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History 125 Fall 2021 Syllabus

Professor Fitzhugh Brundage

brundage@email.unc.edu

Office hours: By appointment

Office: Hamilton 511

Teaching Assistants:

Nicole Harry

Office: Hamilton 522 Office Hours: M 12-2pm

Madeleine McGrady

Office: Hamilton 404 Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30 PM, TH 11AM-12PM

Course Subject: The aim of this course is to understand significant social, economic and cultural transformations during the past century in the United States. We will trace developments in technology, business, social life, and popular culture through American popular music. We also will discuss how popular music has reflected shifting attitudes about race, region, gender, and class. Particular attention will be devoted to the role that popular music played in the forging of a mass culture participated in and consumed by Americans, regardless of class, region, race, and gender.

STATEMENT REGARDING FACE MASKS

This semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community — your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the [Office of Student Conduct](#). At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see [Carolina Together](#).

COURSE GOALS

Analyze historical events and change

Historians have a distinctive way of thinking about the past. By learning to ask how and why (as well as who, what, where, and when) we will develop our abilities to think “historically.” Our goal is not mere command of “facts,” but rather the capacity to use history to understand and explain how American society has evolved during the past century.

Apply analytical models to historical and cultural change

In order to think critically about the past, we will develop analytical models that we will use to make sense of technological developments, the “music business,” the evolution of musical genres, and the public’s reaction to technological and stylistic changes. Each recitation and lecture will provide us with opportunities to apply these analytical models to specific topics and problems.

Analyze diverse cultural “artifacts”

We will analyze “artifacts” of the past century, such as sound clips, sheet music, liner notes, lyrics, advertisements, and contemporary music criticism. Our goal, again, is not to compile arcane knowledge about genres, artists, or events in the history of American popular music, but rather to use these “artifacts” to make sense of political, social, cultural, and economic change in twentieth century America.

Demonstrate the “historical way of thinking”

Class activities, recitations, and written assignments in this course will provide you with an opportunity to hone your skills of critical historical analysis. The measure of success in all these tasks will be creativity and precision. The ‘historical way of thinking’ is dynamic, meaning, in other words, that historical events and issues are open to a range of possible interpretation. The best historical thinking takes into account the range of possible interpretations and advances an argument that does the best job of clarifying the significance of an event or issue. It encourages us to see an event or issue in a new light. Good historical thinking requires clear expression, whether in recitation or on paper. Our attention to the clarity and precision of your writing is a reflection of the importance we attach to the best possible expression of your ideas.

REQUIRED READING

All assigned readings are available at the course Sakai site.

COURSE SAKAI SITE

The course Sakai site is an essential resource for this class. Detailed information about each recitation and assignment, as well as assigned readings and external web links, are available at the course Sakai site. All recorded lectures are archived on the Sakai site. Recitation music samples and lyrics are also stored on the site. All updates about the class will be posted there. Please consult the site at least weekly in preparation for recitation. If you have difficulty gaining access to the Sakai site, let us know immediately.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Weekly Packback Postings
Midnight

15% **DUE DATE: Each Wednesday by**

Sheet Music Assignment
class

20% **DUE DATE: Thursday, September 30 in**

Family Music History
class

20% **DUE DATE: Tuesday, November 4 in**

Final Exam
8AM

30% **EXAM DATE: Tuesday, December 7,**

Recitation Participation

15%

All graded assignments will be returned two weeks after the due date.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM

WE TAKE PLAGIARISM VERY SERIOUSLY and will impose appropriate sanctions when we identify instances of plagiarism in this course. If you are unclear about what practices constitute plagiarism, we will be glad to discuss the topic with you.

The UNC Honor Court defines plagiarism as "the deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise." (Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, Section II.B.1.). We strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center's website where you can learn more about plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Visit <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>

RECITATIONS

Attendance at the six recitations is required.

Recitations are an essential part of this course. They provide an opportunity for you and your classmates to apply analytical models and the knowledge that you are acquiring in this course to specific topics and issues. Because historical analysis is dynamic and open-ended, shared analysis can generate fresh and deeper insights into a historical problem. Your participation, therefore, is important not only for you but also for your fellow students. In short, recitations are about active learning.

