

# ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC

FALL SEMESTER 2014 / W 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM  
TAPER HALL OF THE HUMANITIES, 202  
MUSC 410, 4.0 UNITS

**Instructor: Dr. Sean Nye**

Email: seannye@usc.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. in 310 MUS

**T.A.: Eric Davis**

Email: ericd@usc.edu. Office hours: By Appointment

**Description:** Electronic Dance Music (EDM) is currently experiencing an extraordinary renaissance in popular attention in the United States. This development has been both surprising and intriguing for the popular press, as well as for long-established EDM scholars and protagonists. Beyond these current developments, EDM's history – as “house/techno,” “rave,” “electronica,” etc. – spans a broader chronology from the 1970s to the present. It involves multiple intersections with the music and cultures of disco, hip hop, and reggae, among others. In this course, we will examine EDM through a dual view emerging from our present moment: (1) the history of global EDM, especially in Europe and the United States, between the 1970s and the 2000s, and (2) current EDM scenes in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and beyond. We will carefully read selections from the classic history of rave and techno culture: Simon Reynolds's *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*. We will also have special guests, including Simon Reynolds, to discuss a range of EDM practices and cultural issues.

## **Objectives:**

“Electronic Dance Music” will explore the history of EDM from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives: as scholars, journalists, fans, musicians, promoters, etc. We have diverse experiences and investments that emerge out of our respective engagements with electronic dance music. This class, as a course open to non-music majors, will attempt to enrich our experiences and critical engagement with EDM as music and culture.

Over the next fifteen weeks we will:

- [1] study the history of EDM as a contested genre, as well as genre proliferation within EDM
- [2] examine club cultures and the sociology of raves and mass events
- [3] explore the basic technologies of electronic production and DJ culture
- [4] engage issues of ideology, politics, identity, and power with respect to EDM history
- [5] develop writing skills with respect to EDM that engage scholarly and literary approaches: musicology, cultural studies, aesthetics, journalism, science fiction, etc.

## **Required Texts:**

**Books:** Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*.

**Articles:** Diverse readings posted on Blackboard.

## **Listening:**

Music examples posted weekly on Blackboard.

### Statements: A Compilation

We create out of the German language, the mother language, which is very mechanical, we use as the basic structure of our music. Also the machines, from the industries of Germany... We use tapes, prerecorded, and we play tapes, also in our performance... We don't need a choir. We just turn the key, and there's the choir.

**Kraftwerk, interview with Lester Bangs, 1975**

The popular dance, which has in part become a concert, is a release for violence that has lost its meaning. Carnival without the masks and the channeling of the tragic; in which the music is only a pretext for the noncommunication, the solitude, and the silence imposed by the sound volume and the dancing; in which even in its worldly substitute, the night club, the music prevents people from speaking – people who in any event do not want to, or cannot, speak. For them, there is already silence in repetition.

**Jacques Attali, "Repeating" chapter of *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, 1977**

An ambience is defined as an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence: a tint. My intention is to produce original pieces ostensibly (but not exclusively) for particular times and situations with a view to building up a small but versatile catalogue of environmental music suited to a wide variety of moods and atmospheres.

**Brian Eno, liner notes to *Music For Airports*, 1978**

The void that would have signified the disappearance of any culture of meaning and aesthetic sentiment.

But this is still too romantic and destructive, this void would still have had value as a masterpiece of anticulture. Perhaps revolving strobe lights and gyroscopic lights, striating the space, for which the crowd would have provided the moving base element?

**Jean Baudrillard, "The Beaubourg Effect" in *Simulacra and Simulation*, 1981**

Since the beginning of the century, when the electronic tube was developed by von Lieben in Germany and De Forest in California, it has been possible to amplify and transmit signals. Accordingly, the large media networks, which have been in existence since the thirties, have been able to fall back on all three storage media--writing, film, and photography--to link up and send their signals at will.

**Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1986**

In the beginning, there was Jack, and Jack had a groove. And from this groove came the groove of all grooves. And while one day viciously throwing down on his box, Jack boldly declared, "Let there be HOUSE!" and house music was born. "I AM, you see, I am the creator, and this is my house! And, in my house there is ONLY house music. But, I am not so selfish because once you enter my house it then becomes OUR house and OUR house music!"... Jack is the one that can bring nations of all Jackers together under one house. You may be black; you may be white; you may be Jew or Gentile. It don't make a difference in OUR house. And this is fresh.

**Rhythm Controll, "My House," 1987**

**Fingers Inc. Feat. Chuck Roberts, "Can You Feel It?" 1988**

Put on my raving shoes, and I boarded the plane. Touched down in a land where the skies look blue, in the middle of the pouring rain. Everybody was happy, ecstasy shining down on me. Yeah, I've got a first class ticket. Feel as good as a boy can be. I'm raving, I'm raving. I'm raving till the sweat just pours down off me. I'm raving, I'm raving. But do I really feel the way I feel?

**Shut Up and Dance, Feat. Peter Dinklage, "Raving I'm Raving," 1992**

Sonic Fiction strands you in the present with no way of getting back to the 70s. Sonic Fiction is the first stage of a reentry program which grasps this very clearly. Sonic Fictions are part of modern music's MythSystems. Moving through living space, real-world environments that are already alien.

**Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than the Sun*, 1998**

### **Administrative Guidelines and Resources:**

**Attendance:** Students should notify the instructor prior to an anticipated absence. Students should provide written confirmation to verify that an unanticipated absence was due to health or personal reasons (i.e., a doctor's note, a notification from an athletic director or coach, etc.). Other absences will be considered unexcused. Students with written verification for absences from individuals such as a medical professional, a coach, or a military official will receive credit for missed, in-class activities; students without written verification will not receive credit. Written verification from parents, guardians, or roommates will not be accepted. Students are encouraged to consult with their peers to secure notes for missed classes.

*Any student who accumulates more than three absences will earn an "F" for the course.*

**Plagiarism:** As defined in the University Student Conduct Code (published in each year's edition of SCampus), plagiarism includes:

- "The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form;"
- "The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;" and
- "Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers." (§11.11)

**Work Missed Before the Drop Deadline:** Students who miss class work or examinations prior to the drop deadline should be told by the instructor that they must complete the work before the end of the semester or they must withdraw by the deadline (end of the twelfth week or 12th week equivalent for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks); the student may not be assigned a grade of IN if the missing work in a semester occurred prior to the drop deadline and is not made up by the end of the semester. If a student misses earlier work but otherwise completes the course, the weighted grade for work completed is to be assigned, with the missing work counting as zero.

**Unofficial Withdrawal before the Drop Deadline** (End of the twelfth week or twelfth week equivalent for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks) If a student stops attending before the end of the twelfth week (or twelfth week equivalent for any course scheduled for less than 15 weeks) of a semester, the appropriate grade is UW.

**Unofficial Withdrawal after the Drop Deadline** (End of the twelfth week): If a student stops attending during the final examination period and does not contact the instructor, the appropriated weighted grade should be assigned, with the work not done counting as zero. A grade of MG (missing grade) should not be assigned. If it is later learned that the student had a documented bona fide illness or emergency and was unable to contact the instructor prior to the final, the instructor should use the Correction of Grade Process to change the grade to IN.

**Disability Accommodation:** In cases where a student with a disability requires time beyond the normal end of the semester as part of his/her legal accommodation as determined by the Disability Services and Programs Office (DSP), a mark of IP will be assigned by the registrar before the end of the semester, and a final letter grade will be awarded by the faculty member by the date in the accommodation contract prepared by the faculty, student and the DSP staff. The contract will specify the work to be completed and the date by which the work is to be done.

