

History 083: First Year Seminar
“African History through Popular Music”
Spring 2016
Professor Lisa Lindsay



Classes: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:15 in Dey 306

Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00-3:30, Thursdays, 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

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Course Themes and Objectives

Over the last three decades, African popular music has found audiences all over the world. Artists like Nigeria’s Fela Kuti, South Africa’s Miriam Makeba, and the Democratic Republic of Congo’s Papa Wemba (all pictured above) have attracted widespread attention in their home countries and abroad not only because their music is extremely catchy, but also because they have expressed sentiments widely shared by others. Often, music such as theirs has contained sharp political or social commentary; other times, African popular music speaks to the universal themes of love, making a living, and having a good time. In all instances, however, African popular music—like popular music everywhere—has helped to express and define people, their communities, and their concerns. What music we listen to can say a lot about who we think we are, who others think we are, or who we would like to be. Music, then, is connected to *identity*, *community*, and *politics*, and these connections will form the central themes in our course.

In this seminar, we will study popular music as a way of understanding African history from about the 1930s to the present. In other words, we will listen to, read about, and analyze music in particular times and places in Africa so that we may learn about the societies where it was produced and consumed. Since the African continent is large and

diverse, we'll simplify matters by focusing mostly on Nigeria, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), three of Africa's largest and most musically influential countries. What do forms of music from these places tell us about Africans' interactions with other parts of the world? What does the music tell us about how people defined themselves and formed communities of belonging or shared interest at particular points in time? What does it tell us about their relationship with their governments, or their hopes for making a living? In learning about people's lives this way, we will also learn about African history more broadly.

Specifically, by the end of this course, students should:

- be familiar with the basic outlines of modern African history, particularly in Nigeria, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as some forms of popular music from these countries;
- be alert to ways that music can be a historical source, and be open to learning history through unconventional sources more broadly;
- understand the concepts of *imagined communities* and *the invention of tradition* so that they may be used to analyze a range of societies and situations;
- hone their skills in reading comprehension, historical analysis, clear writing, and polished speaking.

In this research-exposure course, you will be working with a Graduate Research Consultant, Daniel Velásquez, who will assist you in the research project described below. The GRC Program is sponsored by the Office for Undergraduate Research (www.unc.edu/depts/our), and you may be able to use this research-exposure course to meet a requirement of the Carolina Research Scholars Program (http://www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/students_crsp.html). I encourage you to visit the OUR website to learn about how you might engage in research, scholarship and creative performance while you are at UNC.

Format and Activities:

Since people learn best through multiple senses and activities, this course is organized around a mixed format of mini-lectures, discussions, music, films, reading assignments, writing exercises, research projects, and oral presentations. Class meetings will feature some of these; you will be responsible for the others with guidance from me and your classmates. Here is some more information on your responsibilities:

Readings: You should come to class having done the assigned reading (that is, the one listed for **that** day on the syllabus) and assimilated it well enough to discuss it. Generally, this means taking notes on the main ideas and evidentiary basis of your readings. If possible, please bring the text(s) with you to class. Our discussions will be much more stimulating if students have substantive ideas, spurred by the reading

material, to contribute. Readings will be drawn from the following books, which are available for purchase at Student Stores and on reserve at the Undergraduate Library (except for the latter two, which are not on reserve but are available as e-books through the UNC Library's online catalog):

Christopher Waterman, *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*

David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight! South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*

Tejumola Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music! Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics*

Bob W. White, *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire*

Additional readings, designated with "S," are available as .pdf files on the course Sakai website, under "Resources--Readings." Others are available through web links in this syllabus.

Other Assignments:

1. Class participation: At a bare minimum this means attendance in class; it also includes active involvement in class discussion. By taking part in our class discussions, you will deepen your understanding of the ideas and phenomena we study and you will gain practice and confidence in presenting your thoughts orally. Missing class more than once, using your laptop for something other than class work, and listening passively without adding anything of your own will all adversely affect your participation grade.
2. A short (5 minute) presentation of a musician/band, song, instrument, theme, or genre of African music, along with a paragraph summarizing your presentation posted to our Sakai discussion board. Each class (more or less), a different student will give one of these presentations, which are intended to help us as a group build our familiarity with the enormous range of African popular music. The paragraph summary should be posted on Sakai (under "Forums") by class time the day of the presentation, to create a record for all of our use. While there is no grade for this assignment (other than a completion grade), I reserve the right to ask you to redo it if it appears you did not take it seriously. You may choose your own topic and date to present, or you may take one of the suggested topics and dates on the syllabus below. All presentations must be completed by April 1, 2016.
3. Three short essays: These will be based on your interpretations of our class readings and are intended to showcase and hone your analytical and writing skills. Each essay should be approximately four double-spaced (12 point font) pages. Deadlines are firm: late assignments will be marked down one grade increment (A to A- to B+, etc.) for each day past the due date.
4. As a capstone project for this class, each student will produce a **podcast** of about 15 minutes, focusing on some aspect of the connection between African popular music and

