

Fall 2013  
VKC 203  
T/Th 9:30-10:50

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Office hours by appointment

## **History 380: American Popular Culture**

### *Focus for Fall 2013: Music in American Society*

#### **Overview**

If, as some people say, “the history of a people is found in its songs,” what kind of history is found in American popular song and music more broadly? Sacred hymns and slave spirituals accompanied colonial life; patriotic ballads stoked Revolutionary passions; nineteenth-century minstrel shows entertained urban audiences; and vaudeville acts ushered in the twentieth century. Tracing the music that has accompanied American life from hymns to hip-hop is relatively straightforward, but assessing music’s social impact is trickier. Does music merely reflect history, or can it also shape history? When we view American life through the lens of music, what can we discover about the inventions and ideas, social movements, cultural debates, racial tensions, and violent conflicts that mark its history? By examining the history of American popular music from the colonial period to today, this class seeks answers to these questions.

Because developments in American popular music build on preexisting styles and materials, this class is organized as a chronological survey. Additionally, we will trace several important themes in popular music today that have their roots in earlier period. Those themes include: the distinction between “cultivate” and “vernacular” music, otherwise known as the highbrow/lowbrow divide; the practice of borrowing or appropriating existing music in order to create something new; and the development of new media for creating and disseminating music (such as printed sheet music, the phonograph, the CD and the MP3). These themes will be touchstones for the class throughout the semester, which begins by examining music from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the first half of the course, and focuses on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries after the midterm.

#### **Expectations**

This class asks historical and historiographical questions, and the reading assignments reflect those dual thrusts. We will engage in debates over American popular music has been treated as a historical source by reading secondary sources that model various approaches. As much as possible, we will use primary sources to study the history of music. These sources include readings assigned from the sourcebook, as well as listening to the music itself. Many of us listen to popular music for fun, but this class will develop the important skill of being able to listen to music attentively and discuss it critically. We will build a vocabulary to describe what we hear, and practice listening to popular music with its historical context in mind. You do not need to read music in this class, but a willingness to work on listening critically is vital.

## Required Books

Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*  
ISBN 0674390776

Judith Tick, ed. *Music in the USA: a Documentary Companion*  
ISBN: 978-0195139884

Craig Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America*  
ISBN 0-472-03147-3

*Recommended:* Richard Crawford and Larry Hamberlin, *An Introduction to America's Music*  
ISBN 978-0-393-93531-8

The required books are available at the USC bookstore. We will use the Tick sourcebook extensively beginning with the second class, so it is worth picking up a copy right away. All other reading assignments are (marked \*) on Ares, Blackboard, or are as full texts online through the USC library. A list of all the readings is at the end of the syllabus. Listening assignments are on Blackboard under the “Listening Assignments” tab.

There is no textbook for this class, but those of you who wish to consult one will find Crawford-Hamberlin *Introduction to America's Music* also available at the bookstore.

## Organization and Requirements

### Preparation

Class time will be divided between lecture and discussion. Come to class having read *and thought about* the texts assigned for that day, and be ready to share your thoughts in discussion. The same goes for the assigned listening: listen before class, preferably without multitasking. It will be much harder to have something meaningful to say about a song if you listened to it while distracted, or did not listen to it at all. This is true even with music you already know.

### Attendance

You are expected to attend every class. Not only is difficult to learn anything if you are not actually present, but the class will suffer without your contributions. You are allowed one free pass, but repeated absences will negatively affect your class participation grade. Contact me if you need special accommodations in the event of a family emergency or extended illness.

### Classroom Etiquette

Class meets for 80 minutes twice a week, which does not give us much time to cover four hundred years of music history. Being punctual and staying the entire time is both the polite thing to do and the best way to learn in this class.

Technology can be a wonderful aid to learning, but when it becomes a distraction it wastes everyone's time. Computers and tablets may be used for taking notes, but this policy will be revised if they become a distraction. No cell phone use will be permitted (including texting).

