

MUSIC AND AMERICAN CULTURE (VPA)

GUH 3730: 981(25660) -- WINTER 2003

Weekend I: February 1 and 2, 9:00-5:00

Weekend II: March 1 and 2, 9:00-5:00

Weekend III: March 29 and March 30, 9:00-5:00

Reserve Backup Snow Dates now: February 22 & 23, March 22 & 23

Instructor:

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***always use instead of office info**

Course Description

GUH 3730 focuses on a particular form of the visual and performing arts --music. It is neither an "appreciation of music" class nor an introduction to the technical discipline of music. It is a course in the field of cultural studies. We explore the complex set of historical, social, political, economic and aesthetic forces that have created American music. Class meetings combine discussion of readings, listening to audio samples, and viewing of video documentaries with guest visits by Detroit-area performers.

Textbooks

- Daniel Kingman's American Music: A Panorama, The Second Concise Edition. New York: Thomson/Schirmer, 2003. (\$51.88, tax included). ISBN #0-534-59832-3
- Lornell and Rasmussen's Musics of Multicultural America: A Study of Twelve Musical Communities. New York: Thomson/Schirmer, 1997 (\$49.76, tax included). ISBN 0-02-864585-5

Both books are now available at Paperbacks Unlimited at 22634 Woodward in Ferndale (2nd block south of 9 mile on the east/north-bound side). They're open 9 to 9 Monday through Saturday and 9 to 4 on Sundays. Phone: 248-546-3282.

General Education Requirement in Visual and Performing Arts

(VPA), GUH 3730 is broad-based in coverage and introduces a significant epistemological question that deals with fundamental problems and methods in art and culture. The course develops understanding of how music shapes aesthetic sensibilities, moral visions and historical perspectives, and how it relates to other forms of visual and performing arts. It also develops upper-level sophistication in describing what is seen, heard, and read using skills of analysis, interpretation/criticism and evaluation/appreciation applied to primary materials and artistic experiences.

Syllabus – p. 2

Core Themes

Duke Ellington framed the epistemological (philosophical) problem this course poses. Good music, Ellington once said, is a matter of talent, not categories. Yet, like other art forms music is classified into aesthetic categories known as "genres," a French word meaning kinds or styles. To illustrate the epistemological problem at the heart of this course, consider the following questions. When "folk" music is recorded and sold, is it still "folk" music? Or, has it become "popular," "mass" or "commercial"? If a piece of "folk" or "jazz" music is used in a symphonic suite, does it become "fine art" or "classical" music? When a jazz artist does an improvisation of an old blues song, is it still "folk" or "blues"? When a composer uses a blues tune in a jazz symphony, is it still "blues"? Has "jazz" become a "fine art"? Or, if a classical piece is played on a synthesizer, is it still "fine art" or has it become "popular" music?

To continue the epistemological query, if zydeco musician Clifton Chenier is "a man way beyond category," are traditional categories helpful? Or, are they rigid ways of thinking? One of the striking features of contemporary art forms is the blurring, mixing, and fusion of genres. To cite another example, when "zydecajun" artist Wayne Toups adds a little bit of R&B and a little bit of rock and roll to cajun and zydeco, what exactly is he playing? He insists you can't get too far away from the borders of genres because you lose the roots. However, traditional Cajun musicians are critical of what he is doing.

As we study the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of American music, we will also examine the historical, social, political, and economic forces that shaped it. Music is a form of entertainment, an artistic expression, an aesthetic sensibility, and a cultural "text" that we will learn to read. The idea of "reading" music may seem odd, because it is an aural form. We "listen" to music. By learning to "read" what we hear -- aided by written texts, audio samples, visual documentaries, and guest artists -- we will learn about the rich cultural "text" of American music. We will also examine the impact of technology and commercialization on the changing character of music.

The following Core Themes will form connecting threads for all activities in the course, including written assignments.

Core Themes

- oral, amateur, and folk traditions versus professional and commercial forms
- regionalism versus standardization, homogenization, and mainstreaming
- tradition versus innovation
- the impact of historical, social, political, and economic change
- the impact of technology and science
- the cultural meaning of music for individuals, communities, and ethnic groups
- genre definition versus genre blurring and fusion
- integration of and comparison of music with other art forms, especially dance
- performative aspects of music (as entertainment, expression, and spectacle)
- valuing and privileging versus devaluing and marginalizing of particular genres

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REQUIREMENTS

- (1) Attendance and Participation (15%)**
- (2) Three Study Questions (45% of Grade: 15% for each)**
- (3) Conference Listening Project (40% of Grade)**

