

[musc I925/fall 2011]

musical youth cultures

Prof. Kiri Miller, Manning Assistant Professor Brown University
Two class meetings of 1 hour and 20 minutes per week

In this seminar—a cross-cultural examination of music-oriented youth communities—we will explore ethnographic method, media studies, and subculture theory as they relate to music. The course will require critical engagement with a variety of popular music genres and cultures, encouraging students to examine their own musical production and consumption practices. Topics will include youth-produced vs. youth-consumed music, club culture and associated media technologies, online communities, minority and diaspora youth cultures, activist musical collectives, concepts of the mainstream vs. the underground, and ethnographic theory and method. You will leave the course with an understanding of music's role in the formation and perpetuation of affinity communities; enhanced listening skills; an expanded knowledge of musical genres; and a sense of the ethical issues involved in ethnographic fieldwork and writing.

We will begin by addressing some basic theoretical issues (e.g., subculture, media reception, ethnicity, gender, diaspora) and will proceed to case studies oriented around particular genres and communities. Each class meeting will include focused discussion of the assigned reading as well as musical listening and video examples. There will be student-led discussion for part of one class meeting each week. You should also expect to present elements of your final project to the class at regular intervals during the semester.

You will need to read one or two scholarly articles or book chapters before each class meeting. In addition, you will often need to read/view/listen to online materials assigned by your classmates. Each of you will be part of a *discussion-leading team* for one class meeting (on Thursdays). There will be 5 short *quizzes* on vocabulary and listening (all on Tuesdays). The following written assignments will be posted to your individual research blog: *critical reviews*, *performance ethnography essay*, *web ethnography project*. You will be asked to provide *collegial feedback* on some of your classmates' blog posts. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 letter-grade per day (e.g., B => B-). Evaluation rubrics are posted on the wiki. There is no final exam.

Active participation and consistent attendance are crucial aspects of this course, and you should be aware that unexcused absences will directly affect your course grade. Beginning with your third skipped class, your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 letter-grade for each absence. Please be sure to email in advance (or ASAP after the missed class) if you have a good reason to be absent.

Required materials: *Music Scenes* (Bennett and Peterson 2004) is at the bookstore.

Everything else is on online reserve (OCRA) or the course wiki:

<http://tinyurl.com/MYCwiki>

Please bring readings to class. See the wiki FAQ for more details.

assignment terms defined

critical reviews: You will write brief reviews of 8 readings over the course of the term. 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, discussion-worthy points: your response to the question “What was this reading about, and why does it matter for this class?” The discussion question should be one that could generate a conversation in class (not a question that only the author could answer or that would require further research). For your first 4 critical reviews, you may choose from any of the readings due up to October 18 (but don’t review excerpts; only full articles or book chapters). Post each review as a blog entry **by the night before the reading is due** and **create a link to that entry** from the “critical reviews” page on the course wiki. Do the same for your second 4 critical reviews, which must all be posted by December 6. **You will not receive credit for late reviews or for reviews that have not been linked from the course wiki.**

discussion-leading team: Your team will assign some supplementary materials to the class and lead discussion of the day’s topic for most of the class period. How to do this:

1. Skim the assigned reading for your discussion-leading day at least **a week in advance**.
2. Use what you learn to search the web for interesting supplementary materials (blogs, fansites, YouTube videos, newspaper articles, etc.).
3. Each member of the team should find something and post the link on the course wiki **by the Monday before your discussion-leading day**. Each item should not take more than 10 minutes to read/stream/etc.
4. Your classmates will submit discussion questions about the reading or the supplementary materials via the course wiki **by 10 p.m. the night before class**. Your team should briefly **convene before class** to decide which questions to raise and how to divide the responsibility of leading discussion.
5. Be creative! The class is yours to run on your discussion-leading day.

collegial feedback: You will occasionally be asked to post a few sentences of feedback on your classmates’ research blogs. This feedback should include suggestions about ideas/approach/research questions, plus any helpful resources you might have encountered.