### Academic Integrity

Intellectual development requires honesty, responsibility, and doing your own work. Taking ideas or words from others—plagiarizing—is dishonest and will result in a failing grade on the paper and possibly other disciplinary actions. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me or consult USC's online “Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism” ([http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug\\_plag.htm](http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm)). For more on USC's policies about academic integrity see “The Trojan Integrity Guide”

(<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tio.pdf>).

### **Disabilities**

If you have special academic needs due to a disability you are required to register with Disability Services and Programs. Obtain a letter verifying your needs for accommodations from DSP and give me a copy soon as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. They can be reached at [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu) and (213) 740-0776.

### **Evaluation**

The goal of this class is to teach you to think critically about music's role in American history, and assignments are aimed at helping you achieve that goal. All of your work in this class will be evaluated for its accuracy, thoughtfulness, and clarity.

There are three essays for this class. They are intended to encourage you to engage with the course materials carefully and develop your capacity to think critically and express yourself clearly. Papers should be sent to me as email attachments by 9am on the day they are due. Paper grades will be lowered one level for each day they are late (e.g., a grade of B becomes a B- if one day late, a C+ if two days late, etc.).

Part one of the midterm exam and the final exam will include five paragraph-long passages taken from the readings, which you will be asked to identify and discuss critically. Part two of the mid-term exam will be one in-class essay; part two of the final exam will include two essay questions, one handed out in advance. Use of computers, tablets, and smartphones is forbidden in the exams.

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- class participation 20%
- midterm exam 10%
- final exam 25%
- first essay 10% (4-5 pages, due Sept. 17)
- second essay 15% (5-7 pages, due Oct. 29)
- third essay 20% (6-8 pages, due Dec. 17)

### **Lectures and Readings**

#### **Aug. 27: Popular music: past and present**

#### **Aug. 29: Indians, Christians, Slaves: the Music of Colonial American Societies**

Tick: Early Indigenous-European encounters; Samuel Sewell diary (3-10, 22-24)

\*Southern, "Slave Advertisements" in *Readings in Black American Music* (31-35)

#### **Sept. 3: Print, Politics, and Promoting the Revolution in Popular Song**

Tick: Colonial newspapers (41-46)

\*Goodman, "Musical Sleuthing in Early America"

#### **Sept. 5: Professionalization and Cultivated Taste in the Early Republic**

Tick: Daniel Read on pirating and "scientific music"; theater songs (73-77, 78-84)

\*Potter, *Food for Apollo* ch. 2 (34-69)

*Listening*: William Shield, "When William, at Eve"

**Sept. 10: Amateurs, Dilettantes, and the Rise of Music Education**

Tick: Boston public schools; music education for girls (145-148, 155-159)

\*Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class* chs. 1 and 5 (1-14, 117-151)

**Sept. 12: From Parlor Songs to Minstrelsy**

Tick: Thomas D. Rice (107-113)

\*Lott, *Love and Theft* chs. 2-3 (15-62)

*Listening*: Stephen Foster songs: “Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair,” “Old Folks at Home”

**Sept. 17: Antebellum Celebrities and Sensational Tours**

Tick: Minstrelsy; Barnum and Lind; Hauser, Hungarian violinist (118-122, 185-189, 190-194)

\*Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing* ch. 2 (40-74) [full text online through USC library]

*Listening*: Dan Emmett, “De Boatman’s Dance”

**FIRST ESSAY DUE 9:30am**

**Sept. 19: Music of the Civil War**

Tick: Frederick Douglass; excerpt from *Slave Songs of the United States*; Sarah Morgan diary (219-224, 229-234, 245-249)

\*W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* ch. 14 (121-129)

Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow* ch. 2 (85-168)

*Listening*: “Dixie”; “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground”

**Sept. 24: Classical Music: Americana or Cultural Nationalism?**

Tick: late 19<sup>th</sup>-c. cultural nationalism; woman composers (308-315, 320-329)

