

Hip-Hop to Dubstep: International Music Styles and the Remix, NCOM 3039.A
Course Syllabus
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School of Media Studies, Department of Communication
The New School University
Online
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Course Description

This course is a theoretical and historical survey of popular music influenced by or part of the remix tradition in hip-hop and electronica. Emphasis is placed on the shaping of culture by media and vice-versa. Remixes are compositions that reconfigure a pre-existing music recording, often to make it more danceable. As simple as the definition sounds, it carries a complex set of cultural variables that include issues of class, gender, and ethnicity. Listening exercises and analysis of recorded music is complemented by readings that provide understanding of the historical context and theoretical underpinning of remix practices. Our survey begins with popular music in the United States in the early 1950s, including Blues, R&B, Rock n' Roll, and early funk. In the 1960s, this music was appropriated in the Caribbean and gave birth to new styles, Calypso, Ska, Reggae, and Dub. Then it came full circle back to the United States with the development of hip-hop music. The rise of the international styles called trip-hop, drum 'n' bass, and dubstep and the parallel history of techno and house music and styles in-between are then considered, in order to arrive at a theoretical understanding of the complexity of contemporary music and the extent to which it has been defined by the principles of sampling and remix.

Class Structure

At the beginning of each week—on Mondays, an introductory lecture will be posted along with questions on the readings and the music selection, which will be available online for listening. Each weekly discussion, except for the first week and the last week, will be led by students. Students leading a discussion must be ready to discuss the questions and share their views and analysis of the discography for the respective week.

The students leading the discussion for their respective week will arrange a time for a video conference with the instructor to discuss the material they summarized. All students part of the class are strongly encouraged to participate in all weekly conferences, but this is not an essential requirement. They only need to attend the meeting with the professor. All students, however, are expected to post responses and comment as explained below. The video conference can take place on Monday or Tuesday, at a time that is most convenient for both the students who are summarizing for the week and the professor— but it cannot take place on Thursday because this is the last day to post comments to the corresponding class forum. The conference will be archived and available for the entire class to review. The issues raised in the conference should help enhance the discussion taking place on the online forums from week to week.

Participants will be expected to post at least two responses and comments each week demonstrating that they have read the assigned texts and listened to the assigned music selection. Notes and questions by the instructor should be considered starting points for

a fruitful conversation. It's important to keep up with all readings and activities in class because they will inform the final paper due at the end of the term.

By Thursday night of each week every participant should have at least two posts, at which point the class will officially come to the end of the discussion. This is done in order to give participants enough time to focus on the next set of readings and media works. If somebody posts on the discussion thread after Thursday, it will not be considered late, but it is in the students' best interest to focus on the current readings for each week according to the schedule. Posting late comments after the discussion is officially over may prove to be overwhelming when trying to keep up with overall class activity, therefore students should try to keep up and focus on the current weekly activities as much as possible. There will be discussions every week except for the last week of class, when students will have time to write the final essay.

Student Evaluation

As noted above, students' evaluation will be based on their general participation in weekly discussions, as well as leading a discussion on one of the assigned readings—this includes a video conference with the instructor. A final essay is due at the end of the class. Rambling about a subject with no specific reference to the texts or music selections will not count as participation. Each post should demonstrate some understanding of the subject, and use of specific terms. There is no word limit but a strong post is one that shows clear engagement with the subject matter. If students do not understand something, a question should be posted for discussion. However, such question should demonstrate that the participant has read the material and listened to the music selections. See details on distributed percentage for each of the three items below under grading.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand how music is a medium that reflects the politics and history of diverse cultures.
- Develop a solid understanding of the history of contemporary popular music production within the tradition of remix culture.
- Organize and present thoughts in a clear, systematic, and convincing manner through weekly discussions as well as written assignments

A Note on Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A student who commits plagiarism will be reported to the office of the Media Studies. The student's behavior will be taken very seriously and dealt with according to the guidelines provided by The New School. To avoid plagiarism, please cite your sources when appropriate.

THE NEW SCHOOL ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY POLICY (excerpt)

The New School views "academic honesty and integrity" as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits. Academic honesty and integrity includes accurate use of quotations,

as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of faculty members and other students). Academic dishonesty results from infractions of this “accurate use”. The standards of academic honesty and integrity, and citation of sources, apply to all forms of academic work, including submissions of drafts of final papers or projects. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty and integrity.

Definitions and Examples of Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating on examinations, either by copying another student’s work or by utilizing unauthorized materials
- using work of others as one’s own original work and submitting such work to the university or to scholarly journals, magazines, or similar publications
- submission of another students’ work obtained by theft or purchase as one’s own original work
- submission of work downloaded from paid or unpaid sources on the internet as one’s own original work, or including the information in a submitted work without proper citation
- submitting the same work for more than one course without the knowledge and explicit approval of all of the faculty members involved
- destruction or defacement of the work of others
- aiding or abetting any act of academic dishonesty
- any attempt to gain academic advantage by presenting misleading information, making deceptive statements or falsifying documents, including documents related to internships
- engaging in other forms of academic misconduct that violate principles of integrity.

