions should be both broad and clearly related to the issues we are studying. They should sustain discussion for 20 minutes.

In order for your team to lead discussion of the day's topic you will need to:

1. Skim the assigned reading for your discussion-leading day a couple of days in advance.
2. Use what you learn to search the web for interesting supplementary materials (blogs, fan sites, videos, songs, newspaper articles, etc.). These should be posted to the wiki by 9pm the night before your discussion day.
4. Your team should briefly convene before class to decide which questions to raise and how to divide the responsibility of leading discussion.
5. Have fun! The class is yours on your discussion-leading day.

25% - 3 pg. Paper and Final Multimedia Project

Paper:

You will use the library's digital resources to find two articles on a topic that builds on the readings from class. You will be asked to do library research and to write in an academic style. You will also incorporate analysis of three primary sources (i.e. a newspaper article, movie, audio recording – anything that dates from the period you are writing about). You may look at a particular tradition, practice, musician, or theme. As this is a relatively short paper, you will need to think carefully about how to narrowly focus your research and writing. We will discuss possible topics in class. *You will write the paper over the weekend, and then submit a printed draft of the paper on Monday.* You should also bring a draft of the paper to the Writing Center as soon as you can! *A final draft will be due on the last day of class, as integrated with your multimedia project.*

Final Presentation/ Multimedia project:

You will give a short final presentation on your paper/multimedia project, on the last day of class.

RESOURCES AT BROWN

Writing Center

You should bring your draft to the writing center by the second week of class.

Digital Resources at the Orwig Music Library

Students are given full electronic access to the library's digital resources. In this class, students will get a

chance to explore these resources through individual assignments and group projects. You will benefit from a presentation by librarian Ned Quist on how to use a university library to do research, and will use these skills in writing your paper. We will also explore how to incorporate multi-media materials into scholarship.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Week 1. (June 18-22)

Monday 18: Introduction: models of music cultures and ideas about political songs.

Readings (IN CLASS) Jackson, Michael. 2006. *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*. Copenhagen, Museum Tuscalenium. Press, pages 11-36.

Titon, Jeff Todd. 2009. *Worlds of Music*, Chapter 1

Assign discussion leaders for Wednesday

Tuesday 19: Music, Culture, and Politics

Readings (IN CLASS): Turino, Thomas. 2008. *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 (pg 1-22 – skim for main points as if you were going to write a critical review); Chapter 7 (read only 210-225 re U.S.)

Smith, Suzanne E. 1999. *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press: Introduction, Chapter 1

Wednesday 20: Performance and Studio Recording

Readings

Albin, Zak. *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*. Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press: Chapt. 3 (“Sound as Form”)

Toynbee, Jason. 2007. *Bob Marley: Herald of a Postcolonial World?* Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA : Polity Press. Chapt. 2.

THURS 21: Recording Studio Visit, Percussion Workshop

1 pm: Librarian Ned Quist Demonstrates Library Resources and Research Techniques

Readings

Albin, Zak. *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*. Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press: Chapt.4

Manuel, Peter. 2006 *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music From Rumba to Reggae*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapt. 1.

IN CLASS: Chapt 7

THURSDAY EVE LAB: Steinert Hall recording studio, 6 to 10 pm.

Friday 22: Jamaica

1st CRITICAL REVIEW DUE

Readings

Veal, Michael 2007 *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae*. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press. Chapter 5: 140-162

Dawes, Kwame Senu Neville. 2002 *Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius*. London: Sanctuary.
Introduction (16-38) Chapter 1: 39-59.
IN CLASS: Chapter 4: 243-272

Week 2. (June 25-29)

Monday 25: TBA

Tuesday 26: Brazilian Music

PAPER DRAFT DUE

Reading

Larry Crook. *Brazilian Music: Northeastern Traditions and the Heartbeat of a Modern Nation*, Chapt. 1, 4.

W 27: Hip Hop

Readings

Pardue, Derek. 2008. *Ideologies of Marginality in Brazilian Hip Hop*. New York: Palgrave: Pg. 1-57

IN CLASS: Garofalo, Reebee. 2007 "Pop Goes to War, 2001-2004" in: Music In The Post-9/11 World, p.3-26

Thursday 28: Cuba

Movie: Guerilla Radio: The Hip Hop Struggle Under Castro

Readings

Manuel, Peter. 2006 *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music From Rumba to Reggae*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chapt. 2.

Friday 29: Presentations

FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER DUE