

# ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC

SPRING 2016 / TUESDAYS 6:00 PM – 9:50 PM  
TAPER HALL OF THE HUMANITIES, 202  
MUSC 410, 4.0 UNITS

**Instructor: Dr. Sean Nye**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3–5 p.m. in 305 MUS

**Description:** In this decade, Electronic Dance Music (EDM) has experienced an extraordinary renaissance in the United States, both in terms of music and festival culture. This development has not only surprised and fascinated the popular press, but also long-established EDM scholars and protagonists. Some have gone so far as to claim that EDM is the music of the Millennial Generation. Beyond these current developments, EDM's history – as disco, 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 hip-hop and reggae, among others.

In this course, we will examine EDM through a dual perspective 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 and beyond.

To address this perspective, we will carefully read from Simon Reynolds's classic history of rave culture, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*. Additional readings will include selections from a newly published history of American EDM, Michaelangelo Matos's *The Underground is Massive: How Electronic Dance Music Conquered America*. We will also have guest speakers to discuss a range of EDM cultural practices and issues.

## **Objectives:**

As a course open to non-music majors, this class will attempt to enrich our experiences and critical engagement with EDM. It will explore club and dance history from multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives: as scholars, journalists, musicians, fans, etc. We have diverse experiences that emerge out of our engagements with EDM.

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 culture, debates about drugs, and the sociology of raves and mass events
- [3] explore the basic technologies of electronic production and DJ culture
- [4] engage issues of gender, sexuality, class, and race with respect to EDM history
- [5] develop writing skills that engage scholarly approaches to EDM

## **Required Texts:**

### **Books:**

- (1) Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*.

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

**Course Requirements:**

The class will be run in a lecture format, but you are also expected to keep up with weekly reading assignments and listening materials. In-class activities will include group work, discussion, and brief written responses. There will be five quizzes and two essays in this course. Please note: the *Blackboard* website will contain additional readings as well as a weekly listing of EDM tracks.

**Assessment and Assignments:**

**Grading:**

You will be graded on the following items:

- five quizzes (see guidelines below in the syllabus): **each worth 10%** of the class grade. Four quizzes will be administered during class meetings, and one will take place during the Final Exam meeting specified by the university. Of these five possible quizzes, your **four highest grades** will count toward your grade.
- two essays, **each worth 20%** of your class grade. These are to be written outside of class and submitted (on paper) to me in class. No late essays will be accepted for any reason short of a **serious, documented medical emergency**. A doctor's note explaining why you were unable to write the essay will be required for any extension to the due date.
- participation: **worth 20%** of your class grade. To receive full credit, you must attend class regularly, participate constructively in class discussions, and turn in brief written responses during class. It is your responsibility to make sure that you attend class consistently.

Grading is as follows:

90-100% = A  
80-89% = B  
70-79% = C  
65-69% = D  
below 65 = F

Pluses and minuses are as follows: B+ means 87 through 89; A- means 90 through 93, etc.

**How to Access Reading and Listening Materials:**

The syllabus and additional readings are available on Blackboard: <https://blackboard.usc.edu>  
Our library does not own recordings for most of the assigned listening, but they are easily streamed on Spotify or Apple Music, or available on YouTube.

**Essays:**

You will submit two (2) essays during the semester. Each essay should contain between 1000 and 1200 words, and will reflect on EDM music and culture. The essays are not research assignments. Instead, you will focus on critical and aesthetic interpretations with information gleaned from the assigned readings.

### **Statement for 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](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX), [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

### **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

#### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/files/2015/08/SCampus-2015-16.pdf>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

#### **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

#### **Resources for Student Writers**

**The Writing Center:** <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/> The Writing Center 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/>

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

Discogs.com  
Dancecult.net  
Residentadvisor.com  
Pitchfork.com  
Thump.vice.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*

**MUSC 410m (Electronic Dance Music)  
Quiz Guidelines**

Five quizzes will be administered throughout the semester. All quiz dates are announced in the Class Schedule of the Syllabus. **Your four highest quiz grades will be kept; your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.**

Format: Each quiz will be distributed on paper. There is no need to bring your own paper or blue books, but you will need to bring your own writing implement (pen or pencil).

The quiz could ask you to:

- listen to and comment on a track played during the quiz period,
- answer questions relating to material covered in lecture,
- answer questions pertaining to an assigned reading.

How much do I write?:

Good responses are often no longer than one page in length, but there are no minimum or maximum length guidelines. Be succinct, not flowery.

How to study: If you attend lecture regularly and study your lecture notes, and if you complete the required readings on time, you will be more than adequately prepared to write excellent answers. What counts is that you can demonstrate some knowledge of stylistic traits, accurate historical/cultural context, and musical characteristics in EDM, **given what we have covered in class.**

Scheduling: Quizzes will be administered on the following dates:

- 2 February
- 23 February
- 29 March
- 19 April
- Finals week (7:00pm, THH 202)

Make-ups

If you do not attend lecture the day that any quizzes are scheduled, you will be allowed to make it up only if your absence were due to one of the following reasons:

- a documented illness (doctor's or health clinic's note required)
- a USC-affiliated sports event (coach's letter required; you must give me one week of advance notice)
- observance of a religious holiday (you must give me one week of advance notice)

No make-ups will be permitted for students who miss any quizzes due to Greek events, work, other class events (i.e., labs), etc.