Please download the complete document, available on Blackboard along with this syllabus.

Required Readings

Brewster, Bill and Frank Broughton. *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*.
New York: Grover Press, 2000.

Farrugia, Rebekah. *Beyond The Dancefloor: Female DJs, Technology and Electronic Dance Music Culture*. Bristol & Chicago: Intellect, 2012.

Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Sound Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Course Requirements

Please note that final grades are dependent upon consistent performance in all course requirements.

- **Read and view all assigned material, and listen to music selections on time and participate in class discussion between Monday mornings and Thursday evenings of each week.**

- **Lead Class Discussion:** Choose a week and lead a discussion on one of the assigned texts. Be ready to comment on the questions posted each week by the instructor, and to keep the conversation going with your peers.
- **Final Essay:** Write a final essay between 2000 to 2500 words which critically discusses a specific music genre. Details on the final essay will be provided around the middle of the term.
- **There are no make-ups.** Please check with the instructor for possible exceptions. Not consulting with the instructor prior to the dates when assignments are due will lead to an automatic F. **The Final essay cannot be late—no exceptions.**

Grading

- **Participation in class discussion** (includes weekly online contribution of at least two substantial entries on blackboard): **33%**
- **Leading a weekly class discussion on a specific text.** Comment on the questions posted each week by the instructor: **33%**
- **Final Essay** which reflects critically on the issues discussed throughout the term: **34%**

Total 100%

Grade Scale

Letter grade assignments are as follows:

- 94-100 = A
- 90-93 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 84-86 = B
- 80-83 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 74-76 = C
- 70-73 = C-
- 60-69 = D
- 0-59 = F

Attendance

- Three weeks of non-participation = F, Inability to post commentary by Thursday evening of each week will not affect your grade immediately, but it may be an important variable to evaluate overall class participation.
- One week of non-participation is worth 8.5% of overall grade.
- There is no excuse for non-participation unless it is an extreme case. Please check with instructor for exceptions.

Office hours: Contact via e-mail

Semester Schedule

Please note that all online material, including discography is available at

http://navasse.net/NS/NCOM3039A_SM14

Week 1

June 2, - 6, 2014

Introduction to class

Focus: Pre-history/Critical Context

1900 –1960s

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Evaluate chapters in books to decide on a week to lead a discussion. All students must lead a weekly discussion during the term.

Week 2

June 9 – 13, 2014

Focus: Dub Music/Hip-Hop

Jacques Attali, "Noise: The Political Economy of Music," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 29-39

Michael Veal, "Starship Africa," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 454-467.

Brewster (*Last Night a DJ...*), Chapters 1 – 3

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Weekly discussion leaders announced.

Week 3

June 16 – 20, 2014

Focus: Dub/Disco/Hip-Hop

Tricia Rose (*Black Noise*), Chapters 1 – 2

Brewster (*Last Night a DJ...*) chapters 4 – 6

Louise Meintjes, "The Recording Studio as Fetish," In *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 265-283

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Week 4

June 23 – 27, 2014

Focus: Hip-Hop/House Music

Rose (*Black Noise*), chapters 3 – 4

Brewster (*Last Night A DJ...*) chapters 7, 10 – 11

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Week 5

June 30 – July 4, 2014

Focus: Techno /Trip-Hop/Downtempo

Rose (*Black Noise*), chapter 5

Brewster (*Last Night A DJ...*) chapter 12

Rebekah Farrugia, *Beyond the Dancefloor*, chapters 1 & 2

Friedrich Kittler, "Gramophone," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 234-248

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Week 6

July 7 – 11, 2014

Focus: Trip-Hop/Downtempo/Drum 'n' Bass

Excerpts from Simon Reynold's *Energy Flash*, "Jungle and Drum 'n' Bass," (PDF)

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Rebekah Farrugia, *Beyond the Dancefloor*, Chapters 3 & 4

John Mowitt, "The Sound of Music in the Era of Its Electronic Reproducibility," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 213-224.

Week 7

July 14 – 18, 2014

Focus: Dubstep

Excerpts from Simon Reynold's *Energy Flash*, "UK Garage and 2Step", (PDF)

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

Emily Thompson, "Sound Modernity and History," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 117-129.

Michele Martin, "Gender and Early Telephone Culture," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 336-350

Lisa Gitelman, "The phonograph's New Media Publics," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 283-303

Week 8

Focus: International Horizon

July 21 – 25, 2014

Shuhei Hosokawa, "The Walkman Effect," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 104 – 116

Jody Berland, "Contradicting Media: Toward a Political Phenomenology of Listening," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 40 - 48

Michele Chion, "The Three Listening Modes," in *The Sound Studies Reader*, pp. 48 – 53

Eduardo Navas, "Regressive and Reflexive Mashups in Sampling Culture," (PDF): <http://remixtheory.net/?p=444>

Week 9

July 28 – August 1, 2014

Final Text due on July 31 at 12 noon.