

COMM 307
SOUND CLASH
Popular Music and American Culture

Fall 2020, (4.0 units)
Mon./Wed. 10 – 11:50 am PST Via Zoom
USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism

Instructor: Perry B. Johnson

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10 – 11 am PST and by appointment (via Zoom)

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Course Description:

This course asks students to interrogate the idea of America and American identity through the comparative study of popular music. We will use music as a method for exploring issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality in the constitution of American culture and in the making and unmaking of the American self. This is *neither* a linear and comprehensive history of American music, *nor* is it a musicology course with attention to musical formalism and technique. Rather, it emphasizes music as intercultural communication, a living cultural space where ethnic, racial, national, gender and sexual identities are both formed and de-formed. While focusing on major musical movements throughout the twentieth—and into the twenty-first—century (minstrelsy, blues, jazz, *corridos*, salsa, rock, punk, hip-hop, pop, etc.), we will root our thinking through several key critical rubrics: Performance, community, activism/protest, industry, memory, affect, power, and technology. This course is guided by the following key questions: What is music's role in the construction of "America" as a geopolitical idea, as well as the notion of transnational, inter-American identities? We will also pay particular attention to the role of the music industry itself. How has the music industry changed from the days of vaudeville to today? Central themes considered all semester long will include immigration, assimilation, citizenship, and patriotism. Together, we will learn to listen critically to the music that shapes the experiences of who we think we are, as well as impacts our engagement with and socio-cultural understandings of particular historical and political moments.

This course will mix online lectures, listening/viewing activities, class discussions, student presentations and collaborations, guest speakers, and attendance to at least one (1) online event or virtual exhibition. You will be required to actively and critically read, listen to, and engage with course material, and to focus on developing your research and analytical skills. There are several writing assignments for this course, in addition to weekly reading response blogs, so it is critical that you work to keep up with the assigned course reading schedule, submit assignments on time, and stay current with course lectures (either synchronously or asynchronously).

Learning Objectives:

Students completing this course will learn: How to think critically about popular music as sound and culture, with an emphasis on community, performance, history, and affect; the theoretical tools and concepts needed to understand popular music as sound, technology, industry, and culture; how to analyze the impact of popular music in the communication of racial and ethnic meanings and identities; how to study race and gender, and racialized and gendered meanings and identities; how to study race and ethnicity as musical performances and structures; how to write about the role of music in their own lives and in the daily lives of others.

Required Text:

Blues People, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka (New York: Morrow, 1963)

All other assigned readings will be posted to the course Blackboard under “Content.”

I encourage you to support independent local bookstores or similar online platforms, like [Bookshop](#), as possible. [HERE](#) is one list of bookstores across the U.S.

Course Spotify [Playlist](#)

Course YouTube [Playlist](#)

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown:

Participation	(10%)
<i>Not based solely on in-class participation or attendance</i>	
Weekly blog posts	(20%)
<i>Due Tuesdays by 10 pm, beginning Week 2</i>	
Reading presentation	(5%)
<i>Sign-up for presentations will be distributed Week 2; presentations begin Week 3</i>	
Songbook essay	(20%)
Analytical essay	(20%)
Final project	(25%)

In order to pass the class, **ALL** assignments must be completed. Failure to complete **one or more** will result in an “F” in the course.

All assignment prompts/instructions will be posted on Blackboard under “Assignments” and will be discussed individually in class.

Weekly blog posts are due Tuesdays by 10 pm (beginning Week 2, August 25). **NO** late blog posts will be accepted. Blogs should be submitted via Blackboard (“Tools” > “Discussion Board” > “Week # Blog”).

General Policies:

1. **Attendance:** Active participation and engaged discussions and debates are central to the success and development of this course. You are strongly encouraged to attend live sessions via Zoom. This is the best way to engage with the course and keep up to date with class activities and assignments. **You are allowed three (3) unexcused absences;** for *each* additional unexcused absence, half ($\frac{1}{2}$) a grade will be deducted from your final grade in the course. Please note: You are responsible for the material covered in any class you miss.
 - a. **Synchronous Expectations:** University guidelines dictate normal attendance, participation, and assessment expectations for students to be between the hours of 7:00 am to 10:00 pm in your current time zone.
 - b. **Asynchronous Expectations:** I understand that we are coming together from different time zones around the world. There will be no penalty for failing to attend live sessions. However, if you miss a class or are unable to attend our meetings synchronously, you will be able to keep up with the class by reviewing class recordings and engaging through asynchronous assignments. In order to get credit for participation and attendance, you are asked to watch the recorded lecture and post a 3-2-1 Response on the Blackboard discussion board no later than one week after the lecture. The “3-2-1” asks you to state: (a) three things you have learned, (b) two interesting facts, (c) one question that came up. Failure to do so will count as an unexcused absence.
2. **Participation:** Your participation is key. The current modality of teaching includes synchronous and asynchronous lessons, assignments, exercises, and evaluation processes, and each affords different types of participation. In a synchronous zoom environment, when proper, participation is synchronous. This may include talking, when appropriate, during a zoom meeting, or using the chat function to generate or participate in discussions. Blackboard offers different types of participation, including participating in forums and completing asynchronous assignments. The participation grade for this course will take into consideration your synchronous attendance, or asynchronous response post, along with in-class participation, office hour meetings, and a live performance blog post (more details will be distributed in class). Each week, I will call on a selection of you to discuss key ideas/insights from your weekly reading blogs, so please come prepared ready to discuss your observations/connections/responses. If you have any concerns or questions about the course, please reach out to me as soon as possible; I understand unforeseen conflicts arise and I will work with you to ensure your success in the course, but such matters cannot be resolved at the end of the semester.
3. **Class Atmosphere and Discussion:** I am committed to working to ensure that our time together is generative and engaging and that our classroom and course discussion boards, etc. remain respectful and open spaces for the exchange of diverse opinions, ideas, and perspectives. Disagreements are welcome and can indeed lead to productive and informed discussions and debates, but disrespect or hostility of any kind will not be tolerated. Please work with me to ensure that this class is a mutually supportive space for the expression of differing ideas, values, and beliefs.

4. **Assignment Deadlines:** The deadline for each assignment will be in Pacific Standard Time (PST) and specified in the corresponding prompt (all posted on Blackboard under “Assignments”). When submitting assignments, please be sure to **budget time for potential technology issues and save your Turnitin confirmation emails as proof of submission**. Late papers will receive a one-third ($\frac{1}{3}$) grade reduction for each day late (including weekends). Extensions on assignments must be granted and approved by me in advance of the assignment deadline. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.
5. **Assignment Format:** All written assignments must be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and have 1-inch margins. Please make sure to spell-check and proofread all papers for spelling and grammar. All assignments should include a “Works Cited” (including for music/media examples), page numbers, and follow a style guide consistently for citations and references (e.g., APA or MLA). For a helpful style guide/writing reference, see [Purdue’s OWL](#). Assignments should be submitted via Turnitin under “Assignments” in the course Blackboard. Assignments should be saved and submitted in .doc or .docx format, so I may return your graded papers to you with feedback and comments in “Track Changes.”
6. **Email and Course Correspondence:** Please include "COMM 307" in the subject line of any course-related emails, so I can work to prioritize our correspondence. Also, [a helpful note on email etiquette](#). I work to reply to email within 24 hours during the week (Mon. - Fri.) and 48 hours over the weekend (Sat. & Sun.). Unless urgent, please allow for this time to pass before sending a follow-up email.
7. **Technology Requirements:** Our class and weekly office hours will be conducted via Zoom. Meeting links will be available via the toolbar of the course Blackboard. Lectures will be recorded and made available for those of you not able to attend in real-time (please see the Recording Notice included below). Details for activating and setting up your Zoom account can be accessed via the [USC Website](#). For additional tech support and resources, please visit USC's [Student Basic Needs](#) page.

Please plan to join our weekly classes via a laptop or desktop computer (rather than your phone), unless this is not possible. I also encourage you to please turn on your video when possible. It is helpful to be able to see each other, just as in an in-person class. However, I do recognize that if you have limited internet bandwidth or no webcam, it may not be possible. If you are unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions, it is ok to turn off your video. Please mute your microphone when you are not talking. This helps eliminate background noise. Use a headset when possible. This will improve audio quality. If you are not able to find a quiet, distraction free spot where you can use your microphone, use the chat window for questions and comments relevant to the class.

Please note: While this technology will be central to the online format of the course this semester, technology can also become a distraction. The temptation to check email, social

media, messenger, text messages, etc. is strong (I am with you on this), but please respect our time together in class—even if we must be together virtually—and join me in committing this time to our course discussions, lecture material, and the relevant texts and media examples at hand.

