MUSC 250 The Music of Black Americans

Fall Semester 2019

**Dr. Ronald C. McCurdy,** Professor Grader/TA: Taya Hardy

Course Hours: M-W, 2:00-3:50p.m. Email: thardy@usc.edu

Office Hours: W 12:00p.m. -1:50p.m.

Office Phone: (213) 821-2301 Grader/TA: Astrid Kayembe

E-mail: rmccurdy@usc.edu Email: kayembe@usc.edu

# Course Description

This course will examine and chronicle the musical contributions of African Americans who came to this country as Indentured Servants in 1619 and later enslaved Africans in the 17th Century. Emerging from the degradation and atrocities of slavery, the enslaved Africans were able to create a “song” that would have a profound impact on how we disseminate and digest music today. Although musical contributions by African Americans will be the primary focus of this class, it will be necessary to discuss and examine the social, economic, religious, political and technological variables that helped with the proliferation of the music. This listening and study will be leavened with many investigations of the content and style of the music and its relationship to society.

Ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax stated, “As we live, so do we sing.” Those words have never been more applicable to the plight of the enslaved African. We will examine a variety of musical genres beginning with the music of West Africa and moving to Plantations songs (spirituals, work songs), Ethiopian Minstrelsy, music of the Mississippi Delta, Blues, Ragtime, Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, Art Music and Rap. As we examine the various genres we will need to identify some of the individuals who were instrumental in shaping the landscape of what became American Music. Such figures as Master Juba, Francis Johnson, Newport Gardner, Richard Allen, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Mary Lou Williams, Robert Johnson, Ma Rainey, Thomas A. Dorsey, Marian Anderson, William Grant Still, Stevie Wonder, James Brown and Tupac will be discussed. All of these individuals helped to shape and define the African Diaspora in America. All of the musical innovations and opportunities experienced by the African and later African Americans were tempered by social, political, economic and religious variables.

This course will also consider the global impact African Americans have had on the direction and influences of various musical styles and the economic force it has had on the global economy**.** The diversity dimensions for this course will be *Race, Religion and Gender*. This will be the reoccurring theme throughout the semester as we examine the various developments and musical contributions of African Americans.

**Texts:** Southern, Eileen. The Music of Black Americans (1997)

**Book Report Readings: (**Three mandatory book readings of your choice)

They Came in Chains: Americans from Africa by J. Saunders Redding

Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880 by W.E.B. Du Bois

Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America by Mary S. Campbell

The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church by Michael W. Harris

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration by Isabel Wilkerson

When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down   
by Joan Morgan

The African Slave Trade by Basil Davidson

Ar'n't I A Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South by Deborah Gray White

American Slavery: 1619-1877 by Peter Kolchin

The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color Among African Americans   
by Kathy Russell

Beyond Category: The Life And Genius Of Duke Ellington by John Hasse

Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday by Angela Y. Davis

The Negro in American Culture Margaret Just Butcher

In A Minor Chord. by Dawin T.Turner

The New Negro by Alain LeRoy Locke

Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 by Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore

Harlem: Negro Metropolis by Claude McKay

**Course Objectives:**

* Analysis: This course will introduce a broad knowledge of the musical styles that comprise music of the African Diaspora. Additionally, students will gain basic tools for analyzing music through listening. Although no prior musical training or knowledge is required, students will develop an understanding of the social, political, economic and religious variables that influenced the music.
* Making: In an effort connect the social and political dots, (depending on the student’s musical or poetic prowess), some class members will have the opportunity to engage in crafting poems that will be converted into a rap lyric. Students will be given a social or political topic to use as a source for their creative material.
* Connectivity: This class will focus on the evolution of Black music beginning with primarily the music of West Africa through early religious styles (Spirituals/Gospel), Blues, Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, Soul and Rap. Students will be challenged to develop a greater understanding of how race, ethnicity, class and gender impacted each genre.
* Context: Students will develop conceptual tools to link these studies to other coursework and situations.
* Engagement: Students will attend two “live” concerts in or around USC. Additionally, students will engage in analytical listening and will write a summary of the concert.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**