history. This is your opportunity to showcase your understanding of African history and your command of key concepts for relating music to historical dynamics. Each podcast should mix songs and commentary, and it should be accompanied by a written script (citing your sources) and images. The podcasts and images will be posted online. Our graduate research consultant will help you conceptualize and produce your podcasts, and you'll get more detailed instructions through the course of the semester.

5. Everyone will present the topic and argument of their podcasts, with a key example or two, in class. These presentations should be about 10 minutes each (that is, you cannot simply play or read your podcast). You'll be graded not only on your own presentation, but on the attention you give to your classmates' presentations.

6. We will attend an **evening performance** of African popular music: Blitz the Ambassador on Feb. 11 at Motorco in Durham (<http://motorcomusic.com/event/dp-presents-blitz-the-ambassador/>). You will be provided with tickets and transportation. After the performance, you will be asked to post your observations in the form of a mini-review on Sakai (under "Forums"), for a completion (but not a letter) grade. If you are unable to attend either of this performance, please let me know as soon as possible.

You should be aware that plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Court for assessment. Remember that when writing, taking exams, or performing other assignments you are bound by the Honor Code. For details, see <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html> and <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>.

For help with your writing and other academic skills, I strongly recommend UNC's Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>) and Learning Center (<http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>).

Overall grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance and participation	15%
Individual presentation and posted summary	5%
Essay 1	10%
Essay 2	15%
Essay 3	15%
Podcast text	20%
Podcast songs, images, and execution	5%
Podcast presentation and attention to others	10%
Concert mini-review	5%

Schedule:

Part I: Introduction to Africa and to History through Music

Tu 1/12: Introductions

- What does music have to do with history?"
- First presentation, by Dr. Lindsay
- After class, read "Is Music the Key to Understanding History?," a blog post by Jonathan Healey at <https://thesocialhistorian.wordpress.com/2014/03/31/is-music-the-key-to-understanding-history/>

Th 1/14: Introduction to African Colonial History

- Read portions of the MSU African Studies Center web resource, *Exploring Africa: "Colonial Exploration and Conquest in Africa"* at <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/colonial-exploration-and-conquest-in-africa-explore/> (you do not have to do any of the activities) and
- "The Practice and Legacy of Colonialism" at <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/the-practice-and-legacy-of-colonialism-expand/> (again, no activities--just read)
- In class: talk about how to read scholarly books and articles.

Part II: Music and Identity in Colonial Africa

Tu 1/19: Music and Social Change in Colonial Nigeria

- Read Waterman, *Juju*, ch. 1 (concentrate on pp. 1-3 and 6-10) and ch. 2
- Think about how and why different styles of music appealed to different groups of people.

Possible presentation topics: early highlife in Ghana or Sierra Leone, brass bands in colonial Africa

Th 1/21: How to do things for this class -- **Meet in Wilson Library Room 304.**

- Introduction to podcasts, by Daniel Velásquez
- Introduction to the UNC Music Library, by Diane Steinhaus, Public Services Librarian

Before class, familiarize yourself with the podcast "Afropop Worldwide," (<http://www.afropop.org/>) by browsing the website and listening to bits of podcasts.

What makes a good podcast about music and history?

Tu 1/26: Rumba on the River: Colonialism and Popular Music in the Belgian Congo

- Read White, *Rumba Rules*, pp. xi-xv, xxi-xxiii, chapter 1, and pp. 37-42
- OR read Bob W. White, "Congolese Rumba and Other Cosmpolitanisms," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 4, 168 (2002): 663-686, on Sakai.
- Think about comparisons between the Belgian Congo and Nigeria during the colonial period. How do musical styles reflect their histories?

