Understanding Popular Music Syllabus (Summer Session)
History of Consciousness Department (HISC 80O)

Instructor: Jared Gampel (jgampel@ucsc.edu)
Teaching Assistant: Justin Gilmore (jtgilmor@ucsc.edu)
Class Hours: Monday/Wednesday 1:00-4:30 PM
Office Hours: Jared (by appointment), Justin (by appointment)

Required Texts:

All other readings will be compiled in a course reader available at the Literary Guillotine (205 Locust Street). Hard copies of all texts are mandatory.

Course Description

“The Music, The Music, this is our history.” (Amiri Baraka, 1999)

The purpose of this class is to introduce students to the study of popular music. Our course begins with the concepts and categories that cultural theorists use to understand popular music. In other words, we begin with theory. After laying these foundations, we will move to case studies of various genres: blues, rock ‘n’ roll, rock, soul, funk, disco, and hip-hop. We typically imagine genres to be defined only by their sonic coordinates, represented by an ideal type from which we measure deviations. But this course takes a different tack, expanding the notion of genre to encompass musical culture and history. This means that understanding any genre requires looking to its historical conditions of possibility as well as to the sounds themselves. Indeed, the path toward knowledge leads in both directions. What can history tell us about music? How can popular music tell us about our history?

There is an audio component to the course. Our readings are paired with songs, which we will unpack, analyze, and put into conversation with our texts.

The goal of this course is for students to develop the skills necessary to analyze and criticize popular music. Firstly, this means challenging common sense understandings of how music works. And secondly, it requires an understanding of the ways history (economics, politics, race and gender relations, etc.) works its way into musical forms.

Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand and apply the concepts, categories, and methods cultural theorists use to analyze popular music.
- analyze and criticize songs, albums, genres, and musical cultures.
- develop independent research projects based on musical and textual primary sources.
Requirements

- Four Reading/Listening Responses | 40% | Students will submit four 1-3 page reading/listening responses throughout the quarter. These will be turned in on Mondays beginning on Week 2. One response may be written per unit. You may not turn in multiple reading responses at the end of the quarter. Responses must explicitly cite and reference course readings. They should be concise, well-written, and proofread for errors. Responses must be double-spaced, in 12pt Times New Roman font.

- Final Paper | 40% | Students will submit a final consisting of a 6-8 page paper that analyses a musical genre of their choosing. This paper must include concepts and categories that we cover in class, as well as an analysis of at least one song. Three outside sources must be used. You are required to meet with your instructor in office hours once during the quarter to discuss your final paper topic. Your final paper should be well-written and proofread for errors. It must be double-spaced, in 12pt Times New Roman font.

- Attendance and Participation | 20% | Students must read the assigned texts in preparation for each class. Attendance will be taken in class, and participation will be evaluated by the instructor.

- This course requires approximately 100-150 pages of reading per week, which should demand 6 or 7 hours outside of class. Reading/listening responses will add approximately 4 hours of work over the course of the quarter. The course will meet twice per week for 3.5 hours per meeting, totaling 7 hours per week. Students should therefore anticipate dedicating roughly 15 hours per week to this course.

- Conduct in lecture: Lecture attendance is mandatory. More than one absence results in failing the course. Phones and computers are not allowed in lecture unless permission has been given by the instructor. Any student that uses their phone in class will be asked to leave for the day and will lose 5% of their participation grade per infraction. Students may not leave early unless permission has been given by the instructor. If you need to leave early, let the instructor and your TA know before lecture begins. If you are more than 10 minutes late to lecture, do not attend. You will be asked to leave.

- Conduct in discussion: It is mandatory that a hard copy of the relevant text is brought to class every day. If you do not have your text, you will lose 50% of your participation grade for the day. All other expectations will be dictated by your TA.

Disability Information

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first week of the quarter. At this time, we would also like to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. We encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.
Academic Misconduct Policy
Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or facilitating academic dishonesty. Acts of academic misconduct during the course, including plagiarism, will result in failure of the course. Your case will be reported to the College Provost as per the Academic Integrity guidelines found on the web at: http://www.ucsc.edu/academics/academic_integrity/undergraduate_students/

Schedule
This schedule is subject to possible alterations or updates as the quarter progresses. All students will be notified of changes well in advance.

Course Outline

Foundations of Interpretation

6/22: Popular Culture and the Culture Industry


6/24: The Critique of Mass Culture

Chapter 4: The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception, pp. 94-136.

6/29: Rethinking Mass Culture and the Uses of Cultural Commodities


Chapter 1: From Culture to Hegemony, pp. 5-19.

Blues

7/1: The Origins of the Blues

7/6: **Country Blues and Classic Blues**


From Rock ‘n’ Roll to Rock

7/8: **Rock ‘n’ Roll**


7/13: **Rock in the 1960s**


From Soul to Funk

7/15: **Soul & Funk**


**Film**


**Disco**

7/20: Disco


**Hip-Hop**

7/22: Hip-Hop and Rap


Final Paper due on 7/27 by noon.