Six (6) requirements for the course grades will be determined by the following:

(1) Class participation (discussion, writings-Top Hat) (5%)

(2) Oral presentation (10%)

(3) Mid-term Exam (20%)

(4) Final exam (20%)

(5) Research paper (20%)

(6) Listening exams and quizzes (10%)

## Class Mechanics:

A. **Research Paper Guidelines**

Students must submit a 10-page, typed and double-spaced research paper covering one of the following topics: 1) a comparative analysis of two different styles (e.g. gospel vs. spirituals, stride piano vs. ragtime, New Orleans Jazz vs. Chicago Jazz, Urban blues vs. Classic blues); 2) historical survey of a particular instrument used in jazz (e.g., African instruments, evolution of the tenor saxophone, trumpet or electric guitar); 3) a critique of a particular era or genre ranging from the 1800s to present. Research should include popular performers, styles and events; 4) the relationship between a selected genre and social politics within a specific period or stylistic movement. Papers are expected to be written in a scholarly fashion including technical jargon, or reference to seminal recordings. As a research paper, each work must include a bibliography of sources used. Please consult the MLA Handbook, Turabian’s Manual of Style or the Chicago Manual of Style for citation format. Students must have topics approved by the instructor by **October 18. Paper is due November 15** No extensions will be granted unless there are special circumstances.

B. **Oral Presentation Guidelines**

Students will be assigned to a group (no more than five students per group) to prepare and present an oral presentation. The presentation will be 10 minutes minutes in length and will address the following: 1) biographical information about artist or genre, 2) a description of performance practices and analysis of the style, 3) those who influenced and those who were influenced by your artist of choice and 4) the social, technology, economic, religious, and/or political variables that may have influenced the music. This presentation should be done on PowerPoint or Google Docs complete with video/audio inserts and still photographs. Each group will prepare a one-page abstract complete with bibliography and discography.

C. **Class Assignments**

Regular class attendance, adequate preparation, and class participation is expected. **Four unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by a letter grade.** The aforementioned will be essential to your success in this course. All exams are to be taken at times indicated and assignments will be due on the day of class listed (with a hard copy). **Late assignments will not be accepted**. Only extreme emergency situations (must be documented) will warrant a make-up exam or acceptance of late assignments. You must call Dr. McCurdy’s office in advance of the exam or quiz. Please do not schedule a trip before the final exam. The exam will not be given early!

D. **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/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. 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 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 describes reporting options and other resources.

E. **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 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.

**DATES TO REMEMBER**

Quizzes/listening exams

Wednesday, September 4

Wednesday, September 25

Wednesday, October 30

Wednesday, November 13

Midterm

Wednesday, October 16 - Midterm

Final Exam

TBA

Class Oral Presentations

September 23- Amistad Group

September 25- Ellington Group

October 3- Miles Davis Group

October 7- John Coltrane Group

October 9- Wayne Shorter Group

October 14- Master Juba Group

October 21- Underground Railroad Group

October 23- King Daddy Rice Group

October 28- Fisk Jubilee Group

October 30- Muddy Waters Group

November 4-Robert Johnson Group

November 6-Jim Crow Group

November 11- Miles Davis Group

November 13-W. Grant Still Group

November 18- Thelonious Monk Group

Term Paper Due Date

November 14

**DAILY READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS AND CLASS PRESENTATIONS:**

**Unit One: Music in African Culture and the Middle Passage**

**Week One**

Monday, August 26 Welcome: Class Overview.

Wednesday, August 28 What were the functions of music in African Society? What roles were played by men, women, children and the elderly? What were the functions of music? What were the instruments?

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 3-21.(Article) Cudjoe, S.D., *The Techniques of Ewe Drumming and the Social Importance of Music in Africa.*

**Week Two**

Monday, September 2 Labor Day

**Assignment: Video** *“Amistad”* (Assigned questions)

Wednesday, September 4 The Middle Passage and the Slave Trade. Characteristics of West African Music.

**Readings:** *(Article)* Lovejoy, Paul E. *The “Middle Passage”: The Enforced Migration of Africans across the Atlantic* Music of the Colonial Period.

