MUSIC 2734A

HIT RECORDS: LYRICS, STYLES, MIXING

Dr R. Toft, TC 114, ext. 85104
Term 1 – Monday, 1:30-3:30, online / Thursday, 2:30-3:30, online

COURSE DESCRIPTION
A study of the techniques songwriters, performers, and producers in the 1960s employed to create effective verbal and musical arguments in a variety of genres, focusing on the structural elements of lyrics and music, performing styles, and arrangement (mixing).

CONTENT AND TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
This course, designed to help students hone their skills in aural analysis, investigates top-40 songs recorded in the 1960s from the perspective of the critical listener. It introduces foundational terms and concepts and takes as its starting point the notion that training in popular music should include a component that enables students to acquire a technical understanding of the sonic material on recordings (the song itself, as well as its recorded version). Participants will gain entry to the soundscape of 1960s pop/rock through the ears of recordists (songwriters, arrangers, band members, producers, and engineers), and by the end of the semester, students should be able not only to identify and label with appropriate academic terminology many of the technical parameters of recorded sound but also to discuss the expressive flow of a track. Succeeding generations of recordists have been heavily influenced by the classic sounds developed by Fender and Gibson in the 1950s and 1960s and by the sonic creations of luminaries such as Phil Spector and George Martin, and the techniques and concepts acquired in Music 2734 are transferable to other genres and the work of more recent artists.

One of the fundamental purposes of a university education is to challenge students to think differently about the subject at hand, and this course follows that guiding principle. In other words, if instructors do not make students feel intellectually uncomfortable, they have not been successful. So, please be receptive to new ideas, terminology (most of which will be quite foreign), and ways of thinking/working. This course applies critical thinking to the practices of recordists in order to increase sensitivity to the subtleties of a recording’s sonic surface.

ORGANIZATION & OUTCOMES
Most of the lectures will be used to establish a technical foundation for listening and its related academic terminology, but the latter part of the course will be reserved for student presentations on the sonic characteristics of specific recordings from the 1960s. Through individual projects presented to the class, students will demonstrate their understanding of the inner workings of songs and recordings, so that the specific knowledge and listening skills acquired in the first part of the course can be used to evaluate and explain to others the strategies songwriters and recordists employ to create recordings.

COURSE MATERIALS
Required text:

ASSESSMENT
62% Two mid-term Tests (probably early October and early November) – 31% each
38% Class presentation on a selected track from the 1960s (during the final weeks of the term)
ATTENDANCE
Not everything covered in the lectures is included in the text for the course, and students will acquire much of the framework necessary for listening to and discussing recordings through material presented in class. Regular attendance is encouraged as part of the preparation for tests.

CONSULTATION
I am available for consultation outside class by appointment. Please contact me to arrange a time for a Zoom session. I prefer to conduct business “in person” rather than by e-mail, and I do not answer questions about course content by email. On the rare occasion that a student misses a lecture for legitimate and medically documented reasons, I will provide assistance with course material, but please be advised that I do not give private summaries of lectures. Students should rely on their peers to gather, and understand, material from classes they miss. See me only to clarify what you and your peers cannot grasp independently.

PREREQUISITE
Music 1651a/b or the former Music 1650a/b

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

GRADING SCALE
A+ = 90-100%, A = 80-89%, B = 70-79%, C = 60-69%, D = 50-59%, F = 0-49%.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION FOR STUDENT ABSENCE
Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. **Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus.** Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. **Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.**

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office. For the Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)
ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION FOR MISSING WORK

In cases where students are unable to submit work due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if an online self-reported absence is submitted, or if appropriate supporting documentation is submitted to the Associate Dean’s office, and the accommodation is granted, then the missed assessments may be rescheduled or discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the course, at the discretion of the instructor. If neither a self-reported absence nor an appropriate supporting document is submitted to the appropriate office, then the missed assignments will receive a grade of zero.

ACADEMIC OFFENCES

Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_disipline_undergrad.pdf

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (https://www.uwo.ca/health/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in UCC room 76. Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in UC11.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students work with Accessible Education Western (AEW, formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar. http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo

PLAGIARISM

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing, such as, footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

CONTINGENCY PLAN

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor.

