



Why are performances by Miley Cyrus and Flavor Flav accused of being blackface minstrelsy?

How did “A Change Is Gonna Come” become an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement?

Why was the first rap album to top the Billboard charts recorded by a white group?

Why do pop stars such as Madonna and Lady Gaga incite incendiary responses from feminists and sexists alike?

Is Darius Rucker the only black country music star?

In this cultural account of popular music in the United States, you will find answers to these questions. You will encounter the **musical genres**, which determined the soundscape of twentieth-century United States. You will examine the way in which the **music industry** and **music technology** determined how listeners consumed and interacted with **sound recordings**. You will learn how to locate, in journalistic discourse, scholarly texts, and fan interpretations, the tension between the profit-driven music industry and the construction of so-called authentic musical expressions through the formation of distinct musical styles and star personas.

By gaining a basic understanding of U.S. history, you will be able to explain how music genres reverberate in society, reflect cultural change, and make history. To practice analyzing music from this cultural lens, we will consider the relationship between music and identity, music and power. Two questions will drive our work together: **How do musicians and the music industry use sound to signify social identities? How do listeners hear race, gender, and class in music?**

More broadly, you will learn to think like a historian by developing the metacognitive skills necessary to assess the ideological motives behind historical accounts. What biases and assumptions inform the various constructions of U.S. popular music history you encounter in our readings? By the end of this course, you will have rich answers for this question.

## Course Materials

- Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)
- David Brackett, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Subscription to Learning Catalytics (online classroom response system)
- Access to our course's Spotify playlists
- Additional readings (posted on our website under the course schedule)

## Learning Activities & Assessments

In the following activities, you have the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned about U.S. popular music and creatively decide how you want to apply that knowledge. Pre-class quizzes and short weekly blog posts, although tedious and sometimes difficult, are designed to test and strengthen your foundational knowledge on course topics so you are better prepared for the more comprehensive and expressive assignments. (Detailed prompts including expectations, logistics, examples of best practices, and grading rubrics are posted on our course site.)

Pop Music Analysis (15%): Analyze a popular song by designing your own analytical method. Submit a 3-5 page document which includes a combination of graphs and prose to demonstrate, explain, and justify your analysis. Be mindful of how your methodological choices are 1) appropriate for the particular genre, artist, and time period you chose and 2) yield a particular listening experience. Challenge yourself not to rely solely on strategies you have encountered elsewhere. Put together a unique method, which helps your reader understand the cultural significance of the musician's creative choices. Your analysis should consider how the musician uses style to represent cultural identities.

A&R Pitch (15%): You work for A&R at a record label (of your choosing). Make a case for why the A&R executive should sign the artist (of your choosing) you recently scouted. Use information about the musician's life experiences and style, audience and critical reception, and ticket and record sells to support your prediction about the potential popularity of this client as well as appropriate fit with other artists signed to your particular branch of the label you work for. Include a portfolio of the musician's repertoire by using examples of your own music description and analysis, cover art, and photos from live performances, among other things, to present the information to your boss in an organized and compelling format. Part of your job is to be aware of the cultural context of the creation and consumption of your artist's particular style, so be sure to include analysis of this in your profile.

Pop Anthology (20%): With your course-long learning team, design a popular music anthology. Each member of the group should contribute separately to the anthology, but collectively, you should offer a representation of major musical movements. Write your chapter(s) on a selection of songs or compositions by two or three composers whose music represents a culturally and historically significant point in time. (Detailed prompt below.)

Discussion Preparation & Engagement (20%): Discussion sections focus on one of the week's assigned readings and music examples or, at times, consider additional essays and songs.

Your participation grade is mostly derived from your presence and active engagement in this meeting. Each week before discussion, be sure to post a short but conceptually rich argument or opinion about the assigned listening on our course blog. Use the readings, lecture, and class discussion to analyze the elements of music in the song and make an argument or point about the cultural resonance of the sounds. You can do this by focusing on a particular section, a melodic phrase, a hook, the vocal delivery, or a single instrument in the song. Or you can make a more holistic assessment of the song's tone, form, and lyrical topics. Regardless of what component you choose to analyze, make a clear point about how the music can be interpreted, using the readings/lecture/class discussion to support your claim. To prepare for discussion each week, bring this analysis to class.

