# Iconic Figures of Popular Music: The Doors

Fall 2014

Course no. MUSC 424

Section no. 47229R

Units: 2

Time: Wednesday 12:00-1:50pm

Room: UUC B3

Course instructor: Bill Biersach

Instructor’s office: MUS 316

Instructor’s office hours: MW 9 – 9:50 am; 2 – 3:30 pm

Office phone: (213) 740-7416

Instructor’s email: [biersach@usc.edu](mailto:biersach@usc.edu)

# The Premise

The Doors are considered to be one of the most controversial rock bands of the 1960s, mainly due to singer Jim Morrison’s wild lyrics and unpredictable stage persona, but also because of their unique instrumentation (keyboards, guitar, drums, but no bass player) and myriad musical influences from flamenco to jazz to ragtime. The terms “psychedelic rock,” “acid rock,” “hard blues rock” and “stale bourbon and cigarette butt blues” have all been applied to their albums without dispute, though “dark” is perhaps the most pervasive adjective. Although Morrison died in 1971 and the remaining group disbanded two years later, they have sold more than 30 million albums in the United States in the intervening years, and three times that worldwide. These numbers are astounding when one considers that the band only recorded six studio albums while their lead singer was alive. Jim Morrison’s assessment of himself, the band, and their music went as follows:

“Expose yourself to your deepest fear; after that, fear has no power, and the fear of freedom shrinks and vanishes. You are free.”

# Course Goal

In this seminar we will scrutinize the output of the Doors from the standpoint of lyrics, stylistic influences, philosophical influences, instrumentation, performance and production. We will focus, not on the professor’s opinions and reactions (based on his memories of the sixties), but those of the students (raised in the present culture). To this end, students will be assigned songs to research and for which to prepare presentations to be given when we arrive at them chronologically. Students who are keyboardists, guitarists, and drummers will be encouraged to demonstrate the licks and riffs of the band members (although proficiency with an instrument is not a requirement to take the course). In the end it is hoped that each student will leave with an enhanced appreciation not only for music of this group but for the dynamics of the thought behind it.

# Grades

Grades will be based on the following:

Weekly assignments (written discussion points based

on the texts) 20 Points

Oral presentations (album reviews) 20 Points

First midterm exam 20 Points

Second midterm exam 20 Points

Final exam 20 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:**

Densmore, John. *Riders on the Storm: My Life with Jim Morrison and the Doors.* Delacorte Press, New York. 1990.

Hopkins, Jerry, and Sugerman, Danny. *No One Here Gets Out Alive*. Warner Books, New York. 1980.

**Recommended, not required:**

Kubernik, Harvey. *Canyon of Dreams: The Magic and the Music of Laurel Canyon*. Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 2009.

Manzarek, Ray. *Light My Fire: My Life with The Doors*. Berkley Trade, San Francisco. 1999.

# 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. Website and contact information for DSP: <http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html>,

(213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

# 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, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or [http://scampus.usc.edu](http://scampus.usc.edu/)) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

# Emergency Preparedness in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

**Schedule of Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments**

Hopkins/ Densmore

Sugarman

NO ONE HERE RIDERS ON

WEEK TOPIC DATE GETS OUT ALIVE THE STORM

1. Preliminaries Aug. 27

2. *The Doors* (1967) Sept. 3 Forward, Chpts. 1-3 Chpts. 1-5

3. *The Doors* (1967) Sept. 10 Chpt. 4 Chpts. 6-8

Sept. 12 – Last Day to Drop, Add, Etc.

4. *Strange Days* (1967) Sept. 17 Chpt. 5 Chpt. 9

5. *Strange Days* (1967) Sept. 24 —— Chpt. 10

**6. First Midterm Oct. 1** —— ——

7. *Waiting for the Sun* (1968) Oct. 8 Chpt. 6-7 Chpt. 11-12

8. *Waiting for the Sun* (1968) Oct. 15 Chpt. 8 Chpt. 13

*Soft Parade* (1969)

9. *Soft Parade* (1969) Oct. 22 —— Chpt. 14

10. **Second Midterm** **Oct. 29** —— ——

11. Morrison Motel (1970) Nov. 5 Chpt. 9 Chpts. 15-16

12. Morrison Motel (1970)Nov. 12 — Chpt. 17

Nov. 14 – Last Day to Drop with “W”

13. 07 L.A. Woman (1971) Nov. 19 Chpt. 10 Chpt. 18

14. Holiday holidy Nov. 26 —— ——

15. 07 L.A. Woman (1971) Dec 3 Chpt. 11-12 Chpt. 19-22

& Afterward & Afterward

16. **Final Exam Dec. 12 11 am. – 1 pm.**

# Bibliography (books consulted while creating this course)

Brackett, David. *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*. Oxford University Press, New York. 2009.

Brandelius, Jerilyn Lee. *Grateful Dead Family Album*. Warner Books, New York. 1989.

Charlton, Katherine. *Rock Music Styles: A History*. Sixth edition. McGraw Hill, New York. 2011.

Courier, Kevin. *Dangerous Kitchen: The Subversive World of Frank Zappa*. ECW Press, Toronto. 2002.

Corvach, John, and Flory, Andrew. *What’s That Sound? An Introduction to Rock and It’s History.* Third edition. Norton and Company, New York. 2012

Dodd, David (annotated by). The Complete Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics. Free Press, New York. 2005.

Editors of Billboard. *Rock Movers and Shakers*. Billboard Publications, New York. 1989.

Editors of Rolling Stone. *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll*. Rolling Stone Press, New York. 1981.

Garfalo, Reebee. *Rockin’ Out: Popular Music in the USA.* Fourth edition. Prentiss Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ. 2008.

Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. Bantam Books, New York. 1987.

Greenfield, Robert. *Dark Star: An Oral Biography of Jerry Garcia.* It Books, New York, 2009. ISBN 13: 978-0061715723 (Pbk.).

Jackson, Blair. *Grateful Dead Gear*. Backbeat Books, San Francisco, 2006. ISBN 13: 978-0-87930-893-3. (Pbk.).

Kubernick, Harvey. *Canyon of Dreams: The Magic and the Music of Laurel Canyon*. Sterling, New York. 2009.

Larson, Thomas E. *History of Rock & Roll*. Dubuque; Kendall Hunt, 2012.

Lesh, Phil. Searching for the Sound: *My Life with the Grateful Dead*. Back Bay Books, New York, 2005. ISBN 13: 978-0-316-15449-9 (Pbk.).

McNally, Dennis. *A Long Strange Trip: The Inside History of the Grateful Dead*. Broadway Books, New York, 2002. ISBN: 0-7679-1186-5 (Pbk.).

Pattison, Robert. *The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism.* Oxford University Press, New York. 1981.

Schloss, Joseph G., Starr, Larry; and Waterman, Christopher. *Rock Music, Culture, and Business*. Oxford University Press, New York. 2012.

Skully, Rock. *Living with the Dead: Twenty Years on the Bus with Garcia and the Grateful Dead.* Cooper Square Press, New York, 2001. ISBN: 0-8154-1163-4 (Pbk.).

Neil Slaven. *Electric Don Quixote: The Definitive Story of Frank Zappa*. Omnibus Press, London. 2003

Taruskin, Richard, and Gibbs, Christopher H. *The Oxford History of Western Music*. College edition. Oxford University Press, New York. 2013.