Course Grading Policy:

I will work to grade and return all assignments to you with feedback within two (2) weeks of submission. Grades for all assignments will be regularly updated to the course Blackboard. Papers will be evaluated on the clarity and development of their thesis and central arguments, use of clearly-cited evidence from appropriate course readings (and supporting external sources, as relevant), depth of analysis, and critical engagement with/consideration of the topics at-hand. If you have concerns regarding a grade on a specific assignment, you must appeal the grade in writing within one (1) week of receiving your graded assignment from me. Your appeal must state why/how you feel your grade is inaccurate, providing specific examples. No appeals will be accepted for assignments submitted late, or after the one-week appeal deadline. Paper revisions/resubmissions will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis and must include a meeting with me to discuss the relevant assignment.

For assistance with written assignments, I strongly encourage you to visit and take advantage of resources and services provided by [The Writing Center](#) at USC.

Grades will be assigned according to the following breakdown:

A/A-	Outstanding, thoughtful, and enthusiastic work
B+/B	Above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	Needs improvement on ideas, argument, and follow-through
C and below	Fulfills the bare minimum/misses the mark, showing little understanding of material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score, depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale detailed below:

A = 100 - 94	C = 76 - 74
A- = 93 - 90	C- = 73 - 70
B+ = 89 - 87	D+ = 69 - 67
B = 86 - 84	D = 66 - 64
B- = 83 - 80	D- = 63 - 60
C+ = 79 - 77	F = 59 - 0

Please make sure to consult USC's [Registration Calendar](#) for dates regarding add/drop deadlines, fees, grading options, etc.

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 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 for DSP and contact information: (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity & Conduct

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. 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. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. [SCampus](#), the Student Guidebook, contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

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 Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. 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>.

Synchronous Session Recording Notice

Live class sessions will be recorded and made available to students through Blackboard (including transcriptions). Please remember that USC policy prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. As a student, you are responsible for the appropriate use and handling of these recordings under existing SCampus policies regarding class notes (<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-c/>). These rules will be strictly enforced, and violations will be met with the appropriate disciplinary sanction.

Going Back to Campus

Although we are starting the semester with online instruction only, conditions may improve. In such case, courses listed as hybrid will give opportunity to students to attend class in person. This will happen only by following the strictest health guidelines and safety protocols. These are listed in the [Trojans Return](#) page. Please take the time to read this ahead so that you are prepared in case it is possible to return to in-person instruction.

Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health – (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 / Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710

campussupport.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, ***HSC:*** (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, ***HSC:*** (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Breaking Bread Program

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/>

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally “breaking bread” over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

USC International Offices

<https://global.usc.edu/global-presence/international-offices/>

USC’s maintains nine international offices that can serve as additional support during these special times. You may contact these offices directly if on-the-ground assistance is needed where we have a presence.

Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

*Please note: The schedule is subject to change to accommodate guest speakers, as well as current events/developments. I will notify you of any changes if and as they arise. **Please check the reading schedule and content on Blackboard regularly.***

All readings should be completed by the class for which they are assigned.

Week 1

Mon., Aug. 17: An Introduction to Critical Listening, Part I

1. Hua Hsu, "Tuning In To Instagram DJs"
2. Daphne Brooks, "How #BlackLivesMatter Started a Musical Revolution"
3. Ann Powers, "A New Canon: In Pop Music, Women Belong at the Center of the Story"

Wed., Aug. 19 An Introduction to Music and Communication

1. Stan Denski, “One Step Up and Two Steps Back: A Heuristic Model for Popular Music and Communication Research”
2. Jonathan Sterne, “There is No Music Industry”

Week 2

Mon., Aug. 24: The Musician as Cultural Theorist

1. Bob Dylan, excerpt from *Chronicles*
2. Questlove, excerpt from *Mo' Meta Blues*
3. Michael Ventura, “The DNA of Pop”

Wed., Aug 26: An Introduction to Critical Listening, Part II

1. Randall Roberts, “The Lost Art of Deep Listening”
2. Pauline Oliveros, “Deep Listening”

Week 3

Mon., Aug. 31: Industry, Identity, and Power, Part I

1. Simon Frith, "The Industrialization of Popular Music"
2. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, "Structures of Feeling and Cognitive Praxis"

Wed., Sep. 2: Industry, Identity, and Power, Part II

1. Theodor Adorno, "On Popular Music"
2. Simon Frith, "Music and Identity"

Reading Presentation:

Week 4

Mon., Sept. 7: Labor Day – NO CLASS

Wed., Sept. 9: Black Music and the Legacy of Slavery, Part I

1. LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 3)
2. Selections from The 1619 Project

Week 5

Mon., Sept. 14: Black Music and the Legacy of Slavery, Part II

1. LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (Chapters 4, 5, and 6)

Wed., Sept. 16: The Minstrel Mask

1. David Wondrich, "Minstrelsy, or Get Out de Way"
2. Ralph Ellison, "Change the Yoke and Slip the Joke"

SONGBOOK ASSIGNMENT DUE

Week 6

Mon., Sept. 21: The Vaudeville Mask

1. Robert Snyder, "Taming the Bowery Boys"
2. Krystyn R. Moon, "The Rise of Chinese and Chinese American Vaudevillians, 1900 - 1920s"

Reading Presentation:

Wed., Sept. 23: Jazz Up North: Tin Pan Alley Days

1. David Suisman, "When Songs Became a Business"

Week 7

Mon., Sept. 28: Jazz Down South: New Orleans

1. Greg Tate, "Why Jazz Will Always Be Relevant"
2. John Szwed, "1900 - 1925 New Orleans"

Wed., Sept. 30: Swing: From Verb to Noun to Verb

1. Screen *on your own*, Ken Burns' PBS documentary, *JAZZ* (first 37 mins, until "The Big Noise" section)
2. LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (Chapter 10, Chapter 12)

Reading Presentation:

Week 8

Mon., Oct. 5: The Race of Rock

1. Alice Walker, "Nineteen Fifty Five"

Wed., Oct. 7: There's a Riot Goin' On: Songs for Change, Part I

1. Craig Werner, excerpt from *A Change is Gonna Come*
2. Anthony Heilbut, "Aretha: How She Got Over"
3. Screen on your own *The Night James Brown Saved Boston*

Reading Presentation:

Week 9

Mon., Oct. 12: Indigenous Peoples Day – NO CLASS

Wed., Oct. 14: Whitney Houston and the Haunting Sound of Soul

Guest Lecture

1. Readings TBD w/ guest

ANALYTICAL ASSIGNMENT DUE

Week 10

Mon., Oct. 19: Music, Gender, and Power, Part I

1. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality"
2. Jessica Hopper, excerpt from *The First Collection of Criticism by a Living Female Rock Critic*
3. Gayle Wald, "I Want it That Way"

Wed., Oct. 21: Music, Gender, and Power, Part II

1. *Selena* (please screen in advance of class)
2. Jenni Rivera, excerpts from *Unbreakable*
3. Lydia Mendoza & La Familia Mendoza, "La Alondra de la Frontera"
4. Deb Paredez, "Remembering Selena, Re-Membering Latinidad"

Reading Presentation:

Week 11

Mon., Oct. 26: Sporting Sounds

Guest Lecture: Dr. Courtney M. Cox

1. *Deadspin*: "The World Series National Anthem that Infuriated America"
2. *The Undeclared*: "The Players' Anthem: When Marvin Gaye Sang 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at the 1983 All-Star Game"
3. *Sport in Society*: "Introduction: Music, Sports, Society"
4. *We Are the Champions*: "Masculinities, Sport, and Popular Music"

Wed., Oct. 28: The Corrido of America, Part II

1. Sam Quinones, "The Ballad of Chalino Sanchez"
2. Josh Kun, "Death Rattle"

Reading Presentation:

Week 12

Mon., Nov. 2: The Latin Tinge: Heard and Unheard

1. Josh Kun, excerpt from *The Tide Was Always High*
2. Murray Forman, “Maracas, Congas, & Castanets”
3. Ricky Martin, excerpt from *Me*

Reading Presentation:

Wed., Nov. 4: Love Will Save the Day

1. Alice Echols, “One and Oneness in Gay Disco”
2. Luis Alfaro, “Circus Disco”
3. Justin Torres, “In Praise of Latin Night at the Queer Club”

Week 13

Mon., Nov. 9: South Bronx, Part I & II

1. Tricia Rose, “All Aboard the Night Train: Flow, Layering and Rupture in Postindustrial New York”
2. Selections from *Go Ahead in the Rain* by Hanif Abdurraqib
3. Screen on your own *From Mambo to Hip Hop*

Reading Presentation:

Wed., Nov. 11 – Club Quarantine

1. Live Performance Blog - LAST day to submit by the start of class (10 am PST)

FINAL PROJECT – DUE: Monday, November 23 by 10 am PST

NO late projects will be accepted.