

The University of Western Ontario, London, Canada  
Department of Music  
Winter 2023

MUS1730B: Intro to Pop Music and Culture

The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.

**Instructor:** Sadie Hochman-Ruiz (Pronouns: she/her)

**Mail:** [shochma@uwo.ca](mailto:shochma@uwo.ca)

**Location:** TC-201 T 1:30-3:30 Th 2:30-3:30

**Office Hours:** F 3-4 via zoom

**Course Description:** A study of the major styles of American popular music of the 20th and 21st centuries, including, but not limited to, Blues, Gospel, Soul, Rock, R&B, Folk and Hip Hop. Students will learn to identify musical styles and think analytically about the role of popular culture plays in shaping American society. Emphasis will be given to the relationship between sound and the social, understanding how popular music builds relationships between people, negotiates the boundaries of identity categories, and orchestrates mass movements. At the end of this course, students will craft a multimedia project about popular music history informed by scholarly research and critical analysis.

**Course Objectives:**

- Develop an understanding of popular music's history from the perspective of diverse audiences
- Understand methodologies that researchers employ to study and analyze popular music and mass culture
- Identify markers of musical genres and analyze genre as a tool of racial classification in the early-20th century
- Create an original multimedia work informed by scholarly research and critical analysis
- Develop the ability to manage your own learning in changing circumstances, both within and outside the discipline

**Required Course Materials:** Garofalo, Reebee and Steve Waksman. *Rockin' Out: Popular Music in the U.S.A.* 6th edition. United States of America: Pearson, 2014. [https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2022B&courses%5B0%5D=001\\_UW/MUS1730B](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2022B&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/MUS1730B)

Additional readings will be made available by the professor.

**Course Evaluation:**

Attendance and Participation (10%): Students are expected to attend each lecture and to be prepared, having read required material and willing to contribute in class discussions.

Listening Journal (10%): Create a listening journal with five songs not included in the course text. You should select one song from each of the following musical styles/communities: blues, jazz, country, rock, pop. Write a 300 word entry for each explaining why selected each song as a representation of its particular category. Your description should touch on at least a few of instrumentation or production techniques, song structure, lyrical topics, iconography (e.g. album covers, live performances), intended audience, or biographical narratives. Draw from descriptions of these musical styles/communities in the textbook.

Midterm (20%): The midterm consists of three sections. The first is a listening exam. The second is terms to define. The third is short answer questions. It will be conducted in class.

Short Paper Due (10%): Popular music is often contrasted with folk music, where popular music is consumed by the masses and folk music is associated with a single community. In our course, we have learned popular music is very reliant on communities to generate cultural meanings associated with a particular style. For this assignment, reflect on the question: “What makes popular music “popular”?” Answers should be no more than 1500 words. Draw on material from the course in addition to your own ideas. You are welcome to speak in first person about your relationship to music. You are welcome to cite the course text, but you are also expected to cite at least two academic sources. Please use Chicago style citations.

Podcast Assignment (25%): Create a podcast of no less than 30 minutes. It should include no fewer than 15 minutes of talking. The podcast should tell the story of the mainstreaming of a musical style and its impact on the community with which it is associated. Use an analytical voice which goes beyond a mere description of events to include some critical perspective. Use musical examples to flesh out your ideas. You must consult no less than three academic sources to research the genre. Include a works cited with your final submission in Chicago format. Assignments will be graded out of 10 for content and out of 10 for clarity and out of 5 for the strong use of musical examples.

If you submit a proposal, by week 10 at the latest, which includes your proposed topic and a point form sketch of your talking points, you will be awarded 5% extra credit.

Final Exam (25%): The final will consist of four sections. The first is a listening exam. The second is terms to define. The third is short answer questions. The final section is a long answer question of 3-4 paragraphs.

Missed assignments and academic accommodation: Academic Accommodation must be requested within 28 days of the missed assignment. All assignments **MUST** be submitted by the deadlines noted on this syllabus. If you think you will not be able to submit your assignment in time (because of illness or bereavement), you must contact me as soon as you are aware of this. All assignments submitted late without documentation will be penalized 2% per day that they are late (including weekends). No assignments will be accepted two weeks after the due date.

Essay Format: All assignments must be typed and double-spaced with standard margins (1-inch side, top, and bottom margins). Do not forget to include your name, student number, course code, and proper citation for all references. You may only use referencing and bibliographic formats from MLA or Chicago Style.