Assessment of recitation participation will be made on the basis of the quality of your contributions. There is no set formula to measure quality participation, but you are likely to make a valuable contribution any time that you advance discussion by directing your peers' attention to a theme that warrants more attention than it received in lecture, the readings, or in recitation. Or you may advance the classes' understanding by offering an alternative reading of a song's lyrics or an argument in the texts. In short, if you prepare for recitation and then engage the class materials and your classmates, you are likely to do well in recitation. We will provide you with a mid-semester assessment of your recitation participation.

Recitations will be held during the following weeks:

[Week Two](#)

[Week Three](#)

[Week Seven](#)

[Week Eight](#)

[Week Twelve](#)

[Week Fourteen](#)

PACKBACK

Packback Community Code: **64e2698c-d2fa-4612-b7a8-bac7d9a2ebb8**

The Packback Forum platform will be used in this course. Packback facilitates online discussion while also allowing the professor and TAs to provide private online coaching and commentary on individual posts. Fifty percent of your Packback grade will be assigned on the basis of your consistent submission of posts to the Packback community. The other fifty percent of your Packback grade will be assigned on the basis of the creativity and thoughtfulness of your posts. All of your posts will be read by the professor and the TAs, and some of the posts may be discussed in Thursday lectures.

The deadline for weekly Packback submissions is Wednesday at 11:59PM EST. In order to receive full credit, you should submit the following per each deadline period:

Two open-ended Questions each week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 60, worth 66.67% of each assignment grade

One Response each week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 60, worth 33.33% of each assignment grade

How to Register on Packback:

An email invitation will be sent to you from help@packback.co prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below:

1. Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co> and clicking "Sign up for an Account"
Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials.
2. Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Looking to join a community you don't see here?" section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage.

Community Lookup Key: **64e2698c-d2fa-4612-b7a8-bac7d9a2ebb8**

3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to www.packback.co/product/pricing for more information.

How to Get Help from the Packback Team:

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at help.packback.co. If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at help@packback.co.

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions

Before you start posting, be sure to read the Community Guidelines found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post does not follow the Packback Community Guidelines, there is a chance it will be removed and you will not receive points for that post.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Accessibility Resources	UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health struggles, chronic medical conditions, temporary disability, or pregnancy complications, all of which can impair student success. See the ARS website for contact and registration information: https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/contact-us
University Testing Center	The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/ .
Counseling and Psychological Services	CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

Complete the assigned readings for each week by midnight on Wednesdays.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE

Assigned Readings:

Ben Green, "Having the Sceptre: Wu-Tang Clan and the Aura of Music in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *Popular Music* (2017): 427-440

Lecture Topics:

Thursday, August 19 (1) A Case Study of the Business of American Popular Music -- *Thriller*

No Recitation

WEEK TWO

Assigned Readings:

Susan Willis, "I Want the Black One: Is There A Place For Afro-American Culture in Commodity Culture?" *New Formations* 10 (Spring 1990): 77-97

Why Does Everyone Keep Stealing Black Music? *New York Times*

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, August 24 (2) Case Studies of the Politics of Creative Appropriation -- Paul Simon, Michael Jackson, and Don Byron

Thursday, August 26 (3) Case Studies of the Politics of Cultural Respectability -- Prince, Twisted Sister, and 2 Live Crew

Recitation Topic: The Place of Popular Music in Your Life

This recitation will encourage you to reflect on your ideas about popular culture and its aesthetic, social, political, and broader cultural significance. You will have an opportunity to consider how technology, "the marketplace," your inherited and adopted identities, and the contemporary historical context have influenced your consumption of popular music.

WEEK THREE

Assigned Readings:

Edward G. Armstrong, "Eminem's Construction of Authenticity," *Popular Music and Society* 27 (2004): 335-355

Stephanie Dunson, "Black Misrepresentation in Nineteenth Century Sheet Music Illustration," in Brundage, ed., *Beyond Blackface*, 45-65

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, August 31 (4) A Case Study of Politics and Popular Music -- The (Dixie) Chicks

Thursday, September 2 (5) Minstrelsy and the Birth of American Popular Music, 1820-1880

Recitation Topic: Sheet Music and Popular Music

In addition to providing an opportunity to develop our analytical skills, this recitation should help you begin to organize your ideas for your first written assignment. In this recitation, we will discuss what can be gleaned from late nineteenth and early twentieth century sheet music. Before attending recitation, visit at least one sheet music website and select a theme in or genre of pre-1920 popular music. For example, you might focus on love songs, patriotic songs, or comedic songs. Or you might prefer to select a genre, such as marches, ragtime, or "old time" nostalgia. Or you might select a theme evident in some songs. Pay close attention to both the lyrics and the visual images of the sheet music. If you are musically literate, you can also incorporate the music itself into your analysis.