Possible presentation topics: Henri Bowane, Papa Wendo, HMV records

Th 1/28: Segregation's Soundtrack in South Africa

- MSU African Studies Center, "Colonialism and Segregation: The Origins of Apartheid," at the *Overcoming Apartheid* website, <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/unit.php?id=65-24E-2> and "The Rise of Apartheid" at <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/unit.php?id=65-24E-5>
- Read Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, ch. 1 and ch. 4

Possible presentation topics: *marabi*, "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika"

Tu 2/2: Sophiatown: the Harlem of South Africa

- Read Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, ch. 6, esp. up to p. 204
- How would you describe the musical life of Sophiatown?
- In-class video, *Come Back Africa* (Lionel Rogosin, 1960, 81 mins. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Come_Back_Africa)

Possible presentation topics: Miriam Makeba, *kwela*, "Wimoweh"

Th 2/4: Decolonization and Independence

- **4-page essay #1 due, on ONE of the following questions: (A) In what ways did the African popular music of the 1930s, '40s and '50s reflect changes in the societies of Nigeria, the Congo, and/or South Africa? (B) In what ways did the popular music of the 1930s, '40s and '50s express connections between Africa and other parts of the world? How did local influences give shape to these connections?**
- "African Resistance, Nationalism and Independence," (just the text; no activities) at <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/resistance-nationalism-and-independence-explain/>
- In-class video excerpt: "Freedom Now," (PBS "The People's Century" series, 1999)

Possible presentation topics: any African national anthem or independence song

Tu 2/9: From highlife to hiplife in Ghana

- Skype conversation with Dr. Nate Plageman (<http://college.wfu.edu/history/faculty-and-staff/faculty/nathan-plageman/>), author of *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music and Social Change in Urban Ghana*
- Before class, listen to podcast, "Hip Deep Ghana," especially the first 23 minutes, at <https://soundcloud.com/afropop-worldwide/hip-deep-ghana-21st-century-accra-from-gospel-to-hiplife>

Possible presentation topics: E.T. Mensah, Bobby Benson, Afro-rock, Afro-funk, Afro-soul, Manu Dibango

Th 2/11: No Class

Evening performance: Blitz the Ambassador – 8pm at Motorco in Durham

Reactions due on the Sakai site by class time on Feb. 16.

Part III: Music and Political Communities from the '60s to the '80s

Tu 2/16: Imagined Communities

- "Politics and Government in Post-Colonial Africa," (no activities) at <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/module-ten-activity-four/>
- Read the excerpt from Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) at <http://www.nationalismproject.org/what.htm> (click on "Benedict Anderson" in the column on the left)
- Think about what "imagined communities" might have to do with independent Africa, and with music.

Possible presentation topics: Zam-Rock, Tanzania's (brief) ban on soul music, Rai music from Algeria (and its longtime government ban)

Th 2/18: Music and *authenticité* in Mobutu's Zaire

- White, *Rumba Rules*, pp. 42-47 and pp. 65-82
- Why, do you think, was Mobutu interested in Congolese music?
- In-class video excerpts: *Lumumba* (Raoul Peck, 2002) and *When We Were Kings* (Leon Gast, 1996)

Possible presentation topics: Le Grand Kallé, Franco, Papa Wemba, any modern *soukous* musician

Tu 2/23 "Tribal" Identity and Yoruba music in Nigeria

- Read Africa Policy Information Center, "Talking about 'Tribe': Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis," online at <http://www.africafocus.org/docs08/ethn0801.php>
- Waterman, *Juju*, p. 55, pp. 63-64, and the following pages from chapter 4: 82-96, 112-119, 146-147
- What does music have to do with "tribal" identity?

Possible presentation topics: the talking drum, Chief Ebenezer Obey, King Sunny Ade, *taraab* music from Tanzania, fuji music from Nigeria

Th 2/25: Class Identity and Popular Music in Nigeria

- Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music*, ch. 1 and ch. 4
- Optional: my review of Olaniyan's book in *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute* 76, 4 (2006): 600-601, on Sakai
- In-class video excerpts: "Fela Kuti: Music is the Weapon," Nigeria, 1982 (53 mins.)

Possible presentation topics: James Brown's influence in Africa, Fela's successors (including Lagbaja, Femi Kuti, Seun Kuti)

Part IV: African Music and “Tradition” in the Global Arena

Tu 3/1: What “tradition”? Whose “tradition”?