The DSP staff will facilitate and monitor this process and remind both the student and the faculty member of the deadline for the completion of the work and submission of the grade. If the student fails to complete the specified work by the deadline, he/she will receive credit only for the earlier work completed by the deadline, and the final letter grade will reflect the absence of the work specified in the accommodation contract.

**Assessment and Assignments:**

**Course Assessment (i.e., Grading):** Final grades for the course will be calculated based on a point system. There are two hundred points possible for the course. Students earn grades based on the number of points as outlined below. Final point totals, as divided by two, will be equivalent to a letter grade.

<b>Letter Grades:</b>	100-94	A	76-74	C
	93-90	A-	73-70	C-
	89-87	B+	69-67	D+
	86-84	B	66-64	D
	83-80	B-	63-60	D-
	79-77	C+	59-0	F

- A** - Achievement that is excellent relative to the level necessary to meet requirements.
- B** - Achievement that is good relative to the level necessary to meet requirements.
- C** - Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
- D** - Achievement worthy of credit even though it fails to meet course requirements.
- CR** - Achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better.
- F (or NC)** - Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed.
- I** - *Incompletes will not be allowed for this course.*

“MUSC 410: EDM” consists of three primary practices of writing: an academic research essay, blog assignments, and in-class short responses for participation.

**Essay:** Students will complete one 5-7 page essay over the course of the semester; it will be due on November 13<sup>th</sup>. The essay must be doubled-spaced, written in twelve-point Times font, and printed on standard (eight and one-half by eleven inch) paper. Students should follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) style in formatting their papers, paying special attention to issues of margin width, citation style, and layout. Students should cite *Energy Flash* and one original academic source. For MLA style, see:

<http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=19123&sid=133048>

See also a popular and thorough site on MLA style offered by Purdue University:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

**Blogs:** MUSC 410 EDM incorporates significant small-group experiences. Following the second week of class (the introductory and general cancel/add period), you will have access to an **online blog** throughout the remainder of the term. I expect the blog to constitute a space for students to interact on an engaged, committed basis. After the second week of classes, you’ll receive information regarding accessing the blog and instructions about the assignments/issues that will organize the discussions, though this will not be a replacement for class discussion. The instructor and T.A. will not comment on entries in the blog; we will only assign grades. We will also offer a general forum for people to offer postings and links.

**Blog Conduct:** While debate is encouraged, blog discussions in this course should always be carried out with professional and personal respect for your fellow colleagues and students.

<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>	<b>FINAL DUE</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
Participation and Attendance	-	30
Blog 1	Sept. 17	5
Blog 2	Sept. 24	5
Blog 3	Oct. 8	5
Blog 4	Oct. 29	5
Essay (5-7 pages)	Nov. 12	50
Midterm	Oct. 15	50
Final	Dec. 10	50
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>

**Late Assignments:** All assignments are to be completed according to the due dates provided in this course syllabus. For full potential points, a student must submit a copy of the essay in class to the instructor on the day it is due. *Assignments will not be accepted via email. **Late blogs will not receive credit.***

Essays received after the date due will be accepted as follows:

- If received within 24 hours from the due date, **10%** will be deducted from the final points possible for that assignment.
- If received after 24 hours, an addition **20%** will be deducted for each day.
- Absolutely no late assignments will be accepted after the last day of the course.

### **Resources for Student Writers**

**The Writing Center:** <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/> The Writing offers face-to-face consulting for *all* University of Southern California students working on any writing project. Consulting is available by appointment. Two non-native speaker specialists and two history specialists are on staff.

