

AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC (MUSIC 12)

(Syllabus updated 7-04)

Class meets in CA 113 @ M W 12:30 – 1:55 pm

Ed Macan, Ph.D., M.A., etc.

(Office: CA 118, Office Phone: 476-4321, Office Hours: M W 2 - 3, T TH 11:30-12:30, F 1- 2)

TEXT Joyner, David Lee. *American Popular Music*, 2nd edition. New York: McGraw Hill, 2003.
Macan, Ed. *American Popular Music Supplement*. College of the Redwoods: 2004.

COURSE DESCRIPTION. A survey of American popular music from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, including the basic elements of music; the evolution of the music industry, music media, and music-related technology; American popular song and music theater; the African American tradition (from spirituals and work songs through the blues and jazz); the Anglo-American tradition (country and western, bluegrass, urban folk); and rock music from *ca.* 1955 to *ca.* 1990. The course, which includes lectures, videos, and recordings, explores American popular music both as a social phenomenon and as an art form worthy of study for its own aesthetic ends. Concert/record reviews and a research paper are included in the class requirements.

GRADING. Grading will be as follows:

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| 1. | Composite of five exams worth 8% each or four exams worth 10% each | 40% |
| 2. | Two written reviews worth 7.5% each | 15% |
| 3. | One research paper | 15% |
| 4. | Participation | 15% |
| 5. | Cumulative final exam | 15% |

Final grades are letter grades. When figuring out the letter grade equivalent of test scores, I use the following scale: 97%-100%=A+, 93%-96%=A, 90%-92%=A-, 87%-89%=B+, 83%-86%=B, 80%-82%=B-, 77%-79%=C+, 73%-76%=C, 70%-72%=C-, 67%-69%=D+, 63%-66%=D, 60%-62%=D-, under 60%=F. NOTE: I expect students to take exams on the day they are scheduled for. *Missed exams may not be retaken unless you have informed me by the exam day of your need to schedule an alternative time. This policy also applies to the final exam.*

NOTE: Final grades will not be posted. If you want to know your final grade, bring a self-addressed stamped envelope on finals day. I will mail you your final exam and put your final grade for the course on the exam.

PARTICIPATION. Punctual attendance is necessary for your success in this course. The participation component of your grade acknowledges the importance that regular attendance, familiarity with lecture material, and participation in lecture discussions has on your successful mastery of the materials taught in this course. You will be awarded ten participation points for each class you attend, including finals day, but please note the following: (a) I will take role at the beginning of each class; if you have not arrived by the time I complete taking role, you will be considered absent; (b) if you leave class early, you will be considered absent.

You will be awarded 10 participation points for each class for which you receive full attendance credit. At the end of the semester, I will tally out your participation grade according to the following scale: 270 points and above is an A, 250 to 269 is a B, 230 to 249 is a C, 200 to 220 is a D, and less than 200 points is an F. The resulting participation grade counts for 15% of your final grade. Please note: for the purposes of tallying your participation grade, *there is no such thing as an excused absence*. To receive full participation points for a given day, you must be here. Please note: I reserve the right to award bonus participation points at the end of the semester to persons whose contributions to lecture discussions have been particularly exemplary.

LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS. There is a set of six cassette tapes (the first five are 60-minute tapes, while the sixth is ninety minutes) that are a crucial component of this class. These tapes are keyed in with the music that is discussed in the textbook. From approximately the fourth week of class on, virtually all of the music that we listen to in class will come from these tapes. There will be listening examples drawn from these tapes for the second exam on, so it will be to your advantage to have home copies of these tapes; you may get copies by bringing your own blank 60-minute cassettes either to me or directly to the Music Library. (In either case, allow two class sessions for turnaround.) When I play music from these tapes in class, it is to illustrate points that have been made in both the textbooks and my lectures; therefore, please treat this as a time for attentive listening, not as a springboard for lengthy conversations with your neighbor. Needless to say, it is inappropriate for you to carry on discussions with your neighbor while I am trying to lecture, while we are listening to music, or while another student is speaking. Your cooperation in this will help the class to run infinitely more smoothly.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS. Once you have become familiar with basic music terminology, you will write three papers: two reviews, which combined are worth 15% of your final grade, and a research paper on a particular musician, group, sub-genre, or other topic (to be approved by me) worth 15% of your final grade. One of the three papers should review a live performance that you attend this semester: if you have not fulfilled this commitment by the third paper, a full grade will be deducted from your final paper. Your first paper will be a review of either a recording or a performance of your choice. Begin by telling us the name of the artist, the name of the album and year of its release or the venue and date at which you saw the performance. Then give us a bit of background concerning the artist(s). What style of music do they sing/play? If it's an underground style, be prepared to describe it briefly, as if you were trying to explain it to the uninitiated. In the main body of the review, discuss the recording or the performance itself. Give us some details about songs/tracks that you consider particular highpoints or low points. If you're reviewing a performance, include an account of the stage show and audience reaction. At the end, sum up your overall impressions. How would you compare this album/show to the artist's previous work? To the work of similar artists?

