

**Music 207-1: Race and Ethnicity in Popular Music
Summer 2008 – Session I**

OCH S008
Instructor: Wendy Hsu
wendyhsu@virginia.edu

MTWRF 10:30 – 12:45pm
Office: Music Library
Office hours by appointment

Course description

Can we hear identifiers of race and ethnicity in music? How do musical sound, image, performance, and even performer become racialized? How does music shape and reflect racial relations and inequalities in the society? How do individuals of particular ethnicity use music to express their identity? This course explores the relationship between popular music, ethnic identities, and racial representations, with a focus on, but not excluded to, popular music emerged in 20th and 21st century in the United States. We will read ethnographic and historical studies of musical practices of various ethnic groups [mostly consisting of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as]. We will also read criticism of contemporary musical representations while analyzing their music and image. By the end of the course, the students will gain a sense of the role of music in the lives of the focused ethnic groups and how issues of race and ethnicity impact the experience of popular music within and across the U.S. borders over time.

Readings

All readings will be posted on the course Toolkit site.

Grading

Attendance and participation	20%
Journal responses	20%
Creative assignment	10%
Midterm exam	25%
Final reflection paper	25%

Attendance & Participation – 20%

You will be graded for each class session. This grade will not be based upon your attendance. Rather it is based upon your preparedness and your overall effort and contribution to the session. At the end of the semester, the grades for each session will be averaged. Come to class prepared to engage in discussion—*this means you need to have done the reading prior to the session*. Bring the week's readings to class for reference. While your participation will be greatly defined by your willingness to talk in class, there will be different formats for discussion in both large and small groups, as well as opportunities for individual and written reflection.

Journal responses – 20%

You will write a journal entry in response (1 or 2 paragraphs) to reading and listening assigned for the day. These responses will be graded on the level of understanding of the reading you have demonstrated and how much thought you've given to listening assignment. Feel free to incorporate anything that may be covered in class discussion. It's advised to focus on one or two (no more than two) ideas in the daily responses. Quality is more important than quantity. More instructions will be given in class.

Creative “mix tape” assignment – 10%

The creative assignment provides an opportunity for you to design your own music and/or video compilation of the music covered in the course. This compilation has to have a theme. Example themes include: *Music of Nuyoricans in the 1960s*, *South Asian American hip hop*, etc. In addition to the media burned onto a CD/DVD, posted on a blog, or on Muxtape.com, you have to include a list of the recordings with a description of historical or social context of the music and artists, and a brief summary of the common qualities shared by all the music on the compilation. You also need to prepare an oral presentation for introduction this compilation to the class at the end of the course. The preparation for this assignment should replace two journal entries of dates most convenient to your own schedule.

Midterm exam - 25%

This will be an assessment of what you have learned so far in the course. It will consist of open-ended short answer questions on the readings and class lectures.

Final reflection paper – 25%

The final is a take-home essay. The objective of the final reflection paper is to reflect on what you've learned over the semester. It will ask you to apply concepts learned from readings and discussion to material of your choice. Details will be provided.

Enrollment

Enrollment is solely the responsibility of the student and will occur through ISIS. Any students who are unable to register but need the credits to graduate should speak to their advisor or to the summer chair in the music department. Visit the music office in Old Cabell Hall to find these people.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes. There are no excused absences. If you miss a class, you will receive a zero for that day's participation grade. And if you miss, you must arrange to turn in any assignments before class. Each student may replace ONE missed day of participation by designing his or her own make-up assignment of about 2 pages in length. The assignment must be approved by the instructor. This should be arranged in advance where possible, or after-the-fact for an absence due to illness.

NOTE: if you anticipate missing more than a total of three classes this semester, you should not sign up for this course.

Classroom Community

We learn better when we know and trust each other. We will work hard the first few days to learn each other's names and to get to know each other. We will also foster community with occasional food, with small group activity, and through discussions,

Assignments and Presentations

No late assignments or delayed presentations will be accepted for any assignment.

