

MUSIC 2621
The Study of Popular Music
Spring 2007

Instructor: Andrew Weintraub
Music Building 305 (624-4184)
Office Hours: Mondays, 2-3pm or by appt.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this seminar is to provide a critical survey of the major issues addressed and methodologies used in the study of popular music. Traditional approaches in music scholarship have proved inadequate for the study of mass-mediated musics. Readings for this course include works from a wide range of disciplines including musicology, ethnomusicology, sociology, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, political science, economics, and music journalism. Our main objective will be to examine ways in which the insights and methods of structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, critical theory, feminist criticism, and psychoanalytical theory have been applied to the problem of understanding how meanings are produced, mediated, negotiated, subverted, and celebrated in popular music.

Required Textbook (available at The Book Center):

Negus, Keith. 1996. *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. New England: Wesleyan University Press.

Required Textbooks (not available at The Book Center):

Fonarow, Wendy. 2006. *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*. Wesleyan University Press.

Hebdige, Dick. 2002 [1979]. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London and New York: Routledge.

Mahon, Maureen. 2004. *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race*. Duke University Press.

Zak, Albin. 2001. *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*. Berkeley: UC Press.

**You may also wish to purchase the following, which contains many of the articles we are reading this term:

Frith, Simon and Andrew Goodwin, editors. *On Record: Rock, Pop, and The Written Word*. New York: Pantheon Books, 301-314. ML3470 .O58 1990

For reference, the following are recommended:

Storey, John. 1993. *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Bennet, Andy (ed.). 2006. *The Popular Music Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. On Defining popular music (Jan. 11)

Definition of the topic of study; what is popular music?; what does “popular” mean?; how is popular music related to groups and communities?; quantitative, qualitative, comparative, and political approaches; what kinds of musics have been studied, and by whom?; music establishments and modes of authority.

Adorno, Theodor. 1990 [1941]. “On Popular Music.” In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and The Written Word*. Edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin. New York: Pantheon Books, 301-314. [ML3470 .O58 1990](#)

Hall, Stuart. 1981. “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular.” In *People’s History and Socialist Theory*. London: Routledge, 227-40.

Manuel, Peter. 1988. “Perspectives on the Study of Non-Western Popular Musics.” In *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1-23. [ML3470 M33 1988](#)

Negus, Keith. 1996. “Audiences.” In *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. New England: Wesleyan University Press, 7-35.

McClary, Susan and Robert Walser. 1990. “Start Making Sense: Musicology Wrestles with Rock.” In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and The Written Word*. Edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin. New York: Pantheon Books, 277-292. [ML3470 .O58 1990](#)

Yang, Mina. 2006. “Fur Elise, circa 2000: Postmodern Readings of Beethoven in Popular Contexts.” *Popular Music and Society* 29 (1): 1-15. [available on-line through Pitt]

2. Culture, Signification, and Style (Jan. 18)

Reading popular music; structural homologies; politics of representation

*Critical Review 1 Due:

Hebdige, Dick. 2002 [1979]. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London and New York: Routledge.

3. The Music Industry (Jan. 25)

The creative process and the production of success; the political process and the control and management of musical production; the two theses about the big music industries; regulation of music industries; copyrights; the musicians’ status in the corporate industry; cooptation.

Albini, Steve. “The Problem with Music.” <http://negativland.com/albini.html>

Bishop, Jack. 2005. “Building International Empires of Sound: Concentrations of Power and Property in the “Global” Music Market.” *Popular Music and Society* 28 (4): 443-71 [available on-line through Pittcat]

Frith, Simon. 1987. “The Industrialization of Popular Music.” In *Popular Music and Communication*. Edited by James Lull. London: Sage Publications, 53-79. [ML3470 P67 1992](#)

Garofalo, Reebee. 1999. “From Music Publishing to MP3: Music and Industry in the Twentieth Century.” *American Music* 17:318-53.

McLeod, Kembrew. "MP3s are Killing Home Taping: The Rise of Internet Distribution and its Challenge to the Major Label Music Monopoly." *Popular Music and Society* 28 (4): 521-531.
Negus, Keith. 1996. "Industry." In *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. New England: Wesleyan University Press, 36-65.

4. Technology (Feb. 1)

The role of technology in popular music; historical context of technology and sound-making; mass culture debates; politics of sampling; rethinking time and space.

Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken, 217-252. [PN514 .B3623 1969](#)
Greene and Porcello (ed). 2004. *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Popular Music*. Wesleyan. [selected articles]

5. Mediations (Feb. 8)

Mediations; encoding/decoding; music programming and radio formats; constructing an audience; popular music as a media product.

Berland, Jody. 1990. "Radio Space and Industrial Time: Music Formats, Local Narratives and Technological Mediation." *Popular Music* 9(2): 179-192.
Hall, Stuart. 1973. "Coding and Encoding in Television Discourse." In *Culture, Media, Language*. Edited by Stuart Hall et al. London: Hutchinson. Hillman [HM101 C9](#)
Manuel, Peter. 1993. "Introduction." In *Cassette Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1-20. [ML3502 I4M36 1993](#)
Negus, Keith. 1996. "Mediations." In *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. New England: Wesleyan University Press.
Rothenbuhler, Eric and Tom McCourt. 2006. "Commercial Radio and Popular Music: Processes of Selection and Factors of Influence." In Bennet (ed). *Popular Music Studies Reader*.

6. Audiences, consumption, and everyday life (Feb. 15)

[the following 3 articles are located in Hesmondhalgh, David and Keith Negus. 2002. *Popular Music Studies*, pp. 85-130.

