

SWAG 144: Gender and Race in Popular Music

Fall 2009

New Cabell Hall 134 | TR 3:30 – 4:45pm

Instructor: Wendy Hsu

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Office Hours: Thurs 1-3pm | Halsey Annex 111A

Course description

Can we hear identifiers of gender and race in music? How can musical sound, image, performance, and even performer become gendered and racialized? How does music shape and reflect racial and gender relations and inequalities in the society? In what ways do individuals of particular racial or gender groups use music to express their identity? This course explores the relationship between popular music, gender, and race, with a focus on, but not excluded to, popular music emerged in 20th and 21st century in the United States. We will read ethnographic and historical studies of music performed by groups and individuals of various gender, sexuality, race, and ethnic groups. We will also read criticism of contemporary musical representations while analyzing their music and image. By the end of the course, the students will gain a sense of the role of music in the lives of the focused ethnic and gender groups and how issues of race and gender impact the experience of popular music within and across the U.S. borders over time.

Readings

All readings will be posted on the course site.

Grading

Attendance and participation	20%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	20%
Concert report	20%
Mixtape assignment and presentation	20%

Attendance & Participation – 20%

Your participation will be graded for each class session. This grade will not be based upon your attendance. Rather it is based upon your preparedness and your overall effort and contribution to the session. At the end of the semester, the grades for each session will be averaged. Come to class prepared to engage in discussion—this means you need to have done the reading and listening prior to the session. Bring the week’s readings to class for reference. While your participation will be greatly defined by your willingness to talk in class, there will be different formats for discussion in both large and small groups, as well as opportunities for individual and written reflection.

Concert report – 20%

There are two concert reports required for the course. The 2-page reports consist of detailed observations of the concerts that you will attend during the semester. You are expected to integrate at least one course concept in these reports. These concert reports will be submitted in the form of a post on the class blog. Further details such as concert listings will

be provided in class.

Mixtape assignment and presentation – 20%

The creative assignment is a three-person project. It provides an opportunity for you to design your own music and/or video compilation. This compilation has to have a theme. Example themes include: women rappers of the 1990s, Riot Grrrrl bands, Chicano rock, etc. In addition to the recordings on a CD, you have to include a list of the media, or a blog with links, along with a 7-8-page essay that contains your commentary on the tracks using course concepts and relevant historical, social, or biographical context and description. You also need to prepare an oral presentation to introduce your compilation to the class at the end of the course.

Midterm exam - 20%

This will be an assessment of what you have learned so far in the course. It will consist of short answer questions and essay questions on the readings and class lectures.

Final exam – 20%

The final exam will be in the same format as the midterm exam. In addition, it will ask you to apply concepts learned from readings and discussion to material of your choice.

Enrollment

Enrollment is solely the responsibility of the student and will occur through SIS. Any students who are unable to register but need the credits to graduate should speak to their advisor or to the chair in the SWAG department. Visit the SWAG office in Minor Hall to find these people.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes. There are no excused absences. If you miss a class, you will receive a zero for that day's participation grade. And if you miss a class, you must arrange to turn in any assignments before class. Each student may replace ONE missed day of participation by designing his or her own make-up assignment of about 2 pages in length. The assignment must be approved by the instructor. This should be arranged in advance where possible, or after-the-fact for an absence due to illness.

NOTE: if you anticipate missing more than a total of three classes this semester, you should not sign up for this course.

Classroom Community

We learn better when we know and trust each other. We will work hard the first few days to learn each other's names and to get to know each other. We will also foster community with occasional food, with small group activity, and through discussions, structured debates and presentations. Ground rules: no cell phones, no laptops unless otherwise noted.

Late Assignments and Presentations

No late assignments or delayed presentations will be accepted for any assignment.

Honor Policy

I expect you to uphold the University Honor Policy at all times. You are expected to have read and agreed to the Honor Policy Statement provided on the class homepage (<http://www.toolkit.virginia.edu>)

Grading

Wherever possible I will emphasize written feedback, yet I use grades to compare your performance to the ideal performance. Ideal performance is something just above an A. An

'A' for an assignment in this class requires consistent and satisfactory attention to all requirements plus a substantial demonstration of creativity and originality. A 'B' for an assignment in this class requires consistent and satisfactory attention to all requirements and some indication of creativity and originality. A 'C' for an assignment in this class would either 1) have consistent and satisfactory attention to all requirements, but no creativity and originality, or 2) have some creativity and originality but an inconsistent attention to the details. A 'D' for an assignment would lack creativity and originality and miss several of the requirements. An 'F' for an assignment would have fallen short on all points.