performance ethnography essay: Attend a musical performance and write a mini-ethnography following the model provided in Seeger 1992. 1,000-1,200 words, due to your blog before class on November 1st. This essay will give you an opportunity to apply what you have learned so far about ethnographic approaches to music. You should also use it to demonstrate your formal academic writing skills. (However, this does not mean you have to sound stuffy. Yes, you can use the first person.) At the end, please **include the word count** of your essay. **You must write a brief self-evaluation of this essay.** Type up a short paragraph addressing at least two things you especially like about your work and one thing that could stand improvement. Rate your own satisfaction with your work on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest) and provide a sentence or two of justification for the rating. **Turn in hard copy of this self-evaluation in class on the essay due date, November 1st.**

web ethnography project: You will conduct ethnographic fieldwork (in-person or web-based) on a music-oriented youth community of your choice. You may work in teams if you wish, but each member’s contributions must be well-defined. You will establish a topic early in the term and will use your research blog to post materials, report on your progress, reflect on any challenges you encounter, and exchange ideas with your classmates. If you choose to conduct a group project, all group members will share a research blog (but please sign your individual contributions). **Make sure you back up the material on your blog in some way. At a minimum, email your posts to yourself.** Your grade will be based on five required blog posts:

- initial topic post (~2 paragraphs, outlining your topic, your planned approach, and some guiding questions for your research)—due **September 27**
- first fieldnotes/materials post (~500 words)—due **October 11**
- interview excerpt (~500 words, see permission form on wiki)—due **November 8**
- second fieldnotes/materials post (~500 words)—due **November 29**
- final ethnography blog post (see below)

final ethnography blog post: This is the capping project for the course. Minimum requirements:

- 1,500-2,000 words of polished writing (or 750 words per team member)
Required elements: description of topic and why it matters; description of research method; citations from field materials; initial findings about the nature of this culture, contextualized with references to course concepts and readings; potential questions for further research. Use short citations (e.g., Hebdige 1979) in the body of the text.
- 5 links to related web materials
- 3 still images (preferably photographs taken by you)
- 2 embedded examples of streaming audio or video related to your topic
- 1 “works cited” list, including 3 scholarly books/articles not assigned in class
References to assigned class readings can be abbreviated in this list, e.g., Hebdige 1979.
- include the word count at the end of the main text (don’t count the works cited list)

This post must be completed by **5 p.m. on Friday, December 16th**.

evaluation breakdown & fine print

in-class work & informal writing

5% your turn as discussion leader
 5% collegial feedback
 10% quizzes (lowest grade dropped)
 20% class & wiki participation

formal written work

15% critical reviews
 15% performance ethnography essay
 15% web ethnography progress
 15% final ethnography blog post

Grades will not be tweaked to achieve a particular distribution (i.e., there is no curve, except on participation points). See the wiki for evaluation rubrics and an explanation of participation points. Please note: I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously. All students must be familiar with Brown’s Academic Code and carry out their work accordingly. When in doubt, cite a source or ask what to do.

In-class techno-communications policy: if you are texting, tweeting, updating your status, checking your email, shoe-shopping, or engaging in web-based side missions (even class-related multi-tasking), you will be asked to leave and you will be counted as absent for that day. Please treat class time as a precious 80-minute escape from the internet and your phone.

weekly topics & assignments

Sep. 8

introduction

Th getting started

Sep. 13, 15

approaches to youth culture

T Hebdige 1979:23-29, 106-109; McClary 1994

Th Thornton 1996 (Ch. 3) **[sample quiz]**

Sep. 20, 22

ethnography

T Titon 2002:464-74, Seeger 1992:104-107, Cohen 1993

Th Hodkinson (Ch. 7) in *Music Scenes*

Sep. 27, 29

diaspora & nationalism

T Slobin 1994, Yang 2008 (Ch. 5) **[Q1]**

Th Maira 2008, Nooshin 2009

Blog your ethnography topic by Tuesday 9/27.

Oct. 4, 6

gendered scenes

T Cohen 1997, Bannister 2006

Th McRobbie 1993, Schilt (Ch. 6) in *Music Scenes*

Comment on two classmates' topic posts by Tuesday 10/4.

Track comments on the wiki.

Oct. 11, 13

mass media & reception: GTA, Britney, YouTube

T Miller 2007

film in class: *Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006)

Th Lowe (Ch. 4) in *Music Scenes*, Salvato 2009

Blog your first fieldnotes by Tuesday 10/11.