Honor Policy

I expect you to uphold the University Honor Policy at all times. You are expected to have read and agreed to the Honor Policy Statement provided on the class homepage (<http://www.toolkit.virginia.edu>)

Grading

Wherever possible I will emphasize written feedback, yet I use grades to compare your performance to the ideal performance. Ideal performance is something just above an A. An 'A' for an assignment in this class requires consistent and satisfactory attention to all requirements **plus** a substantial demonstration of creativity and originality. A 'B' for an assignment in this class requires consistent and satisfactory attention to all requirements and some indication of creativity and originality. A 'C' for an assignment in this class would either 1) have consistent and satisfactory attention to all requirements, but no creativity and originality, or 2) have some creativity and originality but an inconsistent attention to the details. A 'D' for an assignment would lack creativity and originality and miss several of the requirements. An 'F' for an assignment would have fallen short on all points.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Early Histories of Pop Music in the US

Monday 5/12: *Race and Ethnicity: the case of popular music*
Introduction

Tuesday 5/13: Historical Overview of Race and Popular Music in the US
Read: Shank, Barry. "From Rice to Ice: the face of race in rock and pop"
Read: Wang, Oliver. "Between the Notes"

Wednesday 5/14: *Blackface Minstrelsy*
Read: Lott, Eric. "Love and Theft: the Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy"
Read: Black, Ray. "Satire's Cruellest Cut: Exorcising Blackness in Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*"
In-class Screening: clips from *Bamboozled*

Thursday 5/15: *Jewish American in Jazz and Hollywood*

Read: Rogin. "Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice"

Friday 5/16: *Asian American Women in Punk and Post-Punk*

Read: Nguyen, Mimi. "Tales of an Asiatic Geek Girl"

Explore: <http://www.worsethanqueer.com>

Guest: Carol Bui

Week 2: Music, Race, and Power in Late 20th Century US

Monday 5/19: African American Blues

Read: Filene, Benjamin. "Mastering the Cult of Authenticity: Leonard Chess, Willie Dixon, and the Strange Career of Muddy Waters"

Tuesday 5/20: *Rock 'n' Roll: Elvis, Bob Dylan & Janis Joplin*

Read: Shank, Barry. "'That Wild Mercury Sound': Bob Dylan and the Illusion of American Culture"

Read: Bertrand, Michael. "Dateline Dixie: Rock 'n' Roll, Race, and the Issue of change"

Wednesday 5/21: *Hip Hop I: African Americans and the origin of hip hop*

Read: Rose, Tricia. "Prophets of Rage: Rap Music and the Politics of Black Cultural Expression"

Guest: DJ Millz

Thursday 5/22: *Puerto Ricans in the US*

Read: Negus, Keith. "The Latin music industry, the production of salsa and the cultural matrix"

Read: Flores, Juan "'Cha-Cha with a Backbeat': Songs and the Stories of Latin Boogaloo"

Friday 5/23: *Midterm Exam!!!*

Week 3: Interracial Encounters and Multicultural Crossings

Monday 5/26: *Chicano Rock*

Read: Kun, Josh. "Rock's Reconquista"

Guest: Martin Terrazas

Tuesday 5/27: *Hip Hop II: Afro-Asian Connection*

Read: Wang, Oliver. "These are the Breaks"

Read: Whaley, Deborah. "Black Bodies/Yellow Masks: The Orientalist Aesthetic in Hip-Hop and Black Visual Culture"

Wednesday 5/28: *Race and Reality TV*

Read: Meinzel, Katherine. "Making the Dream a Reality (Show): the celebration of failure in *American Idol*"

Read: Hsu, Wendy. "William Hung: Performing the Asian Model Minority"

Thursday 5/29: *African American Rock*

Read: Mahon, Maureen. "Black Like This: Race, Generation and Rock in the Post Civil-Rights Era"

In-class screening: Afropunk

Friday 5/30: no class

Week 4: Transformations and Transnationalism

Monday 6/2: *Popular Musics of the Diaspora*

Read: Lipsitz, George. "Crossing Over: Hidden History of Diaspora"

Read: Sharma, Nitasha. "Musical Crossings: Identity Formations of Second Generation South Asian American Hip-Hop Artists"

Tuesday 6/3: *Transnational Music Production, Circulation and Reception*

Read: Valverde, Kieu. "Making Transnational Vietnamese music: Sounds of Home and Resistance"

Read: Schoel, Gretchen. "Filling in the Blanks: Lessons from an Internet Blues Jam"

Wednesday 6/4: *Music and Film in the 2000s: O Brother Where Art Thou*

Read: TBA

Screen: *O Brother Where Art Thou*

Thursday 6/5: *review & creative project presentations*

Friday 6/6: FINAL EXAM