- S: Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983)
- Think about what “invented traditions” may have to do with popular music.

Possible presentation topics: the Mahotella Queens, *mbaqanga* music in South Africa

Th 3/3: Podcast workshop, with Daniel Velásquez

- **4-page essay #2 due: What are some of the ways that producers and consumers of African popular music since the 1960s have expressed their class, communal, and/or national identities? In other words, what are some of the ways that music has helped to define who people are and the (imagined?) communities to which they belong?**
- What elements are needed in a good historical podcast?

Tu 3/8: Apartheid Music in South Africa

- Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, ch. 7
- “Protest and Resistance through the Rivonia Trial (1964),” at <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/unit.php?id=65-24E-8&page=1>
- Think about how and why musical traditions in apartheid-era South Africa may have been “invented.” What (imagined?) communities were they meant to invoke?

Possible presentation topics: Hugh Masekela, Abdullah Ibrahim, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Johnny Clegg

Th 3/10: No Class – work on your plans for your podcasts.

SPRING BREAK

Tu 3/22: Antiapartheid music in South Africa

- “Reigniting the Struggle - The 1970s through the Release of Nelson Mandela,” at <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/unit.php?id=65-24E-7>
- Begin in-class video: “Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony” (dir. Lee Hirsh, 2002, 103 mins.)

Possible presentation topics: *chimurenga* music from Zimbabwe, the Bundu Boys

Th 3/24: Music and the end of apartheid in South Africa

- Podcast prospectus due
- Schedule your meeting with Daniel Velásquez (see 4/12)
- Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, pp. 293-313 and 326-332
- How did people’s musical tastes (sometimes) relate to their political views?
- Finish “Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony”

Possible presentation topics: Brenda Fassie, "Sun City," "Graceland," *kwaito*

Tu 3/29: Africa in the Neoliberal Era

- MSU African Studies Center, "Globalization and Post-Colonial Economies," at <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/curriculum/unit-two/module-nine/module-nine-activity-eight/>
- MSU African Studies Center, "Globalization," at <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/module-nine-activity-nine/>
- What are some major features of modern African economies?

Possible presentation topics: Yussou N'dour, Angelique Kidjo, Tinariwen, K'naan, rap music in Senegalese politics, gospel music in Africa, Ali Farka Toure, Salif Keita

Th 3/31: Music and Insecurity in Zaire/DRC

- Read White, *Rumba Rules*, ch. 6

Possible presentation topics: *soukous* or similar music in Kenya or elsewhere

Tu 4/5: The contradictions of African modernity

- Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music*, ch. 8
- What is the relationship between the local (or "nativist") and the global (or "cosmopolitan") in Fela's music?

Th 4/7: Music and NGOs in the DRC

- Class visit by Dr. Chérie Rivers Ndaliko of the Dept. of Music (<http://music.unc.edu/people/musicfaculty/cherie-rivers-ndaliko/>)
- In preparation for class, listen to the Afropop Worldwide podcast, "Hip Deep: Congo-Goma: Music, Conflict and NGOs," (aired 11/26/2015) through iTunes or at https://soundcloud.com/afropop-worldwide/hip-deep-congo-goma-music-conflict-and-ngos?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3Aafropop%2Fpodcast%28Afropop+Worldwide%29&utm_content=FeedBurner
- Prepare at least one question for Dr. Ndaliko and one topic for class discussion.

Friday 4/8 by 5pm: **4-page essay #3 due: What has been "traditional" about popular music in modern South Africa, Nigeria, and/or the DRC? How has popular music reflected people's ideas of what their "traditions" are? How have musical "traditions" related to modern circumstances? OR: Considering the period from the 1970s to the 1990s, how (and to what extent) has popular music in Nigeria, the Congo, and South Africa expressed political protest? What in particular have musicians protested? What have been the results?**

Tu 4/12: No Class – instead, meet individually with Daniel Velásquez at **between March 24 and the end of the day on April 12** to hone the content, organization, and presentation of your podcast.

Th 4/14: Student Presentations

Tu 4/19: Student Presentations

Th 4/21: Student Presentations

Tu 4/26: Student Presentations and class wrap-up

Podcasts, texts, and all connected materials are due by 5pm on Monday, May 2.