Grading Policy

A =	Excellent (A equivalent to 4.00 HPA; A- equivalent to 3.67)
B =	Good (B+ 3.33 HPA; B 3.00; B- 2.67)
C =	Average (C+ 2.33 HPA; C 2.00; C- 1.67)
D =	Poor (D+ 1.33 HPA; D 1.00; D- 0.67)
E =	Not acceptable (E or F = 0.00 HPA)
I =	Requirements not completed but at least 50% of coursework submitted. At the end of one year, the University converts an "I" into an "X."
X =	Did not attend, complete enough work to qualify for "I," or drop the course

Requirement #1: Attendance and Participation (15%)

Attendance at every scheduled meeting (including makeup snow dates) is mandatory, not optional. No student may miss more than one day in the event of an emergency and substantial makeup work will be required. **Coming in significantly late or leaving significantly early on any day counts as missing class.** Family events, social gatherings, weddings and vacations are not acceptable excuses. Arrange your schedules to accommodate the course, not the other way around. In case of a genuine emergency, contact me ASAP by phone (home #) or email.

Viewing and Listening Policy: We use a lot of audio and visual resources, because they are vital learning tools. They are required references in Study Questions and (as pertinent) the Listening Project. The playing of audio samples and the showing of videos are not times for talking with a neighbor or taking a nap. They're crucial activities.

Please observe common rules of courtesy. No cell phones may be used in the classroom. If you need a beeper for emergencies, please answer during a break or leave the room to respond. Also, be thoughtful of others by placing all trash in appropriate containers and, most important, not carrying on conversations with others during class.

Requirement #2: Three Study Questions

At the beginning of each weekend, I will distribute a list of Study Questions that focus the Core Themes for that particular weekend. Select 1 question to write on from each weekend, for a total of 3 separate weekend Study Questions. Each response should be 4 pages long. (Figure 250 words per page for email submissions.) The purpose of this assignment is to synthesize all pertinent activities of a weekend -- readings, viewings and listenings, discussions, performances, and groupwork -- around a particular topic. The due date will always be the second Wednesday after a weekend class (February 12, March 12, April 9). Submit either by email or snailmail hard copy to my home address.

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Requirement #3: The Conference Listening Project

This is not a traditional library research paper but an active research project of 8 pages in length. Select 1 genre from each weekend, for a total of 3 genres drawn from each of the 3 separate weekends. Then find new examples we did not study in class from radio, television, records, tapes, CDs, or live performances. You must relate new examples to pertinent activities from the respective weekends plus a minimum of 6 external sources overall, the majority of which may not be from the Internet. If your Study Question was relevant, you may draw on it. All citations should conform to the Department's standard reference tool, The Everyday Writer, and policy on plagiarism, which dictates a grade of "E" if sources are not credited properly, whether paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting.

Due Date: The final version is due Monday, April 21st, but I always welcome drafts.

Format: The minimum requirement for an "example" of a genre is one tune, song, or number. You may contextualize a piece by referencing an entire album, CD, or performance, but that's an option, not a requirement.

#1: Identify the 3 examples: Give the names of pieces, personnel, venues, dates and details of recording/performance. Also, indicate whether they are standards or originals.

#2: Identify the 3 genres: Use relevant information from all course activities and external research sources to define the genres. Also, indicate internal clues of style. If more than one genre is apparent, indicate which ones and support your argument with details.

#3: Situate examples historically, socially, economically and/or politically: Use relevant information from pertinent course activities and external research sources to contextualize examples within the interdisciplinary framework of American culture.

#4: Evaluate the quality of the performance: For groups, consider whether the musicians were competent and coherent. Were they accomplished performers? Were they tight and together or loose and sloppy? Were any individuals stronger or dominant? Did they interact? For individuals, were they accomplished? Were they innovative? For both individuals and groups, were they knowledgeable about the history and genre of their music? Did they talk to the audience about their music?

#5: Include an introduction and a conclusion: Announce your purpose and examples at the outset. In the conclusion, go beyond summary to reflect on the lessons learned.

#6: Think comparatively: Do not treat examples in complete isolation. Compare and contrast as you go, thereby sharpening your definitions and building a more sophisticated discussion of genres and their cultural meaning. Note, too, relevant comparisons with and/or integration of other art forms. Was dance a part of the experience? What elements of spectacle and performance were involved for the performers and for the audience?