WEEK FOUR**Assigned Readings:**

Fitz Brundage, Working in the "Kingdom of Culture:" African Americans and American Popular Culture, 1890-1930," in Brundage, *Beyond Blackface*, 1-42

David Krasner, "The Real Thing," in Brundage, *Beyond Blackface*, 99-123

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, September 7 (6) High and Low Culture and the Politics of Cultural Respectability in the Young Republic, 1820-1900

Thursday, September 9 (7) Sheet Music and the Creation of a Popular Music Industry, 1830-1910

No Recitation**WEEK FIVE****Assigned Readings:**

Katherine Brucher, "Assembly Lines and Contra Dance Lines: The Ford Motor Company Music Department and Leisure Reform." *Journal of the Society for American Music* 10 (November 2016): 470-495

Holly Maples, "Embodying Resistance: Gendering Public Space in Ragtime Social Dance," *NTQ* (August 201: 243-259)

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, September 14 (8) Ragtime -- Black Musicians Take the Stage, 1890-1910

Thursday, September 16 (9) The Social Dance Revolution -- Popular Music Gets its Groove, 1900-1920

No Recitation**WEEK SIX****Assigned Readings:**

Kathy Ogren, "All the Lights Were Tinted Green or Red": Location and Setting for Jazz Performance," in *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 56-86

William F. Danaher, "Gender Power: The Influence of Blues Queens, 1921 to 1929." *American Behavioral Scientist* 48 (July 2005): 1453-67

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, September 21 (10) Indigenous American Modernism -- Jazz! 1915-1930

Thursday, September 23 (11) Women, the Blues, Flappers, and the Assault on Respectability, 1920-1930

No Recitation

WEEK SEVEN

Sheet Music Essay Due Thursday, September 30

Assigned Readings:

Richard Butsch, "Radio Cabinets and Network Homes" in *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 193-207

George Gershwin Selections

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, September 28 12: "Old Timey" Music and Hillbilly Modernism, 1920-1930

Thursday, September 30 13: George Gershwin and Music for the Melting Pot, 1920-1940

Recitation Topic: Reconstructing Your Family's Musical Genealogy

In this recitation, we will discuss various approaches you may adopt to complete a survey of your family's relationship to popular music.

WEEK EIGHT

Assigned Readings:

David W. Stowe, Swing Changes: Big-Band Jazz in New Deal America, 17-49

Stephanie Vander Wel, "The Lavender Cowboy and 'The She Buckaroo': Gene Autry, Patsy Montana, and Depression-Era Gender Roles," *The Musical Quarterly* 95 (Summer-Fall 2012): 207-251

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, October 5 (14) Swing Music and the Economics of Culture during the Great Depression, 1935-1945

Thursday, October 7 (15) Country-Western Music and the Economics of Culture during the Great Depression, 1925-1940

Recitation Topic: Swing, America's Music

Drawing on the assigned Stowe readings, we will discuss how popular music, especially swing, became a shared national culture. How can we measure a music genre's popularity? What characteristics of swing music made it a genre that could become popular across race, class, and regional divides? How much common ground could swing provide the nation's diverse population?

WEEK NINE**Assigned Readings:**

Ronald D. Cohen, "The New Deal Survives," *Depression Folk: Grassroots Music and Left-Wing Politics in 1930s America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 11-79

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, October 12: **University Day**

Thursday, October 14 (16) Folk Music and the Convergence of Politics and Popular Music, 1930-1945

No Recitation**WEEK TEN****Assigned Readings:**

Kathy Peiss, *Zoot Suit. The Enigmatic Career of an Extreme Style* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 106-130

John Leland, "The Golden Age of Hip, I: BeBop, Cool Jazz, and the Cold War," in *Hip: The History* (New York: Ecco, 2004), 111-136

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, October 19 (17) Beyond the Boundaries -- Be-Boppers and Zoot Suiters, 1940-1945