**Unit Two: Two Wars and the New Nation**

**Week Three**

Monday, September 9 Primary and secondary sources. Church Singing: Psalmody and Hymnody. Slavery in the North Vs. the South. Music of Black Americans, pages 23- 58.

Wednesday, September 11 Early Colonial life in America. From indentured servitude to Slavery. What were the conditions of Slave life during the 17th and 18th centuries? The Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. What role did the African (Slave) serve? What kind of music was produced?

**Readings:** *(Article) Pybus, Cassandra, Epic Journey’s ; 4 s of Freedom: Runaway Slave of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty.*

Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 61-74

**Assignment: Video** *12 Years A Slave* (Assigned questions)

**Week four**

Monday, September 16 Religious conversion into Christianity. What impact did this have on the music? What role did the Catholics, Quakers and Moravians play in this process? How did the Africans view the efforts of the religious vocal ensemble? The Black Church. Camp Meetings. What was Richard Allen’s Role?

**Readings:** Music of Black Americans, pages 75-88.

**Assignment:** compose a letter from the perspective of a slave taken to the “new” land. The letter can be written to a parent, grandmother, brother or sister.

Wednesday, September 18 Ethiopian Minstrelsy. King Daddy Rice. Jim Crow and the everlasting impact. What were the content of the Minstrel Songs? What were the caricatures perpetuated.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 89-96. (Article) Lott, Eric. Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy.

**Assignment: Video:** *Glory* (Assigned Questions)

**Week Five**

Monday, September 23 Antebellum Period: Urban life. What were the conditions? The Anti-slavery movement, the Underground Railroad.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 97-116.

Wednesday, September 25 Music of the Black Church. Dance Orchestras and Recreational music. Black fiddlers and white dances. African Dances in the South. The Underground Railroad.

**Readings*:***Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 117-150

**Assignment: Video- 12 Years A Slave** (Assigned questions)

**Week Six**

Monday, September 30 Patterns of slavery in the north and south. Psalm singing in the community. The growth of Psalmody and Hymnody.

**Readings:** *(Article) Rev. Solomon Iyobosa Omo-Osagie II. “Their Soul Made Them Whole”: Negro Spirituals and Lessons in Healing and Atonement* Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 141-147.

Wednesday, October 2 The Antebellum Period: Rural life. Entertainment for the Plantation. What were the conditions? What were the job opportunities for free black men? What were the conditions of plantation life for women?

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages 151-178.

**Unit Three: The War Years and Emancipation**

**Week seven**

Monday, October 7 The Methodist church and the African (slave)Independent Denominations. What were the conditions of the Methodist church for slaves? What were the musical in Characteristics of Folk Music. The Origin of the Spiritual.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 178-204. *(Article)* Maultsby, Portia, K. *Black Spirituals: An Analysis of Textual Forms and Structures*

Wednesday, October 9 The Civil War! War Songs. The Dissemination of Spirituals: The Fisk Jubilee Singers and other student groups. The gender mixed choirs of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Professional Jubilee Singers. Black Ethiopian Minstrelsy.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 205-231.

**Unit Four: The New Century**

**Week Eight**

Monday, October 14 More Minstrel Stars. The Concert Stage: Concert vocalist and instrumentalist. The concert Divas: What were their musical and professional challenges? Traveling Road Shows. The Brass Bands and Dance orchestras of Frances Johnson.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 231-253. *(Article)*Kenney III, William Howland. *The Influence of Black Vaudeville on Early Jazz*

**Assignment:** **Video:** *Bamboozled* (Assigned questions)

Wednesday, October 16 Mid-Term Exam

**Unit Five: Precursors of Jazz**

**Week Nine**

Monday, October 21 Emergence of the Black Intellectuals, artists. Nationalism, Music Conservatories. Black Composers. Concertized Spiritual. Music of the 20th Century. The Clef Club Orchestra and James Reese Europe. Vernon and Irene Castle. Music.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 265-312. (Article) Floyd, Samuel A. The *Invisibility and Fame of Harry T. Burleigh.*

**Assignment:** Craft two (2) position papers (one page each) pro and con rationalizing Reparations to descendants of slaves. Both positions should be equally convincing.