Oct. 18, 20

punk & DIY

- T** Andes 1998, Gosling (Ch. 9) in *Music Scenes* [Q2]
film in class: *Afro-Punk* (2003)
Th Duncombe 1997 (Ch. 3)

**Comment on two sets of fieldnotes by Tuesday 10/18.
Track comments on the wiki.**

First set of critical reviews must be completed by 10/18.

Oct. 25, 27

hip-hop cultures

- T** Rose 1994, Rivera 2003 (Ch. 4)
films in class: *Wild Style* (1983), *Scratch* (2001),
The Freshest Kids (2002), *Rize* (2005)
Th Schloss 2006

Nov. 1, 3

(hip-hop cultures cont.)

- T** Film: *I Love Hip-Hop in Morocco* (2007, dir. Josh Asen '02)
Complete response sheet for class discussion. [Q3]
Th Hayes 2004, Wong 2004 (Ch. 10)

**Performance ethnography essay due to your blog on Tuesday
11/1; hand in self-evaluation in class.**

Nov. 8, 10

metal

- T** Weinstein 1991 (Ch. 4)
film in class: *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (2005)
Th Walser 1993 (intro & Ch. 1)

Interview excerpt due to your blog by Tuesday 11/8.

Nov. 15, 17

British/Asian/Caribbean crossovers

- T** Back 1996 (Ch. 8: 183-211) [Q4]
Th Back 1996 (Ch. 8: 211-235), Dudrah 2002

**Comment on two interviews by Tuesday 11/15.
Track comments on the wiki.**

- _____. 1997. "Men Making a Scene: Rock Music and the Production of Gender." In *Sexing the Groove : Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Sheila Whiteley. London: Routledge.
- Duany, Jorge. 1984. "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Towards an Anthropology of Salsa." *Latin American Music Review* 5(2):186-216.
- Dudrah, Rajinder K. 2002. "Drum'n'dhol: British Bhangra Music and Diasporic South Asian Identity Formation." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 5(3):363-383.
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- Flores, Juan. 2000. *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hayes, David. 2004. "Fear of (and Fascination with) a Black Planet: The Relocation of Rap by White Non-Urban Youth." *Topia* 12:63-82.
- Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge.
- Maira, Sunaina. 2008. "B-Boys and Bass Girls: Sex, Style, and Mobility in Indian American Youth Culture." In *Desi Rap: Hip-Hop and South Asian America*, eds. Ajay Nair and Murali Balaji. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Marshall, Wayne. 2006-07. Reggaeton blog posts (see wiki). <http://wayneandwax.com>
- McClary, Susan. 1994. "Same As It Ever Was: Youth Culture and Music." In *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, eds. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. New York: Routledge.
- McRobbie, Angela. 1993. "Shut Up and Dance: Youth Culture and Changing Modes of Femininity." *Cultural Studies* 7(3):406-426.
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- Rose, Tricia. 1994. "A Style Nobody Can Deal With: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop." In *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, eds. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose. New York: Routledge.
- Salvato, Nick. 2009. "Out of Hand: YouTube Amateurs and Professionals." *TDR (The Drama Review)* 53(3):67-83.

- Schloss, Joseph G. 2006. "Like Old Folk Songs Handed Down from Generation to Generation": History, Canon, and Community in B-boy Culture." *Ethnomusicology* 50(3):411-432.
- Seeger, Anthony. 1992. "Ethnography of Music." In *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction*, ed. Helen Myers. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Simonett, Helena. 2001. *Banda: Mexican Musical Life Across Borders*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Slobin, Mark. 1994. "Music in Diaspora: The View from Euro-America." *Diaspora* 3(3):243-251.
- Thornton, Sarah. 1996. *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.
- Titon, Jeff Todd. 2002. *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples (4th Ed.)*. New York: Schirmer.
- Wald, Elijah. 2001. "Polkas Contrabandistas: Mexican Ballads in the Modern Age." In *American Popular Music: New Approaches to the 20th Century*, eds. Rachel Rubin and Jeff Melnik. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Walser, Robert. 1993. *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Weinstein, Deena. 1991. *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Wong, Deborah. 2004. *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*. New York: Routledge.
- Yang, Mina. 2008. *California Polyphony: Ethnic Voices, Musical Crossroads*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.