In accordance with the University of Western Ontario Undergraduate Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

- A+ = 90-100
- A = 80-89
- B = 70-79
- C = 60-79
- D = 50-59
- F = Below 50%

### **OTHER MATTERS:**

- **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\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_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 or to click on the green "I Need Help Now" button on the Health and Wellness page above.
- **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](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>

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

There are several services for students on campus to take advantage of:

- 1) **Counselling Services:** Students experiencing emotional or mental distress can drop-in at Psychological Services located on the 4th floor of the Student Development Centre. Alternatively, you can book an appointment by calling 519-661-3031.

- 2) Writing Support Centre (Rm 4130, Student Development Centre) can help you learn to write better papers. Tutors are graduate students from a range of departments who have been trained to assist you at any stage in the writing process. You can make an appointment in person at the Writing Centre or call them at 519-661-3655.
- 3) Learning Skills Services (Rm 4100, Student Development Centre) can help develop better learning skills. To make an appointment, you can email them at [learning@uwo.ca](mailto:learning@uwo.ca).

### **Weekly Topics Breakdown**

#### **Week 1: Introduction and Studying Mass Culture**

Summary: Popular music has been grown alongside the development of mass communication technologies, globalization, and the export of American culture. This lesson asks what is to be learned from studying mass culture and, in the process, why the scholarly study of mass culture has been controversial. In addition we consider the roots of American show business in minstrelsy to ponder how a mass culture built on the performance of anti-Black racist tropes will impact lives both in and outside of the United States.

#### **Reading**

Introduction + Chapter 1, pgs. 1-38

#### **Additional Reading** (to consult for your projects)

Adorno, Theodore and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry." In *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002.

#### **Week 2: The Charts and Hybrid Genres**

Summary: In the early-20th century, a seismic change happened in the music industry when the focus of music marketing shifted away from who wrote the song and towards who recorded it and the audience for which it was meant. It signalled an industry moving away from the assumption of an entirely white, middle-class listening audience and toward more complex ideas about the American people where they could be a polyglot bunch who spoke many musical languages. This week we define 'genre,' identify early categories of musical classification and explore first efforts at hybridization. We pay attention to the role of genre in maintaining the segregation of racial markets.

#### **Reading**

Chapter 2 + 3, pgs. 39-80

#### **Additional Reading**

Roy, William G. *Red, Whites, and Blues: Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2010.

### **Week 3: Rock and Roll as a Harbinger of Social Change**

**N.B. This lecture will be online and asynchronous.**

Summary: Rock and roll is often thought of in terms of the blending of styles. It was a hybridization of R&B (rhythm and blues) and C&W (country and western), which can be elaborated upon by recognizing other important influences such as gospel, doo-wop and calypso. However, rock and roll was more than this. It was an event in the creation of the modern music industry. This week we explore rock and roll from a musical perspective, as well as its connections to top 40, televised musical performance, the 45 rpm record, and the transistor-radio.

#### Reading

Chapter 4, pgs. 81-123

#### Additional Reading

Peterson, Richard A. "Why 1955? Explaining the advent of rock music." *Popular Music* 9:1 (1990): 97-116.

### **Week 4: Popular Music and Social Change in the Sixties**

Summary: The 1960s saw popular music paired with a number of political protest movements. Folk music was attached to the mainstream discussion of civil rights for African-Americans, women's liberation, the peace movement and environmentalism. Later, rock music would soundtrack the New Left as it combined Marxism, psychology, and sociology to expand our understanding of identity in modern capitalist society. This week explores a growing sense of rock as a folk music for a youth activist movement. We touch on early mass events in popular music history like the Monterey Pop Festival, Woodstock and Altamont.

#### Reading

Chapter 6, pgs. 149-196

#### Additional Reading

Faulk, Barry K. "New Left in Victorian Drag: The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 53:2 (2011): pgs. 138-158.

### **Week 5: Vertical Integration and Rock's Disintegration**

Summary: Following the 1960s, the music industry became a very lucrative investment. A mass injection of capital triggered the industry to become more sophisticated in its identification of new markets and its delivery of specialized products. The language of identity and culture developed by the New Left in the late-1960s contributed to this moment in music history. This week considers business developments like record label mergers and the introduction of FM

radio, and asks how they relate to the growth of smaller genres with more localized audiences.

Reading

Chapter 7, pgs. 197-246

**Listening Journal Due**

Additional Reading

Tschmuck, Peter. "The Era of Music Conglomerates." In *Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry*. Springer: Berlin, 2012. Pgs. 147-162.