Wednesday, October 23 Music in the 20th Century. The Emergence of Ragtime. Scott Joblin. Jelly Roll Morton and other Rag Performers. Piano Styles: Antecedents of Ragtime. Stride, Boogie Woogie

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 313-331. (Article) Berlin, Edward A. *Scott Joplin Sedalia: New Perspectives.*

The Blues! Father of the Blues, W.C. Handy. Characteristics of the Blues and Gospels. Women Gospel Artists. MahaliaJackson: Queen of Gospel Brass Bands and Dance Orchestras in New Orleans.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 332-364. *(Article)*Eastman, Ralph. *Country Blues Performance and the Oral Tradition.*

**Unit Six: The Jazz Age**

**Week Ten**

Monday, October 28 The Jazz Age. Race Records. New Orleans and the Jazz Movement. The First True Jazz Artist: Louis Armstrong. Other 1st Generation Jazz Artists. Music of Black Americans, pages, 365-382.

Wednesday, October 30 The Swing Era: The music of Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Count Basie and others.

**Readings:** Music of Black Americans, pages, 383-403. (Article) Pearson, Nathan W. *Political and Musical Forces That Influenced the Development of Kansas City*. (Article) Closter Current. Duke Ellington.

**Assignment: Bolden (Movie)**

**Unit Seven: The Harlem Renaissance**

**Week Eleven**

Monday, November 4 The Harlem Renaissance. W.E.B. DuBois and other Black Intellectuals. The Concert world: Roland Hayes, Marian Anderson, and Paul Robeson. Professional Choirs, Eva Jessye The Sacred Music of Duke Ellington.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 404—424. (Article)Lutz, Tom.*Curing the Blues: W. E. B. Du Bois, Fashionable Diseases, and Degraded Music. (Article) Scott Deveaux and Howard McGhee. Jazz in the Forties*

**Wednesday,** November 6 Dean of Afro-American Composers: William G. Still and other Concert Artists. Blacks on Broadway. Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 425-450

**Week Twelve**

**Monday,** November 11Emergence of Gospel. Thomas A. Dorsey, Father of Gospel. Charles A. Tindley. Characteristics of Gospel Music. Gospel Composers.

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 450-465 and 471-486.

**Wednesday,** November 13 WWII and the Bebop Era. Fathers of Bebop; Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. The Great Lakes Experiment.

**Readings:** *(Article) Phillip L. Mason. Soul In The Culture of African Americans.* Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 466-470 and 487-490.

**Week Thirteen**

Monday, November 18 It’s A Woman’s World!: Women Blues and Jazz Singers: Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters. The social dynamics of the women blues singers. Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn.Stylistic characteristics of improvisation.Women Instrumentalist: Mary Lou Williams, et. al.

**Readings:** *(Article)Charles L. Blockson. Melody of Freedom: Paul Robeson (Article) Frances Richardson Keller The Harlem Literary Renaissance*

Wednesday, November 20 The Great Lakes Experience: A breeding ground for music development and segregation. The Black Revolution, New developments in Jazz: Bebop, Cool, Hard Bop, Free. Blacks on Broadway: Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake: *Shuffle Along*

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 466-470 and 487-499.

**Unit Five: Mid-20th Century to the Present**

**Week Fourteen**

Monday, November 25 Rap and Hip hop: Who were the innovators?

**Readings:** Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 513-522

Wednesday, November 27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Week Fifteen**

Monday, December 2 Women Rappers in a male dominated genre. The Golden Age of Rap Music: Public Enemy, Chuck D, KRS-One, Salt-N-Paper, A Tribe Called Quest.

**Readings:** *(Article) Jennifer C. Lena, Social Context and Musical Content of Rap Music 1979-1995*

*(Article)Michael Eric Dyson, The Culture of Hip Hop* Southern, Music of Black Americans, pages, 594-608.

Wednesday, December 4 Class Review