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Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Tuesday 8/25: Course Introduction

Thursday 8/27: Gender and Race: the Case of Popular Music

Read: Hester-Williams, Kim. "Eminem, Masculine Striving, and the Possessive Individualism" http://www.genders.org/g46/g46_hester-williams.html

Special Assignment: Online Field Research [<http://www.media.qualitytech.com/arlene-test.html>]

In-Class Screening: scenes from *The 8 Mile*

Week 2: Gender and Sexuality in Pop Music

Tuesday 9/1: Gender and Sexuality: the Constructionist Approach

Read: Lorber, Judith. Selection from *Paradoxes of Gender*

Thursday 9/3: Gender and Popular Music

Read: Cohen, Sara. "Popular music, gender and sexuality"

Guest: Carey Sargent

Week 3: Race and Ethnicity in Pop Music

Tuesday 9/8: Race & Ethnicity: History and Construction

Read: Prashad, Vijay. "The Strange Career of Xenophobia"

Thursday 9/10: Historical Overview of Popular Music and Race in the US

Read: Shank, Barry. "From Rice to Ice"

Week 4: Blackface : Minstrelsy

Tuesday 9/14: Blackface Minstrelsy

Read: Lott, Eric. "Love and Theft: the Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy"

In-class Screening: clips from *Bamboozled*

Thursday 9/16: Jewish American in Jazz and Hollywood

Read: Rogin, Michael "Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice"

In-class screening: *The Jazz Singer*

Week 5: Race Music - the American Blues

Tuesday 9/22: Country Blues Men

Read: Palmer, Robert. Selections from Deep Blues

Read: Filene, Benjamin. "Creating the Cult of Authenticity: The Lomaxes and Leadbelly"

Thursday 9/24: Blues Queens

Read: Davis, Angela, "Blame It on the Blues: Bessie Smith, Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, and the Politics of Blues Protest"

Week 6: Rock Music

Tuesday 9/29: Rock Music and Gender

Read: Tringali, Juliana. "Love Guns, Tight Pants, and Big Sticks: Who Put the Cock in Rock?"

Due: first concert report

Thursday 10/1: Women Rockers

Read: Wald, Gayle. "One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies"

Week 7: Fall Break

Tuesday 10/6: Fall Break!

Thursday 10/8: Midterm

Week 8: African Americans and Latinos in rock and punk

Tuesday 10/13: Black Rock and Punk

Read: Mahon, Maureen. "Black Like This: Race, Generation and Rock in the Post Civil-Rights Era" and "Playing Rock, Playing Roles"

In-class Screening: *AfroPunk*

Thursday 10/15: Chicano Rock and Punk

Read: Habell-Pallán, Michelle. "Sexuality, Translocality, and Punk in Los Angeles and Beyond"

Read: Nguyen, Mimi. Selections from Punk Planet

In-class screening: Alice Bag Performance Video

Week 9: Hip Hop

Tuesday 10/20: Hip Hop and Race

Read: Rose, Tricia. "Prophets of Rage: Rap Music and the Politics of Black Cultural Expression"

Thursday 10/22: Hip Hop, Gender, and Sexuality

Read: Rose, Tricia. "Bad Sistas: Black Women Rappers and Sexual Politics in Rap Music"

Week 10: Asian American Gender & Sexuality

Tuesday 10/27: Asian American Masculinity

Read: Lee, Robert G. "The Third Sex"

Read: Wang, Oliver. "Between the Notes"

Thursday 10/29: Asian American Femininity

Read: Park, Jane. "Cibo Matto's Stereotype A"

Read: Ono, Yoko. "The Feminization of Society, 1971"

Week 11: Desi: Pop Music in the South Asian Diaspora

Tuesday 11/3: Indian American Youth Consumption of Hip Hop
Read: Maira, Sunaina. "Identity Dub"

Thursday 11/5: Taqwacore
Read: Selection from Maira's *Missing*
Read: Selection from Taqwacore

Week 12: Music Subcultures

Tuesday 11/10 Riot Grrrrl – Women in Punk
Read: Schilt, Kristin. "Riot Grrrrl Is...Contestation over meaning in a Music Scene"
Browse: <http://www.worsethanqueer.com>

Thursday 11/12 Gay Men and Disco
Read: Hughes, Walter. "In the Empire of the Beat: Discipline and Disco"
In-Class Discussion: Lorde, Audre. "Power of the Erotic"

Week 13: Music, Noise, and Power

Tuesday 11/17 Women in Rock Journalism
Read: Rhodes, Lisa. "Women Rockers on the Printed Page"
Guest Speaker: Sarah Culpepper

Thursday 11/19 Queer Representation and Subcultures
Read: Hsu, Wendy. "Reading and Queering Plato in Hedwig and the Angry Inch"
In-class screening: scenes from *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*
Due: second concert report

Week 14: Mixtape Project Presentation

Tuesday 11/24: Project Presentations

Thursday 11/26: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: Mixtape Project Presentation

Tuesday 12/1: Project Presentations

Thursday 12/3: Project Presentations

Final Exam

Thursday 12/10: Final Exam, 9am