Grade Rubric

Quizzes will be graded on a ten-point scale.

An “A” (i.e., 9 or 10) quiz will do the following:

- demonstrate that you have truly read and understood the arguments of assigned readings that pertain to your quiz prompt
- demonstrate that you have thought about the assigned listening and are able to draw on examples from it to discuss various facets of EDM
- show clear organization, not just stream-of-consciousness ordering
- succeed in answering or addressing all facets of the quiz prompt in a satisfactory manner

A “B” quiz (i.e., 8) will do the following:

- succeed in answering or addressing all facets of the quiz prompt
- shows some familiarity with the assigned reading and listening, but not enough to make the response totally convincing
- shows adequate, but not crystalline, organization

A “C” quiz (i.e., 7) will do the following:

- address some of the quiz prompt, but not all of it to be considered a complete response
- does not draw on enough examples from assigned reading or listening to prove the argument
- lacks clear organization; wanders from idea to idea with no real thread

“D” and “F” quizzes (i.e., 6 and below) will do the following:

- ignore the quiz prompt, or address issues not raised in the prompt
- fail to draw on any assigned reading or listening
- be so short as not to count as adequate responses

Schedule and Assignments:

(NB: all reading and listening assignments should be completed \*by\* the date listed, not after)

Students should bring a print copy of *Energy Flash* (EF) or chapters from *The Underground is Massive* (UM) and required readings from Blackboard (BB) to class every week.

**12 January:** Introduction to EDM as music, culture, and history  
Review syllabus and academic research

**19 January:** Disco and Dance Culture

Reading:

EF: xi-xxxvii – “Preface to the Updated Edition,” “Intro,” and “Prologue: Everything Starts with An E.”

BB: Peter Shapiro: “Disco” in *Modulations*.

Screening in class:

*The Joy of Disco*

**26 January:** Kraftwerk and Krautrock

Reading:

BB: Lester Bangs, “Kraftwerkfeature.”

BB: Krautrock reading selections.

Screening in class:

*Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany*

**2 February:** Techno, House, and Garage

**QUIZ #1**

Reading:

EF: 1-33, “A Tale of Three Cities.”

Screening in class:

*Detroit: The Blue Print of Techno*

*Pump Up the Volume: The History of House Music* (part 1)

**9 February:** Rave Culture and Britain

Reading:

EF: 34-68, “Living a Dream: Acid House and UK Rave.”

Screening in class:

*Pump Up the Volume: The History of House Music* (part 2)

**16 February:** Hardcore (Britain, Belgium, Germany)

Reading:

EF: 95-133, "Ardkore, You Know the Score."

Screening in class:

*Pump Up the Volume: The History of House Music* (part 3)

**23 February:** Arts of Listening and Dance

**QUIZ #2**

Reading:

EF: 155-86, "Feed Your Head: Intelligent Techno, Ambient, and Trance."

EF: 203-23, "The Future Sound of Detroit: Underground Resistance, +8, and Carl Craig."

**1 March:** Rave Sociology and Club Cultures

**ESSAY #1**

Reading:

BB: Sarah Thornton, "Introduction" to *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*.

BB: Kai Fikentscher, "The Dancers: Working (It) Out."

Screening in class:

*Eden* (2014)

**8 March:** American Rave Culture

Reading:

EF: 274-312, "America The Rave: US Rave Culture, 1990-97"

UM: 45-64, "Stranger Than Fiction"

**15 March: Spring Break**

**22 March:** Jungle and Early Rave Culture

Reading:

EF: "Roots 'n Future: Jungle Takes over London"

UM: 205-26, "Organic '96"

**29 March:** EDM USA

**QUIZ #3**

Reading:

UM: 313-65, "Coachella" and "Electric Daisy Carnival"

*BB*: “Clubbing in Los Angeles”

**5 April**: Gender and DJs

**ESSAY #2**

Reading:

*EF*: 459-75, “In the Mix: DJ Culture and Remixology”

*BB*: Anna Gavanoas and Rosa Reitsamer: “DJ Technologies, Social Networks and Gendered Trajectories in European DJ Cultures”

**12 April**: EDM Culture Today

Reading:

*EF*: 415-432, “Outro: Nineties House, Speed Garage, and Big Beat.”

*UM*: 367-82, “Random Access Memories.”

**19 April**: *Fin de Millennium* and the 2000s

**QUIZ #4**

Reading:

*EF*: 401-14, “In Our Angelhood: Rave Culture as Spiritual Revolution”

*EF*: 433-45, “Trance Mission”

**26 April** Looking Back and Forward

Readings:

*EF*: 488-517, “Crisis and Consolidation: An Overview of Rave Culture’s Second Decade”

*BB*: Burial, Unedited Interview for *The Wire*.

**FINAL EXAM (5<sup>th</sup> QUIZ), THH 202, 7:00-9:00 PM**

## Course Calendar Overview

<b>January</b>	
12	
19	
26	
<b>February</b>	
2	<b>Quiz 1</b>
9	
16	
23	<b>Quiz 2</b>
<b>March</b>	
1	<b>Essay 1</b>
8	
15	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
22	
29	<b>Quiz 3</b>
<b>April</b>	
5	<b>Essay 2</b>
12	
19	<b>Quiz 4</b>
26	
<b>MAY</b>	
Finals week	<b>FINAL – Quiz 5</b>