RECORDING OF ONLINE ACTIVITIES

All of the remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals participating in the course for their private or group study purposes. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings.
Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

**Online Etiquette**

Some components of this course may involve synchronous online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please honour the following rules of etiquette:

- Use your computer and/or laptop if possible (as opposed to a cell phone or tablet)
- “Arrive” to class on time
- Ensure that you are in a private location to protect the confidentiality of discussions in the event that a class discussion deals with sensitive or personal material
- To minimize background noise, kindly mute your microphone for the entire class until you are invited to speak, unless directed otherwise
- Unless invited by your instructor, do not share your screen in the meeting
- In order to give us optimum bandwidth and web quality, please turn off your video camera for the entire class unless you are invited to speak
- Be prepared to turn your video camera off at the instructor’s request if the internet connection becomes unstable

The course instructor will act as moderator for the class and will deal with any questions from participants. To participate please consider the following:

- If you wish to speak, select the blue “raise hand” function and wait for the instructor to acknowledge you before beginning your comment or question.
- Kindly remember to unmute your microphone and turn on your video camera before speaking.
- Self-identify when speaking.
- Kindly remember to select the “raise hand” function again to lower your hand, mute your mic and turn off your video camera after speaking (unless directed otherwise).

General considerations of “netiquette”:

- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
- Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
- Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment.

Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of “Zoom-bombing” a class, or of other serious online offenses, may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.
COURSE OUTLINE

I. Introduction
   • textual criticism of songs and recordings
   • tasks involved in making records
   • the elements of a recording’s sensory surface
   • the four dimensions of a recording

II. The Song
   1. Lyrics: Telling a Story (Text: Chapter 1)
      • the creation of a story and the technical devices used to enrich the telling of that story
      • song form as derived from lyric structure
   2. Prosodic Tunes (Text: Chapter 2)
      • discussion of melodic line from the perspective of prosody and the natural delivery of words
      • differentiation of verse, chorus, and bridge
      • melodic style as a function of vocal delivery
   3. Harmonic Style: Guitar-Based Modalities (Text: Chapter 3)
      • harmonic style of pop/rock placed in a modal framework derived from guitar practices
      • harmonic rhythm

III. The Recorded Work
   1. Intros and Outros
      • sonic signatures
   2. Differentiation of Verse, Chorus, and Bridge
      • a sectional approach to sonic identity
   3. Performing Styles
      a. Vocal (Text: Chapter 4)
         • the central focus of a recording is often the vocal track
         • the expressive style of singing in pop/rock
         • consideration of timbre, register, grammatical/rhetorical phrasing, vibrato, legato/staccato,
           portamento, messa di voce, accent & emphasis, and imperceptible appoggiaturas
      b. Instrumental
         • guitar: timbral properties
            pickups: single coil—Stratocaster, Telecaster
            humbucker—Les Paul
         • amps: American tweed vs British stack
         • mics: type and placement
   4. Signal Processing
      • reverberation, compression, double tracking, chorus, flanging, vocoder, gate, etc.

IV. Expressive flow (the creation and release of emotional/musical tension)
   1. Invention and Arrangement (Text: Chapter 5)
      • assembling a musical discourse from disparate sources to create a hit
      • the activities of recordists from within the context of rhetorical criticism
   2. Transforming a Demo (Text: Chapter 6)
      • the art of turning an unpretentious demo into a powerful musical discourse
      • the distribution of ideas and instruments within the mix, as well as performance style and
        narrative flow
3. Hit and Miss (Text: Chapter 7)
   • the full potential of a song is realized only when the elements of a recording’s sonic surface
     maximize the emotional impact of a song
   • the deficiencies of a miss and the strategies employed in a hit
   • case study: ‘(They Long to Be) Close to You’, Bacharach (Richard Chamberlain—1963 &
     Dionne Warwick—1964) and the Carpenters (1970)

V. Notable Producers and Their Work
1. Phil Spector and the ‘Wall of Sound’
   • Spector’s method of working
   • Spector’s influence: Brian Wilson, Bruce Springsteen, Jim Steinman
2. George Martin & The Beatles: from ‘live’ to ‘studio’ and back
   • Martin’s approach to recording in the early 1960s
   • multi-tracking and increasing complexity in the recording process
   • return to the ‘live’ ethos and Spector’s involvement in Let It Be

VI. Student Presentations on Selected Tracks
   • application of analytical techniques developed in the course to various top-40 tracks from the 1960s