**Week 6: Reactions and Revolts**

Summary: The term 'pop' is complicated and multiple in its meanings. This week juxtaposes two moments in the history of 'pop' music. The first is the late-1950s moment in which the music industry pushed a number of clean, safe pop stars to put an end to the social change that was associated with rock and roll. This moment dovetailed with soul music, where we will explore how Berry Gordy designed a mass marketable African-American sound for a white audience. The second is punk rock's nostalgic review of bygone pop styles as a revolt against the commercialized and elitist forms of rock that began to predominate. We explore pop as an evolving discursive space where audiences contest the meaning of music and to whom it belongs.

Reading:

Chapter 5, pgs. 124-148

Chapter 8, pgs. 250-267

Additional Reading

Gendron, Bernard, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2002.

**Week 8: Midterm**

**Week 9: Hip Hop and You Don't Step**

Summary: Hip Hop grew from a local music culture in the Bronx of the 1970s to one of the most popular genres of music worldwide. Its radical innovation of turntable technique and sample-based production reinvented popular ideas of musicality and challenged the music industry to update its understanding of copyright and intellectual property. This week follows hip-hop alongside genres initiating similar innovations in disco, reggae and, to a degree, funk. We consider the roots of rapping as an oral practice in the dozens and toasts, and follow its evolution in the 1980s as it became more integrated into the mainstream music industry.

Reading:  
Chapter 8, pgs. 271-282  
Chapter 10, pgs. 317-343

Additional Reading

Rose, Tricia. *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip-Hop—and Why That Matters*. BasicCivitas: New York, 2008.

**Week 10: MTV and the New Mass Culture**

Summary: The music industry was not immune to the recession of the 1970s. In the late-1970s, partly due to recession and partly due to vertical integration, labels had massively downsized their rosters. A new model of success for the music industry was constructed in its wake from MTV, the “first national radio station”; investment in megastars; and going international. This week we explore changing circumstances for music as labour with new record contracts. We also investigate new efforts to reach global markets through charity mega-events. As well, we introduce the final podcast assignment and discuss free music editing software for you to try out.

Reading:  
Chapter 9, pgs. 285-316  
Chapter 11, pgs. 359-368

**Short Paper Due**

Additional Reading

Shuker, Roy. “‘U got the look’: Film and Television, Music Video and MTV.” In *Understanding Popular Music* 2nd ed. Routledge: London, 1994. Pgs. 175-192.

**Week 11: Guitar-Rock Rages On**

Summary: Since the sixties, guitar-based rock music has had an outwardly contentious relationship with consumer culture. This week we explore two moments which continued that legacy and antagonized each other in the process. Heavy Metal was in many cases fairly welcoming of the growth of the music industry, especially with hair or glam metal; and it rationalized its success with reference to its artistic triumphs. Grunge and alternative music built off punk’s legacy by ridiculing the arbitrary boundary heavy metal had constructed to shield its commercial success from jeopardizing its artistic achievements; and it adopted a more nihilistic stance towards its own commercialism. In this lecture we explore the continuing cultural legacy of the electric guitar through the diversification of its technique and iconicity.

Reading:  
Chapter 10, pgs. 318-328  
Chapter 11, pgs. 370-383

Additional Reading

Waksman, Steve. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. University of California Press: Berkeley, 2009.

**Week 12: Diversity, Inclusivity and the Mainstream Audience**

Summary: Since the 1970s, the music industry has refined its ability to reach new audiences and assimilate them into mass consumer culture. In the 1990s, the music industry made renewed efforts to integrate people of colour and women. Latin Pop had its moment in the mainstream surrounding the tragic death of *Tejana* pop singer Selena, hip-hop reinvigorated R&B and reorganized the racial politics of pop music performance, and female performers were given more space to participate in countercultural musics. This week we explore the relationship between music and identity and the role of diverse musical communities in producing, arguably, the most successful decade in music business history.

Reading:  
Chapter 11, pgs. 383-413

Additional Reading

Lipsitz, George. *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism, and the Poetics of Place*. Verso: London and New York, 1994.

**Week 13: A Brave New World**

Summary: After the music industry experienced its greatest profits in the 1990s, everything came crashing down in the early-2000s. Peer to peer sharing strongly challenged the business model of the music industry. Though the music industry eventually embraced a business model which included digital music, the effects were long-lasting. This week we explore where the music industry has been headed including the introduction of the 360 contract and a new crop of superstars, social media and the popularizing of local dance styles, and the rise of the 'monoggenre.'

Reading:  
Chapter 12, pgs. 417-462

**Podcast Assignment Due**

Additional Reading

Sterne, Jonathan. *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Duke University Press: Durham, 2012.