

**SWAG 144: Gender and Race in Popular Music
Fall 2008**

Clark Hall 102
Instructor: Wendy Hsu
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TR 3:30 – 4:45pm
Office: Halsey Annex 111A
Office hours: Thurs 1-3pm

Course description

Can we hear identifiers of gender and race in music? How do musical sound, image, performance, and even performer become gendered and racialized? How does music shape and reflect racial and gender relations and inequalities in the society? In what ways do individuals of particular racial or gender groups use music to express their identity? This course explores the relationship between popular music, gender, and race, 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 groups marked by gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. 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 and gender groups and how issues of race and gender impact the experience of popular music within and across the U.S. borders over time.

Readings

All readings will be posted on the course site.

Grading

Attendance and participation	20%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%
Concert report	20%
Mixtape assignment and presentation	20%

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 and listening 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.

Concert report – 20%

There are two concert reports required for the course. The 3-page reports consist of detailed observations of the concerts that you will attend during the semester. You are expected to integrate one or two course concept in these reports. Further details such as concert listings will be provided in class.

Mixtape assignment and presentation – 20%

The creative assignment is a two-person project. It 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: women rappers of the 1990s, queer hip hop, Latino dance music, etc. In addition to the recordings on a CD/DVD, you have to include a list of the media, or a blog with links, along with a description of historical or social context of the music and artists, and a 4-5 page essay that comments on the music using course concepts. You also need to prepare an oral presentation for introduction this compilation to the class at the end of the course. This is a group project

Midterm exam - 20%

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 exam – 20%

The objective of the final exam 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.

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 chair in the SWAG department. Visit the SWAG office in Minor 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, structured debates and presentations. Ground rules: no cell phones, no laptops unless otherwise noted.

Late 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: Introduction

Tuesday 8/26: *Course Introduction*

Thursday 8/28: *Gender and Race: the Case of Popular Music*

Read: Hester-Williams, Kim. "Eminem, Masculine Striving, and the Possessive Individualism" http://www.genders.org/g46/g46_hester-williams.html

Browse/Listen: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=835910>

In-Class Screening: scenes from *The 8 Mile*

Week 2: Gender and Sexuality in Pop Music

Tuesday 9/2: *Gender and Sexuality: the Constructionist Approach*

Read: Lorber, Judith. Selection from *Paradoxes of Gender*

Thursday 9/4: *Gender and Popular Music*

Read: Cohen, Sara. "Popular music, gender and sexuality"

Guest: Carey Sargent

Week 3: Race and Ethnicity in Pop Music

Tuesday 9/9: *Race & Ethnicity: History and Construction*

Read: Prashad, Vijay. "The Strange Career of Xenophobia"

Thursday 9/11: *Historical Overview of Popular Music and Race in the US*

Read: Shank, Barry. "From Rice to Ice"

Week 4: Blackface Minstrelsy

Tuesday 9/16: *Blackface Minstrelsy*

Read: Lott, Eric. "Love and Theft: the Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy"

In-class Screening: clips from *Bamboozled*

Thursday 9/18: *Jewish American in Jazz and Hollywood*

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

In-class screening: *The Jazz Singer*

Week 5: Race Music - the American Blues

Tuesday 9/23: *Country Blues Men*

Read: Palmer, Robert. Selections from *Deep Blues*

Read: Filene, Benjamin. "Creating the Cult of Authenticity: The Lomaxes and Leadbelly"

Thursday 9/25: *Blues Queens*

Read: Davis, Angela, "Blame It on the Blues: Bessie Smith, Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, and the Politics of Blues Protest"

Week 6: Rock Music

Tuesday 9/30: *Rock Music and Gender*

Read: Keightly, Kier. "Reconsidering Rock"

Due: first concert report

Thursday 10/2: *Women Rockers*

Read: Wald, Gayle. "One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies"

Read: Tringali, Juliana. "Love Guns, Tight Pants, and Big Sticks: Who Put the Cock in Rock?"

Week 7: African Americans and Latinos in rock and punk

Tuesday 10/7: *Black Rock and Punk*

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

In-class Screening: *AfroPunk*

Thursday 10/9: *Chicano Rock and Punk*

Read: Habel-Pallán, Michelle. “Sexuality, Translocality, and Punk in Los Angeles and Beyond”

Read: Nguyen, Mimi. Selections from *Punk Planet*

In-class screening: *Beyond the Screams*

Week 8: Fall Break & Midterm

Tuesday 10/14: *Fall Break!*

Thursday 10/16: *Midterm*

Week 9: Hip Hop

Tuesday 10/21: *Hip Hop and Race*

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

Thursday 10/23: *Hip Hop, Gender, and Sexuality*

Read: Rose, Tricia. “Bad Sistas: Black Women Rappers and Sexual Politics in Rap Music”

Week 10: Hip Hop – Afro-Asian Connections

Tuesday 10/28: *Orientalism*

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

Thursday 10/30: *Indian American Youth Consumption of Hip Hop*

Read: Maira, Sunaina. “Identity Dub”

Week 11: Asian American Gender & Sexuality

Tuesday 11/4: *Asian American Masculinity*

Read: Lee, Robert G. “The Third Sex”

Read: Castro, Christi-Ann. “Voices of Minority”

Thursday 11/6: *Asian American Femininity*

Read: Park, Jane. "Cibo Matto's Stereotype A"
Read: Ono, Yoko. "The Feminization of Society, 1971"

Week 12: Music Subcultures

Tuesday 11/11 *Riot Grrrrl – Women in Punk*

Read: Schilt, Kristin. "Riot Grrrl Is...Contestation over meaning in a Music Scene"

Read: Nguyen, Mimi. Selections from *Punk Planet*

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

Thursday 11/13 *Gay Men and Disco*

Read: Lorde, Audre. "Power of the Erotic"

Read: Hughes, Walter. "In the Empire of the Beat: Discipline and Disco"

Week 13: Music, Noise, and Power

Tuesday 11/18 Popular Music Journalism

Guest: Sarah Culpepper

Thursday 11/20 *Queer Representation in Rock Musical*

Read: Hsu, Wendy. "Reading and Queering Plato in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*"

In-class screening: scenes from *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*

Week 14: Mixtape Project Presentation

Tuesday 11/25: *Project Presentations*

Thursday 11/27: *Thanksgiving Break*

Week 15: Mixtape Project Presentation

Tuesday 12/2: *Project Presentations*

Thursday 12/4: *Project Presentations*

Due: second concert report

Final Exam

Wednesday 12/10: *Final Exam*