American Popular Music: Course Syllabus

Instructor: 
Office: 
E-mail: 
Office Hours: 
Phone: 

Textbook

*American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MP3*, Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, 2nd ed.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course; however, students lacking a basic knowledge and understanding of music fundamentals are encouraged to attend office hours for additional help.

Course Description

This course is intended to help you think creatively and critically about popular music. We will study the most significant styles of American music in chronological order, beginning with the roots and continuing through the present day. We will explore several recurring themes throughout the course:

- The interaction of European American, African American, and Latin American traditions
- The influence of mass media and technology (printing, recording, radio, video, Internet)
- The role of popular music as a symbol of identity (race, class, gender, generation)

Goals

The course will enhance your enjoyment and understanding of the music you already know, as well as introduce you to less familiar styles and genres. You will develop critical listening skills and become more informed consumers of popular music.

Learning Methods

- Classroom lectures and discussions
- Recordings—listening and analysis, film and video examples, demonstrations
- Textbook readings and listening assignments
• Fieldwork—live performance attendance and review
• Web site—announcements, course material, links, suggested reading

Exams
There will be four exams during the quarter. Exam questions will include material taken from lectures/discussions, reading/listening assignments, and videos shown in class. The exams will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. The listening ID examples will be taken from the CDs that accompany the textbook and from the recordings placed on reserve in the music library. Only illness and university-sponsored events are acceptable excuses for missing an exam and must be confirmed with written documentation. Be sure to bring a #2 pencil to each exam.

Course Requirements
Reading/Listening. Each week, you will need to complete reading and listening assignments before coming to class. The classroom lectures and discussions are designed to reinforce the reading and listening assignments, not replace them. Be prepared.

Videos. On reserve in the library. These videos will help reinforce the material covered in lectures and readings.

Review of a Live Performance You will be required to attend a live performance and write a 2- to 3-page typed review. Along with the review, include physical proof that you attended the performance (e.g., ticket stub, receipt, band autograph, drummer’s phone number). The performance can be any style or genre of popular music that relates to the material covered in this class. There are a number of venues in town where you can see live music; many of them are free. Check the listings in the newspaper.

Grading Procedures
Final grades will be calculated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 4</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of Live Performance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Grades will follow the standard scale:
Course Policies

**Attendance.** Although perfect attendance does not guarantee an A in this course, it is essential that you attend every class. You are required to know all the material presented during lectures and discussions, including information about course policies and procedures.

**Exams.** Only illness and university-sponsored events are acceptable excuses for missing an exam and must be confirmed with written documentation.

**Dishonesty.** Penalties for cheating in this class can include an F for the exam, assignment, or final grade.
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

15-week semester, three 50-minute lectures per week, 46 scheduled classes (42 lectures and 4 exams)

**Week 1:**

Themes and Streams of American Popular Music  
**Chapter 1**
1. Themes and Streams of Popular Music  
   pp. 1–10
2. Streams of Tradition: European and African American Streams  
   pp. 10–15
3. Streams of Tradition: Latin American Stream  
   pp. 15–17

**Week 2:**

Popular Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries  
**Chapter 2**
4. Minstrel Show; Stephen Foster  
   pp. 18–25
5. Dance Music; Brass Bands; Birth of Tin Pan Alley  
   pp. 26–33
6. The Ragtime Craze; the Phonograph  
   pp. 33–40

**Week 3:**

Social Dance and Jazz, 1917–1935; Tin Pan Alley’s Golden Age  
**Chapters 3–4**
7. Technology and the Music Business; Dance Music  
   pp. 41–52
8. The Jazz Craze  
   pp. 52–63
9. The Golden Age of Tin Pan Alley Song  
   pp. 64–85

**Week 4:**

Race Records and The Blues  
**Chapter 5**
10. Exam #1
11. Race Records; Classic Blues; Bessie Smith; W. C. Handy  
    pp. 86–99
12. Charley Patton; Blind Lemon Jefferson; Robert Johnson  
    pp. 99–108

**Week 5:**

Early Country Music  
**Chapter 5**
    pp. 109–111
    pp. 111–117
15. Popular Music and the Great Depression  
    pp. 117–119

**Week 6:**

The Swing Era, 1935–1945  
**Chapter 6**
16. Swing Music and American Culture  
    pp. 120–134
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<tr>
<th>Week 7:</th>
<th>The Postwar Era, 1946–1954</th>
<th>Chapter 7</th>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Popular Music and Technology; the Big Singers; Urban Folk</td>
<td>pp. 152–166</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Southern Music; Rhythm &amp; Blues</td>
<td>pp. 166–182</td>
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<th>Week 8:</th>
<th>Rock ’n’ Roll, 1954–1959</th>
<th>Chapter 8</th>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Exam #2</td>
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<th>Week 9:</th>
<th>Rock ’n’ Roll and American Pop: The 1960s</th>
<th>Chapters 8-9</th>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>Motown; Beach Boys</td>
<td>pp. 245–254</td>
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<th>Week 10:</th>
<th>The British Invasion, Country, Soul, and Urban Folk</th>
<th>Chapters 9-10</th>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>The Beatles and the British Invasion</td>
<td>pp. 254–268</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Country; Soul</td>
<td>pp. 269–283</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Rock in the Late 1960s</td>
<td>pp. 295–311</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>The 1970s; Country Music; the Popular Mainstream</td>
<td>pp. 305–329</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>Rock Comes of Age</td>
<td>pp. 329–341</td>
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<th>Week 12:</th>
<th>The 1970s: Disco and Progressive Country</th>
<th>Chapters 11–12</th>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>The Outlaws: Progressive Country; Reggae</td>
<td>pp. 350–361</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>Exam #3</td>
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37. 1970s Punk and New Wave; Funk pp. 361–376
38. Rapper’s Delight: The Origins of Hip-Hop pp. 376–381

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<th>Week 14:</th>
<th>The 1980s: The Popular Mainstream: Prince and Madonna Chapters 13–14</th>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon pp. 397–406</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>Prince, Madonna, and the Production of Celebrity pp. 406–441</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>The 1990s: Hip-Hop and Rap pp. 420–438</td>
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<th>Week 15:</th>
<th>Hip-Hop: Alternative Music; World Music Chapters 14–15</th>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>The 1990s: Techno and Alternative Music pp. 438–458</td>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>Conclusions pp. 465–476</td>
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<th>Finals Week:</th>
<th>Check the final exam schedule for date and time</th>
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<td>46.</td>
<td>Exam #4</td>
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