

Honors Composition II: (Un)Popular Music and Technoculture

Two 70 minute class sessions per week

Prof. Tony Grajeda, University of Central Florida

Could music exist these days without technology? Short of being in the presence of a “live” voice, our experience with music, regardless of style or genre, appears to have become thoroughly technological in nature. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find anything “natural” about musical life in the 21st Century, a world in which music is commonly created, distributed and experienced by way of computer. Yet musicians and listeners alike often ignore or even disavow the fundamental role that technology plays in the creation and reception of music.

This course will explore the ever-evolving and increasingly complex relation between music and technology. From the angle of production, we will examine the history of instrument design, from electronic instruments to sampling technology. In terms of consumption or reception, we will consider the development of formats and media (phonograph, radio, TV, tape, CD, MP3) in order to understand the extent to which our experiences with music (and all sound) have been mediated through technology. Finally, we will take on such recent controversial issues as sampling (plagiarism, piracy and music as ‘property’) and “music” or audio files online (Napster, file sharing, record industry lawsuits, anti-downloading software like ICARUS, etc.).

Requirements and grading

As an Honors Composition class, we will adhere to the Gordon Rule, which requires 6000 words of evaluated writing from each student. This translates to approximately 25 pages, the bulk of which will be dedicated to a research project, due on our last session (Monday, April 19). Assignments are due as listed on the syllabus. Late papers will not be accepted—no excuses. You will simply forfeit that portion of the grade, which in most cases will be fatal.

Attendance is essential and mandatory: two unexcused absences will lower your grade by a full point; three unexcused absences will lower your grade two points; four will result in a failing grade. To be excused from class you will need written permission (e.g., a note from your physician). Whining and bellyaching will be frowned upon. Classroom participation, which includes contributing to discussion as well as in-class writing, will also be factored into your grade. All work, except for in class writing, must be typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, in MLA style.

Grading:	—response papers & bibliography	25%
	—research paper (draft)	25%
	—final research paper	25%
	—participation/attendance	25%

Academic policy: Students must follow University standards for personal and academic conduct as outlined in the Golden Rule <<http://www.ucf.edu/goldenrule/>>. There is a zero tolerance policy in this class on academic dishonesty in any form. Plagiarism is cheating and will result in a failing grade, as well as likely suspension.

Classroom conduct:

- arrive on time and do not leave early
- no private conversations
- no cell phones, pagers, etc.

UCF Disability Policy: UCF is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Required texts:

- Timothy Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*
- Paul Theberge, *Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology*
- course reading packet of articles on reserve at the library (& electronic reserve)

Course schedule

Week 1:

- Mon, 1/5—syllabus and response paper guidelines
- Wed, 1/7—film screening: *Modulations* (Iara Lee, 1998)

Week 2:

- Mon, 1/12— reading: Simon Frith, “Art versus Technology: The Strange Case of Popular Music”
- Wed, 1/14— reading: Frith, “Technology and Authority”
- Due: first writing assignment

Week 3:

- Mon, 1/19—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (no class)
- Wed, 1/21—library research class: research assignment

Week 4:

- Mon, 1/26— reading: Timothy Taylor, chap. 1, “Will the Revolution Be Digitized?”
- Wed, 1/28— reading: Taylor, chap. 2, “Music, Technology, Agency, and Practice”

Week 5:

- Mon, 2/2— Taylor, chap. 3, “Postwar Music and the Technoscientific Imaginary” and 4, “Men, Machines, and Music in the Space-Age 1950s”
- Wed, 2/4— reading: Taylor, chap. 5, “Technostalgia”
- screening: *Theremin: An Electronic Odyssey* (Steven Martin, 1995)

Week 6:

- Mon, 2/9— reading: Taylor, chap. 6, “A Riddle Wrapped in a Mystery”

and 7, "Music at Home, Politics Afar"
Wed, 2/11—reading: Taylor, chap. 8, "Turn On, Tune In, Trance Out"
and 9, "Anxiety, Consumption, and Agency"
[second paper option]

Week 7:

Mon, 2/16—reading: Paul Theberge, "Introduction" and Part One:
"Design/Production: The Musical Instrument Industry"
Wed, 2/18—reading: Theberge, Part Two: "Mediation: Musicians' Magazines,
Networks, and User Groups"

Week 8:

Mon, 2/23—reading: Theberge, Part Three: "Consumption/Use:
Technology and Musical Practice"
Wed, 2/25—reading: Theberge, Part Three (cont.)
Due: second writing assignment

Week 9:

Mon, 3/1—outline and informal oral presentations
due: 1 page research project proposal
Wed, 3/3—workshop on annotated bibliography

spring recess (week of March 8-12)

Week 10:

Mon, 3/15—David Toop, "Hip-hop: Iron Needles of Death and a Piece of Wax"
screening: *Scratch* (Doug Pray)
due: annotated bibliography
Wed, 3/17—Tricia Rose, "'All Aboard the Night Train': Flow, Layering, and Rupture in
Postindustrial New York"

Week 11:

Mon, 3/22—Mike Rubin, "Techno: Days of Future Past"
screening: *Better Living Through Circuitry* (Jon Reiss)
Wed, 3/24—Simon Reynolds, "A Tale of Three Cities"
due: first draft of research project (bring two copies)

Week 12:

Mon, 3/29—Chris Cutler, "Plunderphonics," Stephen Perkins, "Plagiarism:
An Interview with the Tape-beatles," John Oswald, "Creatigality" and
Negativland, "Fair Use"
screening: *Sonic Outlaws* (Craig Baldwin, 1995)
Wed, 3/31—David Metzger, "Sampling and Thievery" and selections from
"Contesting the Ownership of Music" (Negativland vs. U2)

Week 13:

Mon, 4/5— John Sloop and Andrew Herman, "Negativland, Out-law Judgments, and the Politics of Cyberspace"

Wed, 4/7— Charles Mann, "The Heavenly Jukebox": www.theatlantic.com/jukebox

Week 14:

Mon, 4/12—oral presentations

Wed, 4/14—oral presentations (last day of class)

Week 15:

Mon. 19— exam session (regular classroom): final projects due

Research project due dates:

Week 9: research project proposal and informal oral presentation

Week 10: annotated bibliography (approx. 2 pages: 5 citations)

Week 11: first draft (approx. 5 pages)

Week 14: oral presentations

Week 15: final research project (10-12 pages)