Levine ch. 3 (171-242)

*Listening*: Amy Beach, “When far from her”; Charles Ives, “The Things Our Fathers Loved”

**Sept. 26: Reconstruction’s Musical Frontiers**

Tick: Ella Sheppard Moore, Fisk Jubilee Singer (258-265)

\*Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* ch. 5 (183-223)

*Listening*: Fisk Jubilee Singers, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

**Oct. 1: The Invention of Recording Technology**

Tick: Federal Cylinder Project (357-360)

\*Thomas Edison on the phonograph; “Phonograph Debates” in *Music, Sound, and Technology in America*, eds. Taylor, Katz, and Grajeda (29-44, 122-133)

\*Kenney, *Recorded Music* chs. 2-3 (23-64) [full text online through USC library]

\*Sterne, *Audible Past* ch. 6 (287-333)

**Oct. 3: Special Collections field trip** (meet 9:30 @ Doheny Library steps)

**Oct. 8: MIDTERM EXAM**

**Oct. 10: Clubs and Dance Halls in the Modern City**

Tick: James Reese Europe (375-377)

\*Miller, *Music and Politics in San Francisco* chs. 3-4 (63-82, 92-105)

\*Vaillant, *Sounds of Reform* (184-233)  
*Listening*: Scott Joplin, “Maple Leaf Rag”; George M. Cohan, “You’re a Grand Old Flag”;  
Bert Williams, “Nobody”

**Oct. 15: The Music of New York City Streets: Broadway and Tin Pan Alley**

Tick: Irving Berlin (378-383)  
\*Kenney, *Recorded Music* ch. 5 (88-108)  
*Listening*: Al Jolson, “April Showers”; Bing Crosby, “How Deep is the Ocean”

**Oct. 17: Jazz, Regionalism, and the Rise of Record Companies**

Tick: Louis Armstrong (409-413)  
\*Kenney chs. 6-7 (109-157)  
*Listening*: Bessie Smith’s “St. Louis Blues”; Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five, “West End Blues”; Robert Johnson, “Cross Road Blues”

**Oct. 22: Music for Hard Times: Labor, Folk, and the Search for Authenticity**

Tick: Zora Neale Hurston; John and Alan Lomax; Woody Guthrie (506-509, 512-518, 519-522)  
\*Denning, *The Cultural Front* ch. 8 (283-322)  
*Listening*: Woody Guthrie, “Hard Travelin’”; Leadbelly, “Bourgeois Blues”; Gene Autry, “Dust”

**Oct. 24: Closing Ranks: Fighting for (and over) American Music**

\*Clement Greenberg, “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” (5-22)  
Tick: Gilbert Seldes on pop music; Duke Ellington and Malcolm X on swing music; Ralph Ellison on bebop (414-416, 532-543, 553-557)  
*Listening*: Glenn Miller, “In the Mood”; Count Basie, “One O’Clock Jump”; Irving Berlin, “God Bless America”

**Oct. 29: Home from the Front: Early Cold War Entertainment**

Tick: Muddy Waters (575-579)  
\*S.I. Hayakawa, “Popular Music vs. the Facts of Life” in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, eds. Rosenberg and White (393-403)  
\*Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World* chs. 1 and 3 (1-26, 58-91) [full text online]  
*Listening*: Nat “King” Cole, “Nature Boy”; Tito Puente, “El cayuco”; Hank Williams, “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry”

**SECOND ESSAY DUE 9:30am**

**Oct. 31: 1950s, Teen Culture, and the Birth of Rock ‘n’ Roll**

Tick: Elvis Presley press coverage; Chuck Berry (580-587, 588-592)  
\*Douglas, *Listening In* ch. 9 (219-255) [full text online]  
*Listening*: Big Mama Thornton, “Hound Dog”; Bill Haley & His Comets, “Shake, Rattle and Roll”; Chuck Berry, “Maybellene”; Elvis Presley, “Hound Dog”