A research paper on a particular musician, group, or sub-genre within the American popular music tradition will be due near the end of the semester (date to be announced). Your paper should demonstrate the relationship of your subject with other musicians/genres discussed in class, and should summarize the importance of your subject's contributions to the American popular music tradition. Reference to specific songs and/or recordings will be helpful, perhaps even necessary; keep in mind the success of your paper will depend to a great extent on how well you define your thesis. Papers should be four to five typed pages (double-spaced, 1 2" left margin, all other margins 1"). This does not include the bibliography, which should be appended to the end of your paper, and show your research sources. Please be aware the while web sites may be used as secondary sources, they may not be used as primary sources: two of your sources should be print sources. Use footnotes as needed; please follow proper footnote format. Papers will be graded on both content and clarity of presentation.

CLASS SCHEDULE (approximate)

1. Intro to Course
2. Elements of Music, part I: rhythm; part II: melody
3. Elements of Music, part II: melody; part III: notation
4. Elements of Music, part IV: harmony
5. Elements of Music, part IV: harmony; part V: tone-color, dynamics
6. Assign reviews and review writing guide.
EXAM #1: The Elements of Music
7. Discussion: How to Write a Review
8. chs. 1, 2; American Popular Song, American Musical Theater
9. (continued)
10. *West Side Story* video (excerpt)
EXAM #2: American Popular Song and Musical Theater
11. Ch. 3, Intro. to African-American Musical Traditions; spirituals, work songs
12. The blues (chs. 4-5)
13. chs. 6-7: Early Jazz and its antecedents; Jazz in the Twenties (Chicago)
14. ch. 8, Jazz of the Thirties and Forties (Swing), ch. 9, Jazz of the Fifties and beyond: bebop, cool jazz, later styles
15. video: *The Story of Jazz*

16. video (concluded)
EXAM #3: The Spiritual, Blues, Ragtime, Jazz
17. ch. 10, origins of country music; ch. 11, early commercialization of country music
18. ch. 12, country meets western; ch. 13, Nashville and the “classic” country sound
19. country music since 1960 (chs. 13-14); bluegrass (ch. 14); video: *High Lonesome: The Story of Bluegrass*
20. video (concluded)
EXAM #4: Country, Bluegrass
21. ch. 15, 16; Early rock and roll, 1955-60; “Bubblegum” rock and roll, 1960-65; urban folk
22. ch. 19; black gospel, doo-wop, fifties and sixties soul music, Motown
23. ch. 17; The British Invasion: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who
24. ch. 18; The Psychedelic Revolution: Rock in the Late Sixties
25. chs. 20-21; Rock in the Seventies, part 1: Progressive Rock, Heavy Metal, Jazz-Rock Fusion
26. chs. 20-21, continued: Rock in the Seventies
27. chs. 22-23; Rock in the Eighties and early Nineties
28. **EXAM #5: Rock Music, ca. 1955-1990**
29. **CUMULATIVE FINAL EXAM**

NOTE: Your continued enrollment in this class after the end of the second week of the semester indicates that you have read, understood, and agreed to be bound by the terms of this syllabus. Please be aware that after the third week of the semester I take no further responsibility for dropping you from the class roll if you stop coming to class. It will be your responsibility to fill out the appropriate petition at Admissions and Records to be permitted to drop the class late. Ordinarily I will sign such a petition, but it is solely your responsibility to initiate this action. Please be aware that in accordance with college policy, incompletes will be given only in highly unusual circumstances, most often for unforeseeable medical emergencies. An extensive workload, academic or otherwise, will not be considered sufficient cause to grant an incomplete.