**Non-Native Speakers:** The Writing Center also offers support for non-native speakers. See details at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writing-center/>

**Music Library:** Housed in the historic Doheny Library, the Music Library exists to serve the needs of Thornton student, housing more than 90,000 items. In addition to an extensive collection of monographs, scores, scholarly journals, audio and visual recordings and reference materials. The Music Library also includes EDM books and collections of electronic music, techno, trip hop, and other popular music recordings. See further details here:

<http://www.usc.edu/libraries/locations/music/>

For information on music holdings, contact:  
Stephanie Bonjack  
Music Library.  
bonjack@usc.edu

**EDM Websites/Resources (a selection):**

Discogs.com  
Dancecult.net  
Rocksbackpages.com  
Residentadvisor.com  
Edm.com  
Thewire.co.uk

**EDM BIBLIOGRAPHY (a selection):**

Brewster and Broughton. *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey.*  
Butler, Mark. *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music.*  
Collin, Matthew. *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House.*  
Cope, Julian. *Krautrock sampler.*  
Cox, Christoph and Daniel Warner, Eds. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music.*  
Demers, Joanna. *Listening through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music.*  
Fickentscher, Kai. *You Better Work. Underground Dance Music in New York City.*  
Gilbert and Pearson. *Discographies: Dance Music, Culture, and the Politics of Sound.*  
Miller, Paul D. aka. DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid. *Rhythm Science.*  
Redhead, Steve, Ed. *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings in Popular Culture.*  
Sicko, Dan. *Techno Rebels: The Renegades of Electro Funk.*  
Silcott, Mireille. *Rave America: New School Dancescapes.*  
St. John, Graham, Ed. *The Local Scenes and Global Cultures of Psytrance.*  
Toop, David. *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound, and Imaginary Worlds.*

**EDM FILMOGRAPHY (a selection):**

**EDM Documentaries**

*Modulations: History of Electronic Dance Music*  
*Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany (BBC)*  
*High Tech Soul: The Creation of Techno Music*  
*Pump Up The Volume: The History of House Music*  
*Summer of Rave, 1989 (BBC)*  
*We Call It Techno: A Documentary About Germany's Early Techno Scene and Culture*  
*The Last Angel of History (Afrofuturism and music)*

**EDM Features Films**

*Trainspotting*  
*Run Lola Run*  
*Human Traffic*  
*Groove*  
*Go*  
*24 Hour Party People*  
*It's All Gone, Pete Tong*  
*Berlin Calling*

**PLEASE NOTE:** Students should bring a print copy of *Energy Flash* (EF), as well as required readings from Blackboard (BB), to class every week.

<b>Week One</b>	<b>Introduction:</b>
Aug. 27 <sup>th</sup>	EDM as music, culture, and history Review syllabus and academic research
<b>Week Two</b>	<b>Histories 1: Germany, Electronic Music, and the 1970s</b>
Sept. 3 <sup>th</sup>	Kraftwerk, Drugs, and American Encounters <i>BB:</i> Lester Bangs, “Kraftwerkfeature” <i>EF:</i> xi-xxxvii – “Preface to the Updated Edition,” “Intro,” and “Prologue: Everything Starts with An E.”
<b>Week Three</b>	<b>Histories 2: Detroit, Chicago, New York... and England</b>
Sept. 10 <sup>th</sup>	Post-Disco Histories <i>EF:</i> 1-33, 34-68 – “A Tale of Three Cities” and “Living a Dream: Acid House and UK Rave.”
<b>Week Four</b>	<b>Histories 3: Britain, Belgium, and Hardcore</b>
Sept. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Extreme Sounds and Excess <i>EF:</i> 95-133, *187-202 – “Ardkore, You Know the Score” and “Slipping into Darkness.”
<b>Week Five</b>	<b>Culture 1: Performers, Identity, and Science Fiction</b>
Sept. 24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Guest speaker: Zel McCarthy (Editor-in-Chief, <i>Thump</i>)</b> <i>BB:</i> Ken McLeod, “Space Oddities: Aliens, Futurism and Meaning in Popular Music” <i>BB:</i> Kodwo Eshun, 78-85 <i>BB:</i> selected reading from <i>Thump</i>
<b>Week Six</b>	<b>Culture 2: Arts of Listening and Dance</b>
Oct. 1 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>EF:</i> 155-86 “Feed Your Head: Intelligent Techno, Ambient, and Trance” <i>BB:</i> Kai Fikentscher, “The Dancers: Working (It) Out”
<b>Week Seven</b>	<b>Culture 3: Rave Sociology / Club Cultures</b>
Oct. 8 <sup>th</sup>	<i>BB:</i> Madison Moore, “Looks: Studio 54 and the Production of Fabulous Nightlife” <i>BB:</i> Sheena Hyndman, “Dance Floors of the Mind: Performing Nightlife Research during the Day.” <i>BB:</i> Sarah Thornton, Introduction, <i>Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital</i> .
<b>Week Eight</b>	
Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MIDTERM</b>

