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Spring 2007 Syllabus

**Leh 301, Section XM82: The American Experience  
American Popular Music from 1940 to 1970**

Reservoir Building Room 126  
6:00 to 8:40 pm  
January 29 to May 14  
Office hours by appointment

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to studying the history and culture of popular music in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. Our objective will be to better understand American music as an expressive form and in the context of society and culture.

We will focus on the genres of jazz and swing, rhythm and blues, gospel, rock and roll, country, folk and blues, and soul. We will discuss artists such as Louis Jordan, Lionel Hampton, Sam Cooke, Ruth Brown, Bill Haley, Elvis Presley, Diana Ross, Little Richard, and Screamin' Jay Hawkins. We will talk about the economics of the music business, aesthetics, and performance styles. We will also focus on the context of the music: recording technologies, segregated and desegregating America, the sexual revolution, and the wars of this period: the Second World War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War. We will listen to music frequently in class. The readings for the course include material from biographies, interviews, contemporary critical writing, and academic scholarship.

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*Course requirements:*

1. Attend each class meeting. Any student who misses three class meetings will fail the course.
2. Prepare for class. Do the assigned reading and be prepared to discuss it.
3. Participate in class discussion. Every student must take part in every class.
4. Turn in written assignments on time.

*Grading:*

Assignments are expected at the class meeting the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized one-third of a grade per day late (an A becomes an A-, and so on). Exams cannot be made up without advance permission.

Class participation:	20%
Quizzes:	20%
Short paper:	10%
Final paper proposal:	10%
Final paper:	20%
Final exam:	20%

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*Assignments:*

Note: Papers should be typed, in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced, and with 1 inch margins. A printed copy should be turned in at the beginning of the class in which the paper is due.

*Short paper, due 3/5/07*

Write 3 pages analyzing a song in context. A list of songs will be provided. Assignment will be handed out and discussed on 2/5/07. Papers will be returned on 3/12/07.

*Final paper proposal, due 4/16/07.*

Write 1-2 pages as a proposal for your final paper. Choose two bands or artists of the 1940-1970 period and briefly explain how you will compare them, what sources you will use, and what your argument will be. Assignment will be handed out on 3/12/07. Paper proposals will be returned on 4/23/07.

*Final paper, due 5/14/07.*

Based on your paper proposal and on my comments, write 7-9 pages analyzing two bands or artists, discussing their music (genre, performance, biography) and their context (audience, historical moment, economic conditions, politics). Students interested in writing on another topic can speak with me about alternative projects. Students will exchange **drafts** of the final papers for discussion in class on **5/7/07**. Papers will be returned at the final exam.

*Class presentations, on 5/14/07:*

Students are required to make a short, 5-minute presentation on their final research papers, including a brief discussion of their subjects and argument.

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*Exams:*

There will be five quizzes and a final exam. These exams may include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Students should be prepared to combine factual detail with analysis. **STUDENTS MUST BE PREPARED TO REFER TO THE READING IN THEIR EXAM ANSWERS.** The final exam will be cumulative, covering material from the entire course. Its date will be announced.

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**PLEASE NOTE! The university is closed on 2/12/07 and 2/19/07. Makeup classes are on THURSDAY 2/15/07 and WEDNESDAY 2/21/07.**

**Week 1: Monday, 1/29/07: Introduction and expectations**

*No reading.*

**Week 2: Monday, 2/5/07: Popular music before 1930; How to talk about music; And just what is “popular”?**

**Note: Short paper assignment handed out.**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 1-16.

Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, pp. 55-90.

**Week 3: THURSDAY, 2/15/07: Swing, popular jazz, blues, and gospel**

**Note: Quiz**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 17-33.

Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, pp. 91-128.

**Week 4: WEDNESDAY, 2/21/07: Improvisation and influences in pop and rhythm and blues**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 33-54.

Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters*, pp.xv-xxvii.

Tucker, "Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies," pp. 376-408.

**Week 5: Monday, 2/26/07: Tin Pan Alley and the economics of popular music**

**Note: Quiz**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 55-75.

Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society*, Ch. 2, "The Pop Music Industry," pp. 29-54.

Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, pp. 129-148.

Rubin and Melnick, *American Popular Music*, Introduction and Ch. 1, "The Business of Popular Music," pp. 1-28.

**Week 6: Monday, 3/5/07: The 1950s, continuity, and change**

**Note: SHORT PAPER DUE.**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 76-93.

Murray, *Stomping the Blues*, pp. 179-200.

Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters*, pp. 370-398.

**Week 7: Monday, 3/12/07: Rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll**

**Note: Quiz**

**Note: Short paper returned**

**Note: Final paper assignment handed out**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 94-109.

Guralnick, *Lost Highway*, "Elvis Presley," pp. 118-144.

Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters*, pp. 168-176.

**Week 8: Monday, 3/19/07: The 1950s and 1960s**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 110-140.

Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters*, pp. 261-274.

**Week 9: Monday, 3/26/07: The politics and context of music change**

**Note: Quiz**

*Reading:*

Ward, *Just My Soul Responding*, Ch. 4, " 'Our day will come': black pop, white pop, and the sounds of integration," pp. 123-172.

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 140-170.

**SPRING BREAK, 4/2/07-4/10/07**

**Week 10: Monday, 4/16/07: Pop, Rock, and soul**

**Note: FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE.**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 171-202.

**Week 11: Monday, 4/23/07: The 1960s**

**Note: Quiz**

**Note: Final paper proposals returned**

*Reading:*

Hirshy, *Nowhere to Run*, pp. 156-183 and 228-249.

**Week 12: Monday, 4/30/07: The 1960s**

*Reading:*

Brackett, *Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader*, pp. 203-229.

Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run*, pp. 265-293.

**Week 13: Monday, 5/7/07: After the 1960s**

**Note: FINAL PAPER DRAFT DISCUSSION.**

*Reading:*

To be announced

**Week 14: Monday, 5/14/07: Exam review and student presentations.**

**Note: FINAL PAPER DUE. Student presentations. Review for exam.**

*No reading assigned.*

**FINAL EXAM DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED**

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*Required texts:*

David Brackett, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader* (Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

*Online readings:*

Peter Guralnick, *Lost Highway: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians* (New York: Perennial, 1979).

Gerri Hirshey, *Nowhere to Run: The Story of Soul Music* (New York: Times Books, 1984).

Brian Longhurst, *Popular Music and Society* (New York: Polity, 1995).

Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues* (New York, Da Capo, 1976).

Arnold Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters* (New York: Collier, 1978).

Sherrie Tucker, "Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies," *Current Musicology* Spring 2001/2002, pp. 376-408.

Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).