In-Class Preparation & Focus (30%): To prepare for our large class meetings, you should complete the assigned readings, listen to the assigned music examples, and take pre-class quizzes. During class you will be part of a course-long learning team. You will discuss answers to questions, analyze songs, and work together. You will also collaborate on one of the course assignments (the Pop Anthology). Your out-of-class preparation, presence, and creative focus for this in-class group work enables you to accrue points for this portion of your grade. To complete some of the in-class activities, you will need a subscription to Learning Catalytics, an online classroom response system, and a laptop or smart phone to access the site.

## Course Schedule

### **Tin Pan Alley and the Modern Music Industry**

RP&S, "Irving Berlin in Tin Pan Alley," 1-9

Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, "The Birth of Tin Pan Alley," 57-61

HBDR&R, "Amateurs and Executants," 13-24

Charles K. Harris, "After the Ball" (1891)

Irving Berlin, "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (1911)

### **"Black" Music: Ragtime & Coon Songs**

HBDR&R, "The Ragtime Life," 25-35

Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, "The Ragtime Craze, 1896-1918," 61-64

Holly Maples, "Embodying Resistance: Gendering Public Space in Ragtime Social Dance," 243-259

Fred Fischer, "If the Man in the Moon Were a Coon" (1905)

Ernest Hogan, "All Coons Look Alike to Me" (1896)

### **Paul Whiteman, Fletcher Henderson, and the Jazz Mainstream**

RP&S, "Technology, the Dawn of Modern Popular Music, and the 'King of Jazz,'" 9-13

HBDR&R, "The King of Jazz," 71-83

Jeffrey Magee, "The 'Paul Whiteman of the Race,'" 27-38

Paul Whiteman, "Whisper" (1921)

Fletcher Henderson, "Sugarfoot Stomp" (1925)

### **The Rise of Independents and the Commercialized Sounds of Race & Class**

Karl Hagstrom Miller, "Race Records and Old-Time Music: The Creation of Two Marketing Categories in the 1920s," 187-214

Mamie Smith, "Crazy Blues" (1920)

### **Benny Goodman, Youth Culture's Anthem**

Lewis Erenberg, "Just One More Chance: The Fall of the Jazz Age and the Rise of Swing, 1929-1935," 3-34  
HBDR&R, "Swing that Music," 111-125  
Benny Goodman, "King Porter Stomp" (1935)  
Glenn Miller, "In the Mood" (1940)  
Frank Sinatra, "I'll Never Smile Again" (1940)

### **The Trouble with Black Swing Bands**

PR&S, "Big Band Swing Music: Race and Power in the Music Business," 14-21  
Erenberg, "News from the Great Wide World: Count Basie, Duke Ellington, & Black Swing Bands," 94-119  
Count Basie, "One O'Clock Jump" (1937)  
Duke Ellington, "Jeep's Blues" (1936)

### **Post-War Ballads and Sentimental Whiteness**

HBDR&R, "Selling the American Ballad," 150-165  
Perry Como, "Prisoner of Love" (1946)  
Patti Page, "The Tennessee Waltz" (1950)  
Nat King Cole, "Too Young" (1951)

### **The Birth of Rhythm 'n' Blues**

Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, "Rhythm and Blues," 220-230  
PR&S, "The House that Ruth Brown Built," 77-81  
Louis Jordan & His Tympani Five, "Choo Choo Ch'Boogie" (1946)  
Ruth Brown, "(Mama) He Treats Your Daughter Mean" (1953)  
Big Joe Turner, "Shake, Rattle and Roll" (1954)

### **Chuck Berry and the White Middle-Class**

RP&S, "From Rhythm and Blues to Rock 'n' Roll: The Songs of Chuck Berry," 100-103  
Timothy Taylor, "His Name Was in Lights: Chuck Berry's 'Johnny B. Goode,'" 27-40  
Chuck Berry, "Maybellene" (1955)  
Chuck Berry, "Johnny B. Goode" (1958)