<b>Week Nine</b>	<b>Scenes 1: American Rave Culture: Underground to EDM</b>
Oct. 22 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Guest speaker: Simon Lamb (COO, Insomniac)</b> EF: 274-312 – “America the Rave: US Rave Culture, 1990-97.” BB: “Clubbing in Los Angeles” and selections.
<b>Week Ten</b>	<b>Scenes 2: Halloween Pre-Party – Horror and Hardcore</b>
Oct. 29 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Guest speaker: Simon Reynolds (author of <i>Energy Flash</i>)</b> Jungle, Hardcore, and Beyond EF: 237-54, 335-63 – “Roots n’ Future: Jungle Takes over London” and “War in the Jungle: Intelligent Drum & Bass vs. Techstep”
<b>Week Eleven</b>	<b>Scenes 3: Art and Minimalism</b>
Nov. 5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Guest speaker: Frank Bretschneider (Berlin-based music producer and video artist)</b> BB: “Raster-Noton” feature in <i>The Wire</i> BB: Mark J. Butler, “(In)Visible Mediators: Urban Mobility, Interface Design, and the Disappearing Computer in Berlin-Based Laptop Performances” *BB: Sean Nye, “Minimal Understandings: The Berlin Decade, The Minimal Continuum, and Debates on the Legacy of German Techno”
<b>Week Twelve</b>	<b>Future Traditions 1: EDM Technologies and Legacies</b>
Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup>	EF: 363-79 “Digital Psychedelia: Sampling and the Soundscape.” BB: Anna Gavanas and Rosa Reitsamer: “DJ Technologies, Social Networks and Gendered Trajectories in European DJ Cultures” BB: selected posts <b>ESSAY DUE IN CLASS</b>
<b>Week Thirteen</b>	<b>Future Traditions 2: Fin de Millennium and the Noughties</b>
Nov. 19 <sup>th</sup>	EF: 415-432, 433-45, *476-87 – “Outro: Nineties House, Speed Garage, and Big Beat,” “Trance Mission,” and “Back to the Future: Retro-Electro, Nu-Wave, and the Eighties Revival.” BB: selected posts
<b>Week Fourteen</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
Nov. 26 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>Week Fifteen</b>	<b>Future Traditions 3: Looking Back and Forward</b>
Dec. 3 <sup>th</sup>	EF: 488-517 “Crisis and Consolidation: An Overview of Rave Culture’s Second Decade” BB: selected posts
<b>Finals Week</b>	
	<b>FINAL</b>

## Course Calendar Overview

<b>August</b>	
27 <sup>th</sup>	
<b>September</b>	
3 <sup>th</sup>	
10 <sup>th</sup>	
17 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Blog 1</b>
24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Blog 2</b>
<b>October</b>	
1 <sup>st</sup>	
8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Blog 3</b>
15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>MIDTERM</b>
22 <sup>nd</sup>	
29 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Blog 4</b>
<b>November</b>	
5 <sup>th</sup>	
12 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Essay</b>
19 <sup>th</sup>	
26 <sup>th</sup>	<b>No class.</b>
<b>December</b>	
3 <sup>rd</sup>	
Finals week	<b>FINAL (Dec. 10)</b>