DRAFT SYLLABUS: SEMINAR TOPICS SUBJECT TO REVISION

PMC9701  “Introduction to Popular Music Studies”  Fall 2018

Mondays, 2:30-5:20  Room FNB-4070
Prof. Keir Keightley  Office Hours: Mondays 5:45-6:15
Office: FNB-4023  Note: Extra Office Hours will be held
Email: kkeightl@uwo.ca  during the semester, times T.B.A.

This course (cross-listed with Music 9554) is an introductory survey of the field of popular music studies. A range of approaches to popular music, from several disciplinary contexts, will be explored. The course will be conducted as a seminar, with extensive discussion of readings and concepts along with presentations by students.

Texts: Required readings are found in a number of places: in a binder in the FIMS Graduate Library on the second floor of the FIMS/Nursing Building (FNB-3020); as electronic resources; or in the three required textbooks:

Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor *Faking It* (available as UWO electronic resource)
Simon Frith *Performing Rites* (can be purchased online; many used copies about)
Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin *On Record* (available as UWO electronic resource)

Recommended (but not required): The Sage Handbook of Popular Music (2014), edited by Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman, is the best “state of the art” overview of our field, and it is available as an electronic resource via UWO libraries.

Evaluation:

**Participation/Aesthetic Exercise:** 20%
This is a graduate seminar, and your presence in class and your thoughtful contributions to discussions are crucial to the learning experience. I expect everyone to show up having read and thought about the required readings and prepared to be called upon during class dialogues. The “Aesthetic Exercise” (dates to be assigned) is included in the “Participation” grade; each student will present a song of their choosing to the class and briefly describe what they like (or dislike) about the song as a preamble to a class discussion.

**Faking It Book Report:** 10%  
due October 1st

**Performing Rites Book Report:** 10%  
due November 12th

Neither a summary nor a review, this assignment involves reading and responding to the book in question (in 5-6, double-spaced pages). The goal is to engage critically with some of the ideas, analyses, or arguments found in the book. You thus have considerable leeway in how you wish to approach this short paper. Nonetheless, I encourage you to pay particular attention to potential overlaps between questions of taste formation and ideas of authenticity. You need not summarize the argument of the book, unless it is in service of illustrating a particular point in your discussion.

**Seminar Presentation:** 10%  
(dates to be assigned)
This involves an approximately 20-minute, in-class presentation of one of the required readings. You should do three things in your concise presentation: outline what you believe to be the key points and argument(s) of the reading; identify its strength(s) and weakness(es); and prepare 2 questions concerning the article that will be used to begin the general discussion of it by the class at the conclusion of your presentation.

**Final Paper:** 50%  
due via email by December 31st
approx. 20 pp., double-spaced, plus bibliography, illustrations, appendices, etc.
You have two choices here but you must meet with me to discuss your ideas before December:

1. A synthesis paper, in which you select eight authors from at least three different lecture topics, and write a synthetic account that explores, critiques, relates and evaluates their arguments and assumptions in light of what you have learned in the class.

1. An original research paper, in which you identify a reasonably limited question or problem in the study of popular music in consultation with me, research it, and then construct and present an analysis/argument.

Outline of Lectures and Readings

Sept. 10th  
**Introduction: Pop, Popular, Popularity...**  
Excerpts from Raymond Williams (1983) *Keywords* London: Fontana.  

Sept. 17th  
**What is This Thing Called ‘Popular Music Studies’?**  
Andrew Chester (1970) “Second Thoughts on a Rock Aesthetic” in *On Record*


Recommended Reading:  


Sept. 24th  
**Hi/Lo**  


Recommended Reading:  


Oct. 1st

History Faking It report due today


Recommended Reading:


Oct. 8th Thanksgiving Holiday

Oct. 15th Early Sociological Approaches


David Riesman (1950) “Listening to Popular Music”;
Donald Horton (1957) “The Dialogue of Courtship in Popular Song”;
Theodor W. Adorno (1941) “On Popular Music”;
(above 3 readings in On Record)


Oct. 22nd Subcultures

Paul G. Cressey “The life-cycle of the taxi-dancer” [1932]
Milton M. Gordon “The concept of the sub-culture and its application” [1947]
Albert K. Cohen “A general theory of subcultures” [1955]
Howard S. Becker “The culture of a deviant group: the dance musician” [1963]
Dick Hebdige “Subculture : the meaning of style” [1979]
Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber “Girls and subcultures” [1977]
(Above readings in the first edition of the The Subcultures Reader) and
Dick Hebdige “Style as Homology and Signifying Practice” and
Angela McRobbie “Settling Accounts with Subcultures: A Feminist Critique”
(Above two readings in On Record)

Recommended Reading:
Ken Gelder, The Subcultures Reader, “Introduction: the field of subcultural studies”, “Introduction to part one”, and “Introduction to part two”.

Oct. 29th
Genre
(available at https://www.tagg.org/others/ffabbri81a.html)


Andy R. Brown (2014) “Everything louder than everyone else”: The origins and persistence of heavy metal music and its global cultural impact?”

Highly recommended reading:
Will Straw (1991) “Communities and Scenes in Popular Music”
(Above two readings in The Subcultures Reader)

Nov. 5th
Industry


“They could destroy the album”: how Spotify’s playlists have changed music for ever” Eamonn Forde The Guardian 17 Aug 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/aug/17/they-could-destroy-the-album-how-spotify-playlists-have-changed-music-for-ever


“Streams ahead: the artists who made it huge without radio support” Peter Robinson The Guardian 1 Dec 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/dec/01/artists-made-it-huge-streaming-spotify-apple-music

Recommended Readings:


Philip H. Ennis (1992) The Seventh Stream: the emergence of rocknroll in American popular music Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press. (This is the single best account of how the pre-digital music business worked; in Music Library)

Nov. 12th Authenticity 2nd report due


Recommended Reading:


Nov. 19th

**Phonography**


David Suisman (2010) “Sound, Knowledge, and the 'Immanence of Human Failure': Rethinking Musical Mechanization through the Phonograph, the Player-Piano, and the Piano” Social Text 28 (1 (102)): 13-34. (online via journal in UWO libraries)


Nov. 26th

**Globalization**


Roger Wallis and Krister Malm (1984) “Patterns of Change” in On Record


Background reading:
Roland Robertson “Mapping the Global Condition” pp. 2-9
Ulf Hannerz “Notes on the Global Ecumene” pp.11-18
above 3 are chapters 1 & 2 & 7 of Media in Global Context edited by Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, Dwayne Winseck, Jim McKenna and Oliver Boyd-Barrett


Recommended reading:


Dec. 3rd

Stardom, Authorship, and Gender/Sexuality
Roland Barthes (1972) “The Grain of the Voice” (both in On Record)


Recommended Reading:

Dec. 10th

New Minstrelsy Studies
Eric Lott (1991) “”The Seeming Counterfeit’: Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy.” American Quarterly Vol. 43, No. 2 (Jun.) pp. 223-254


Recommended reading:

*American Music* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer 2015), pp. 274-280

Dale Cockrell (1997) *Demons of Disorder*

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**Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Additionally,

A) If written work will be assigned in the course and plagiarism-checking software might be used, the following statement to this effect must be included in the course outline:

“All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).”

B) If computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams will be given, and software might be used to check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating, the following statement must be added to course outlines:

“Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.”

**Support Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Western’s “Health and Wellness”

http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.