Huq, Rupa. "Raving, not drowning: authenticity, pleasure, and politics in the electronic dance music scene."

Maxwell, Ian. "The curse of fandom: insiders, outsiders, and ethnography."

Hesmondhalgh, David. "Popular music audiences and everyday life."

Lewis, Lisa.

**Presentation: Introduce two selected songs or pieces of your choice. This presentation will focus on musical values and the various factors and mediations that come into play in your choices.

7. Implications of Technology for Popular Music Practices/Aesthetics: Cultural Identity (Feb. 22)

- Hosokawa, Shuhei. 1984. "The Walkman Effect." *Popular Music* 4(1):165-182.
- Vila, Pablo. 1989. "Argentina's Rock Nacional: The Struggle for Meaning." *Latin American Music*.
- Waterman, Christopher. 1990. "'Our Tradition is a very Modern Tradition': Popular Music and the Construction of Pan-Yoruba Identity." *Ethnomusicology* 34(3):367-379.

8. ***Critical Review II Due (March 1)

- Mahon, Maureen. 2004. *Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race*. Duke University Press.

March 8: Spring Break (no class)

9. ****Critical Review III Due (March 15)

- Zak, Albin. 2001. *The Poetics of Rock: Cutting Tracks, Making Records*.

10. Identities (March 22)

- Dyer, Richard. "In Defense of Disco." In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and The Written Word*. Edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin. New York: Pantheon Books, 410-418. ML3470 .O58 1990
- McClary, Susan. 1991. "Living to Tell: Madonna's Resurrection of the Fleishy." In *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 148-166. [ML82 M38 1991](#)
- Mientjes, Louise. 1990. "Paul Simon's Graceland, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning." *Ethnomusicology* 34(1):37-74.
- Negus, Keith. 1996. "Identities." In *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. New England: Wesleyan University Press.

11. Space and Place (March 29)

Globalization; Hybridity; transculturation; homogenization and innovation; center/periphery; circulation of cultural forms

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Public Culture* 2:1-24.
- Berland, Jody. 1992. "Angels Dancing: Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space." In *Cultural Studies*. Edited by Grossberg et al. New York and London: Routledge, 38-55. [GN357 C844 1992](#)
- Hall, Stuart. 1991. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." In *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*. Edited by Anthony D. King. Binghamton: Department of Art and Art History, State University of New York at Binghamton. [GN357 C848 1997](#)
- Straw, Will. 1991. "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music." *Cultural Studies* :368-388.

12. (April 5)

*****Critical Review IV Due:

Fonarow, Wendy. 2006. *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*. Wesleyan University Press.

13. Gender and Sexuality (April 12)

- Bayton, Mavis. 1997. "Women and the Electric Guitar." In *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*. Edited by Sheila Whitely. London: Routledge, 37-49. ML3470 S46.
- Fast, Susan. "Rethinking Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Led Zeppelin: A Woman's View of Pleasure and Power in Hard Rock." In *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. Andy Bennet.
- Halberstam, Judith. 2006. "What's that Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives." In *Queering the Popular Pitch*. Edited by Sheila Whitely. New York: Routledge, 3-26. ML 3470 Q44 2006.
- Mockus, Martha. 2006. "Queer Thoughts on Country Music and k.d. lang." In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. New York: Routledge, 257-74.
- Weintraub, Andrew. 2007. "Dance Drills, Faith Spills: Islam, Body Politics, and Popular Music in Post-Suharto Indonesia."

14. World Beat and Cultural Imperialism (April 19)

- Feld, Steven. 1988. "Notes on World Beat." *Public Culture Bulletin* 1(1).
- Goodwin, Andrew and Joe Gore. 1990. "World Beat and the Cultural Imperialism Debate." *Socialist Review* 20 (3): 63-80.
- Lipsitz, George. 1996. "Strategic Anti-Essentialism in Popular Music." In *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place*. London and New York: Verso, 51-68. [ML3470 L57 1994](#)
- Negus, Keith. 1996. "Geographies." In *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. New England: Wesleyan University Press.
- Weintraub, Andrew. 1993. "Jawaiian and Local Cultural Identity in Hawai'i." *Perfect Beat: The Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture* 1(2): 78-89.

15. Back to the Future: Musical Analysis (April 26)

- Brackett, David. 2000. "Family Values in Music: Billie Holiday's and Bing Crosby's 'I'll be Seeing You.'" In *Interpreting Popular Music*. Berkeley: UC Press, 34-74. [see also "James Brown's 'Superbad' and the double-voiced utterance" in the same book, pp. 108-156]
- McClary, Susan. "This is not a Story my People Tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson." In Bennet.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to write weekly assignments, participate actively in class discussions, submit book reviews, and present oral presentations on selected articles.

1. Students will be assigned to read all of the readings above. For each of these assigned readings you will be asked to answer a set of questions about the week's reading and related issues. These

assignments will be the basis for each week's discussion, so they must be completed **before** the class in which the readings are discussed. *All assignments must be typed or printed.*

2. Each student is required to write four short critical reviews--not to exceed three pages each--on a) Hebdige; b) Mahon; c) Zak; and d) Fonorow. It is important to contextualize the work within the context of popular music studies. The reports should be handed in at the beginning of the class on the day the book will be discussed.

Grading: Weekly participation (25%); weekly writing assignments (30%); 4 critical reviews (10% x 4=40%); presentation on musical value (5%).