Iconic Figures of Popular Music: Pink Floyd

Spring 2015

Course no. MUSC 424
Section no. 4729R
Units: 2
Time: Wednesdays 12:00-1:50pm
Room: MUS 319

Course instructor: Bill Biersach
Instructor’s office: MUS 316
Instructor’s office hours: MW 9 – 11 am
Office phone: (213) 740-7416
Instructor’s email: biersach@usc.edu

The Premise

From schoolyard friends to superstars to squabbling artists to fading stars, we will follow the course of these intense musicians through the intriguing twists and turns of their rise to fame and their eventual demise as a group and, unfortunately, as friends. Along the way, one of their founding members bailed due to mental problems—yet his unintended influence on the band remained eerily active. In their use of complex recording techniques and newly-invented electronic instruments, they were decades ahead of their time. The amazing visuals, both projected and animatronic, became an integral part of their stage presentation. Their albums were more than collections of musical tracks, and their concerts became more than mere performances of their music. Everything they did was larger than life, but the vicissitudes of life eventually tore the band apart.

Course Goal

In this course we will examine the career arc of this band from several perspectives. We will read the autobiography of a band member, Nick Mason, but also review the story from an outsider’s perspective, journalist Mark Blake. The class will also divide into small groups who will review and present the musical material, album by album, according to guidelines of their choosing. This is very much a student-directed class, the professor acting as guide rather than lecturer.
Grades

Grades will be based on the following:

Weekly assignments (written discussion points based on reading assignments)  25 Points
Oral presentations (album reviews)  25 Points
Three essay exams  25 Points
Participation (attendance and class engagement)  25 Points

Scores for course grade will be tabulated as follows:

94 - 100  A
90 – 93  A-
87 – 89  B+
84 – 86  B
80 – 83  B-
77 – 79  C+
74 – 76  C
70 – 73  C-
67 – 69  D+
64 – 66  D
60 – 63  D-
0 - 59  F

Texts

Required:


Recommended, not required:

**Attendance and Class Participation**

Attendance is important in this course. Two classes may be missed without penalty, but the third and following missed classes will cause your grade to diminish by 2 percentage point each. No distinction will be made between excused and unexcused absences. If you find yourself in unusual circumstances or become persistently ill, contact the professor directly.

Furthermore, your active participation is considered mandatory at all class sessions. Distracted or disengaged (read “electronically engrossed”) behavior will be considered equivalent to an absence.

---

**Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776, [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html).

---

**Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: [http://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/](http://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/). Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: [http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>ALBUM</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>Mark Black</th>
<th>Nick Mason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Preliminaries</td>
<td>Jan. 14</td>
<td><em>Comfortably Inside Out</em></td>
<td><em>Numb</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>Saucerful of Secrets</em> (1968)</td>
<td>Jan. 28</td>
<td>Chpt. 4</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>Madcap Laughs</em> (Sid Barrett) rec. 1968, rel. 1970</td>
<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Chpt. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Atom Heart Mother</em> (1970)</td>
<td>Feb. 11</td>
<td>Chpt. 5</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>FIRST MIDTERM</td>
<td>Feb. 25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><em>Dark Side of the Moon</em> (1973)</td>
<td>Mar. 4</td>
<td>Chpt. 6</td>
<td>Chpt. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>Mar. 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>SECOND MIDTERM</td>
<td>Apr. 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM</td>
<td>Friday, May 9, 12:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