### **Elvis Presley & Sun Records**

RP&S, "Elvis Presley, Sam Phillips, and Rockabilly"  
Michael Bertrand, "Elvis Presley and the Politics of Popular Memory," 62-86  
Elvis Presley, "Heartbreak Hotel" (1956)  
Elvis Presley, "Hound Dog" (1956)  
Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, "Hound Dog" (1952)  
Elvis Presley, "That's All Right" (1954)  
Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, "That's All Right" (1946)

### **The Nashville Sound**

Joli Jensen, "What Makes Country Music Authentic?" 3-20  
Diane Pecknold, "I Wanna Play House": Configurations of Masculinity in the Nashville Sound Era," 86-106  
Brenda Lee, "I'm Sorry" (1960)  
Jim Reeves, "He'll Have To Go" (1959)  
Patsy Cline, "Crazy" (1962)

### **Black Music Industries: Girl Groups & Motown**

Jacqueline Warwick, "Respectability versus Rock 'n' Roll" and "Motown and the Politics of Crossover Success," 137-162  
Suzanne Smith, "Money (That's What I Want)': Black Capitalism and Black Freedom in Detroit," 54-59

PR&S, "No Town Like Motown," 173-177.

The Shirelles, "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" (1960)

The Miracles "Shop Around" (1960)

Martha and the Vandellas, "Dancing in the Street" (1964)

The Four Tops, "I Can't Help Myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch)" (1965)

Stevie Wonder, "Fingertips, Part 2" (1963)

### **The Stones vs. The Beatles: Marketing, Fandom, and Sexuality**

PR&S, 200-230

HBDR&R, "Say You Want A Revolution..." 230-247

The Rolling Stones, "Little Red Rooster" (1964)

The Rolling Stones, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" (1964)

The Beatles, "Please Please Me" (1962)

The Beatles, "A Hard Day's Night" (1964)

### **Soul: The Musical Voice of the Black Freedom Movement**

Portia Maultsby, "Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture," 51-60

PR&S, "From R&B to Soul" 169-172, "The Godfather of Soul and the Beginnings of Funk" 178-189, and

"Aretha Franklin Earns Respect," 194-199

Sam Cooke, "A Change Is Gonna Come" (1963)

Aretha Franklin, "I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Loved You)" (1967)

James Brown, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" (1965)

James Brown, "Say It Loud - I'm Black and I'm Proud" (1968)

### **Jimi Hendrix & the (White) Counterculture**

PR&S, "Janis Joplin" and "Jimi Hendrix," 231-244

Steve Waksman, "Black Sound, Black Body: Jimi Hendrix, the Electric Guitar, and the Meanings of Blackness," 65-70

Janis Joplin, "Piece of My Heart" (1968)

Jimi Hendrix, "Hey Joe" and "Purple Haze" (1966)

Merle Haggard, "Okie from Musckogee" (1969)

### **Rock in the 1970s: Masculinity and the Mega Music Industry**

Starr and Waterman, "The 1970s: Rock Music, Disco, and the Popular Mainstream," 368-372

Steve Waksman, "Every Inch of My Love: The Problem with Cockrock"

Led Zeppelin, *IV* (1971)

### **"In Defense of Disco"**

PR&S, "Get Up On Disco," 328-339

Richard Dyer, "In Defense of Disco," 410-418

Tim Lawrence, "In Defence of Disco (Again)," 128-134

KC and the Sunshine Band, "Get Down Tonight" (1975)

Bee Gees, "Night Fever" (1978)

Donna Summer, "Bad Girls" (1979)

### **Soul Musicians and Hippies Take Over Country**

Starr and Waterman, "Country Music and the Pop Mainstream," 378-381

Starr and Waterman, "The Outlaws: Progressive Country Music," 408-411

Charles Hughes, "You're My Soul Song: How Southern Soul Changed Country Music," 283-305

Willie Nelson, *Red Headed Stranger* (1975)

## **Punk**

Dave Laing, "Interpreting Punk Rock," 123-128

PR&S, "Punk," 339-354

Ramones, "Blitzkrieg Bop" (1976)

Patti Smith, "Horses" (1975)