Thursday, October 21: **Fall Break**

No Recitation

WEEK ELEVEN

Assigned Readings:

Pete Daniel, "Rhythms of the Land," in *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C., 2000), 121-147

Kyle Crichton, "Thar's Gold in Them Hillbillies." *Collier's*, April 30, 1938: 26-27

"Corn of Plenty," *Newsweek*, June 12, 1949 in David Brackett, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Readings: Histories and Debates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 68-69

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, October 26: (18) Technology Transforms Postwar Popular Music, 1945-1965

Thursday, October 28 (19) The Codification of Country Music, 1945-1955

No Recitation

WEEK TWELVE

Family Music History Essay Due Thursday, November 4

Assigned Readings:

Glen Altschuler, *All Shook up: How Rock "n" Roll Changed America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 131-160

Elijah Wald, "Rock the Joint," in *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock "n" Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 166-183

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Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, November 2 (20) From the Periphery to the Mainstream -- The Accelerating Embrace of Black Musics, 1940-1955

Thursday, November 4 (21) Elvis!

Recitation Topic: Rock 'n' Roll, Conformity, and Dissent in 1950s America

In recitation we will discuss the social, economic, and political context in which rock 'n' roll music emerged. Among the important questions we will consider is why rock 'n' roll was perceived to be dangerous to acceptable values and behavior? To what extent did rock 'n' roll represent a significant manifestation of youth dissent? Was rock 'n' roll an important agent or catalyst for change in American society? In what ways did rock 'n' roll differ from previous forms of popular music (e.g., swing, jazz, blues) that were both controversial and highly popular?

WEEK THIRTEEN

Assigned Readings:

Allen J. Matusow, "Rise and Fall of a Counterculture," in *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 275-307

Michael W. Doyle, "Debating the Counterculture," in David R. Farber and Beth L. Bailey, *Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 143-149

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, November 9 (22) The Treacherous Gender Politics of the 1950s -- Divas during the 1950s

Thursday, November 11 (23) The Pursuit of Authenticity in the Age of Mass Production and Consumption

No Recitation

WEEK FOURTEEN

Assigned Readings:

Kenneth J. Bindas and Craig Houston, "'Takin' Care of Business': Rock Music, Vietnam and the Protest Myth." *The Historian* 52 (November 1989): 1-23

Cotton Seller, "The Commodification of Rebellion: Rock Culture and Consumer Capitalism," in Mark Gottdiener, *New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture, and Commodification* (Lanham, MD:

Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 203-226

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, November 16 (24) The Pursuit of Authenticity -- the Counterculture and the Search for Authenticity in Rock

Thursday, November 18 (25) The Pursuit of Authenticity and the Creation of the Popular Music “Concert-Industrial Complex”

Recitation Topic: Idealism and the Pursuit of Authenticity in 1960-70s America

We will explore the meanings attached to artistic expression and “authenticity” in various styles of music during the 1960-70s. Come to recitation prepared to discuss the ideas about authenticity and about the larger purpose of music that informed popular music during the 1960s. Was there a coherent thread in the apparent alienation expressed by musicians in different genres of music? What was the target of their discontent? Why did they believe that music was peculiarly suited to expressing and redressing their discontent? What did they feel was the proper relationship of the artist/musician to mainstream society? Did musicians during the 1960s presume too much of their music and its impact? Is “authenticity” still a valued attribute of contemporary popular musicians?

WEEK FIFTEEN

Assigned Readings:

Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 121-146

Brian Ward, *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm and Blues, Black Consciousness, and Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 388-416

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, November 23 (26) Black Musicians and the Pursuit of Authenticity in Post-Jim Crow America

Thursday, November 25: **Thanksgiving**

No Recitation

WEEK SIXTEEN

Assigned Readings:

Bruce Schulman, "E Pluribus Plures: From Racial Integration to 'Diversity,'" in *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 53-77

Judy Kutulas, "I Feel the Earth Move," in *After Aquarius Dawned: How the Revolutions of the Sixties Became the Popular Culture of the Seventies* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 14-43

Lecture Topics:

Tuesday, November 30 (27) The Digital Revolution and the Transformation of American Popular Music

No Recitation

Final Exam Scheduled at 8AM, Tuesday, December 7