**Nov. 5: A Change is Gonna Come: Music and the Civil Rights Movement**

Tick: Amiri Baraka (625-629)  
Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come* chs. 1-18 (3-100)

*Listening:* Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit”; Ray Charles, “What’d I Say”; The Temptations, “My Girl”; Mahalia Jackson, “Trouble of the World”

**Nov. 7: Musical Countercultures and the Shadow of Vietnam**

Tick: Bob Dylan; Janis Joplin; Charles Reich; Michael W. Rodriguez (602-604, 605-610, 636-641, 654-657)

*Listening:* Beach Boys, “I Know There’s an Answer”; Bob Dylan, “Subterranean Homesick Blues”; Jefferson Airplane, “Somebody to Love”; Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On”

**Nov. 12: Stylistic Fragmentation in the “Me” Decade**

Werner chs. 19-34 (103-191)

*Listening:* Santana, “Oye Como Va”; Sly and the Family Stone, “Family Affair”; Parliament, “Give Up the Funk”

**Nov. 14: From Rebellion to Activism: Outsider Music**

Werner chs. 35-42 (191-235)

*Listening:* New York Dolls, “Trash”; Donna Summer, “Bad Girls”; Johnny Cash, “Folsom Prison Blues”; Joan Jett, “Bad Reputation”

**Nov. 19: Postmodern Pop and early Hip Hop**

Tick: MTV; Michael Jackson; Sally Banes (814-819, 820-825, 826-829)

Werner chs. 43-53 (236-280)

*Listening:* Madonna, “Material Girl”; Prince, “Baby I’m a Star”; Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, “The Message”

**Nov. 21: [no class]**

**Nov. 26: Parental Discretion is Advised: Hip Hop’s Debates**

\*Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars* chs. 5 and 7 (113-131, 149-165) [full text online]

*Viewing:* bel hooks on rap music: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xtoanes\\_L\\_g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xtoanes_L_g)

*Listening:* Public Enemy, “Night of the Living Baseheads”; N.W.A., “Straight Outta Compton”; Salt-N-Pepa, “None of Your Business”

**Nov. 28: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**

**Dec. 3: Alternative Musics**

Werner chs. 58-64 (307-361)

*Listening:* Nirvana, “Smells Like Teen Spirit”; Pixies, “Velouria”; Lauryn Hill, “Doo Wop (That Thing)”

**Dec. 5: Who Owns Music? Music in the Digital Age**

Tick: Public Enemy on sampling; DJ Qbert; Napster (830-835, 836-838, 844-848)

\*Katz, *Capturing Sound* ch. 7 (146-176)

**December 12, 11am-1pm: FINAL EXAM**

**December 17, 9:30am: FINAL ESSAY DUE**

## Course readings

- Broyles, Michael. *"Music of the Highest Class": Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Cavicchi, Daniel. *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011.
- Deloria, Philip. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.
- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso, 1996.
- Douglas, Susan. *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- Du Bois, W. E. B.. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Goodman, Glenda. "Musical Sleuthing in Early America: 'Derry Down' and the XYZ Affair." *Common-Place*, Special Issue on Music, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2013)
- Greenberg, Clement. *The Collected essays and Criticism*, vol. 1. Ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*. Revised ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Kenney, William H.. *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Miller, Leta. *Music and Politics in San Francisco: From the 1906 quake to the Second World War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
- Potter, Dorothy T. *"Food for Apollo": Cultivated Music in Antebellum Philadelphia*. Lehigh University Press, 2011.
- Rose, Tricia. *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop—and Why It Matters*. New York: BasicCivitas, 2008.
- Rosenberg, Bernard and David Manning White, eds. *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*. Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957.
- Southern, Southern, ed. *Readings in Black American Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1983.
- Sterne, Jonathan. *Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Taylor, Timothy D., Mark Katz, and Tony Grajeda, eds. *Music, Sound, and Technology in America: a Documentary History of Early Phonograph, Cinema, and Radio*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Vaillant, Derek. *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.