## **Rap**

Starr and Waterman, "'Rapper's Delight': The Origins of Hip-Hop," 437-442

Mark Anthony Neal, "Postindustrial Soul: Black Popular Music at the Crossroads," 125-158

The Sugarhill Gang, "Rapper's Delight" (1979)

Afrika Bambaataa, "Planet Rock" (1982)

Public Enemy, "Don't Believe the Hype" (1988)

## **MTV's Racism and Sexism**

Lisa Lewis, "The Making of a Preferred Address," 27-42

"Top 10 MTV VMA Shocking Performances"

Laura DeMarco, "30 Years of Madonna: How the Queen of Pop Used Controversy, MTV, and a Talent for Reinvention to craft One of the Most Successful Careers in Music History"

Watch video: Madonna, "Like a Virgin" (1984)

Watch video: Run-*D.M.C.*, "Rock Box" (1984)

## **1980s Working-Class Masculinities as an Antidote to Madonna**

PR&S, "Bruce Springsteen: Reborn in the USA," 377-387

LISTEN: Prince, *Purple Rain*

Bruce Springsteen, "Born in the U.S.A." and "Glory Days" (1984)

Prince, "Let's Go Crazy" (1984)

Watch video: Prince, "Little Red Corvette"

## **Alternative to What?: Grunge & the Profusion of Rock Subgenres**

Mark Mazullo, "The Man Whom the World Sold: Kurt Cobain, Rock's Progressive Aesthetic, and the Challenges of Authenticity," 713-749

Jigsaw Reading Assignments: Group 1: Jim Sullivan, "The Age of Hyphen-Rock," 26-27; Group 2: Neil Strauss, "Forget Pearl Jam: Alternative Rock Lives"; Group 3: PR&S, "Grunge Turns to Scrunge," 471-479

Nirvana, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (1991)

Nirvana, "Heart-Shaped Box" (1992)

## **Women Singer Songwriters & 1990s Feminism**

PR&S, "Genre of Gender? The Resurgence of the Singer-Songwriter," 490-496

Lucy O'Brien, "Girlpower! The New Generation," 459-492

Tori Amos, "Cornflake Girl" (1994)

Alanis Morissette, "You Oughta Know" (1994)

## **White Rap's Empire: From the Beastie Boys to Eminem**

Loren Kajikawa, "Eminem's 'My Name Is': Signifying Whiteness and Re-articulating Race," 341-363

Chris Molanphy, "Introducing the King of Hip-Hop," 1-11

Beastie Boys, "(You Gotta) Fight for Your Right (To Party)" (1989)

Watch video: Eminem, "My Name Is" (1999)

### **The Persistence of White Supremacy in Contemporary Country & Americana**

Pamela Fox, *Natural Acts: Gender, Race, and Rusticity in Country Music*, 145-151

RJ Smith, "Race and Country Music Then and Now"

Beville Dunkerley, "Darius Rucker Making 'True Believers' with Country Music"

Giovanni Russonello, "Why Is a Music Genre Called 'Americana' So Overwhelmingly White and Male?"

Eric Weisbard, "Brad Paisley's 'Accidental Racist' and the History of White Southern Musical Identity"

Watch: Darius Rucker, "Wagon Wheel" (2004)

Brad Paisley, "Accidental Racist" (2013)

The Civil Wars, "Poison & Wine" (2011)

The Lumineers, "Ho Hey" (2012)

### **Clinging to Authenticity in the Era of Advanced Capitalism**

Ryan Hibbett, "What is Indie Rock?" 55-77

Listen to a curated Spotify playlist with the title "indie" or "hipster" in it

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**Final Note:** These are my plans for this course, but I have bigger, longer-lasting dreams. I hope you take away more. I hope you gain insight into your own listening experiences and musical choices and that you learn to value those of others. I hope you begin to understand how your musical experiences and listening choices are culturally and historically situated and, as a result, determine your identity and interactions with others. And as you come to understand how music can both bolster and challenge social inequalities, I hope you begin to wonder how you have the power to affect social change in and through music. Finally, my hope is that, through this short-lived experience and through our brief interactions with one another, you develop a lifelong passion for learning more about music and how music can enrich your life.