WEEKEND I

DAY 1: Saturday, February 1

9:00-9:45 Introduction to the Course: Julie Klein (Coordinator)

- Enrollment sheets, phone chain, course website and email addresses, raffle tickets
- Study questions, advance reading assignments, listening and viewing logs,
- Questions about the syllabus
- Analytical frameworks, time chart, folk-mass-classical spectrum
- Texts: Kingman, Author's Guide (xii-xix)
 - Lornell and Rasmussen, Preface (vii-viii) and Chapter 1 (1-23)

9:45-12:00 The Anglo-American Tradition (includes break)

- Kingman, Chapters 1 and 3: Native American vs. Anglo-Celtic traditions
- Video Texts: "American Roots Music," "Appalachian Journey," "Ballad of a Mountain Man," "The Weavers,"

12:00 Lunch

1:00-3:30 Folk Roots of Country Music and Folk Advocacy (includes break)

- Kingman, Chapters 6 and 7
- Video Texts: "American Roots Music" and "America's Music: The Roots of Country"

3:30-5:00 Dialogue and Performance

Michael King: Writer, Performer, and Record Producer

DAY 2: Sunday, February 2

9:00-12:00 Case Studies #1: Klezmer & Polka (includes break and review)

- KLEZMER: Lornell & Rasmussen, Chapter 3 (49-71). Kingman, p. 449
- POLKA: Lornell-Rasmussen. Chapter 2; Kingman, pp. 89-91
 - Video Text: "In Heaven There is No Beer"
- Review of key concepts and definitions

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-3:15 The African American Tradition

- Kingman, Chapters 2 and 8
- Video Texts: "Bluesland" and other blues documentaries

3:30-5:00 Dialogue and Performance

**Robert B. Jones: Writer, Performer, and
Host of "Blues from the Lowlands," WDET-FM (101.9)**

WEEKEND II

DAY 1: Saturday, March 1

9:00-10:00 **Case Study of Ethnic Music #2: Arab Detroit**
• Discussion of Lornell and Rasmussen, Chapter 4

10:00- 5:00- **Sacred Music**
• Discussion of Kingman, pages 20-28 in Chapter 2; Chapters 10 and 11
• Discussion of Lornell and Rasmussen, Chapters 9-10 (with CD samples)
• Contemporary Christian music CD samples
• Video Texts: “Amazing Grace,” “Jubilee Singers,” “The Songs are Free”
• includes periodic breaks and Lunch from 12:00-1:00

DAY 2: Sunday, March 2

9:00-11:00 **Case Study of Ethnic Music #3: Louisiana Cajun and Zydeco**
• Discussion of "Jai Ete au Bal" (Les Blank, Flower Films), Cajun segment of “American Roots Music” and Kingman pp. 80-88 in Chapter 5

11:00-11:15 15 minute break

11:15-12:30 **Jazz and American Cultural History**
-Discussion of Kingman, Chapters 15 and 16 and clips from Video Text series “Jazz,” a documentary by Ken Burns

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:30 **"Jazz and American Cultural History (Continuation)**
• At some point, we will take a 15 minute break then move across the hall to Room 100 so the jazz band can set up and do sound checks in Room 150. Take books and purses with you, though you can leave coats in 150.

3:30-5:00 **Dialogue and Performance:**
Ernie Rodgers the Rapa House Jazz Band

WEEKEND III: Saturday, March 29

- 9:00-2:00 **Popular Music: From Early American to Rock and Rap**
- Discussion of Kingman pp, 218-24 in Chapter 12, Chapter 14, Chapter 9,
 - Lornell & Rasmussen, Chapters 12 and 13,
 - Video Text series: “America's Music, The Roots of Country,”
“The History of Rock and Roll,” “Rhyme and Reason”
- ^a includes a 15-minute Break and Lunch from 12:00-1:00

- 2:00-5:00** **Latino Traditions and Music of the Americas (Room 100)**
- Kingman Chapter 4 and Post-Chapter
 - Lornell & Rasmussen Chapters 5, 6, and 7
 - Video Texts: “America’s Roots Music,” “Chulas Fronteras,” and
“The Roots of Rhythm”
 - **Includes Performance and Dialogue with The Chicano-Boricua Student Choir**

WEEKEND III: Sunday, March 20

- 9:00-12:00** **"Classical" Music and The New Vocabulary of Sound**
- Kingman Chapters 20-21
 - Video Text: “The American Way” and “Koyaanisgatsi”

12:00-1:00 Lunch

- 1:00-2:30** **Dialogue and Performance: Electronic Music and Sound Sculpting**
Thomas Court, Music Technology Program, Wayne State University

- 2:30-5:00** **Course Conclusion and Course Evaluations**