

**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**  
**Summer 2015**

**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 will summarize a chapter of their choice for their respective weeks and must be ready to discuss the questions posted by the instructor, and share their views and analysis of the discography for the week of their choice.

The students leading the discussion for their respective week will arrange a time for a video conference or a skype text-chat 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. Each student only needs to attend his or her respective meeting with the professor. All students, however, are expected to post responses and comment as explained below. The video/chat 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 should not 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 one response to each of the assigned readings each week demonstrating that they have read the assigned texts and listened

to the assigned music selection. The posts can be brief comments on what someone else posted, but they should be specific with direct references to the text/s discussed. 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, which consists on writing a critical analysis of an event of choice the student attends. The event needs to be a music engagement relevant to the genres discussed throughout the term.

By Thursday night of each week every participant should have finished posting, 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/chat 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, and when a text is discussed, proper page citation. 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 Canvas along with this syllabus.*

### **Required Readings**

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

Reynolds, Simon. *Energy Flash*. Berkeley: Softskull Press, 2012.

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

Navas, Eduardo et. al. *The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies*, 2015.

### **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 to discussions on Canvas): **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\\_SM15](http://navasse.net/NS/NCOM3039A_SM15)

### Week 1

June 1, - 5, 2015

Introduction to class

Focus: early history/Critical Context

1900 –1960s

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Canvas

**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 8 – 12, 2015

Focus: Dub Music/Hip-Hop

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

Martin Irvine, "Remix and the Dialogic Engine of Culture," *The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies*, pp. 15 - 42

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Canvas

**Weekly discussion leaders announced.**

### Week 3

June 15 – 19, 2015

Focus: Dub/Disco/Hip-Hop

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

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

Stephan Sonvilla-Weiss, "Good Artists Copy; Great Artists Steal," *The Routledge Companion to Remix Studies*, pp. 54-67

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

### Week 4

June 22 – 26, 2015

Focus: Hip-Hop/House Music

Rose (*Black Noise*), chapters 3 – 4

Brewster (*Last Night A DJ...*) chapters 7 – 9

Kembrew McLeod, "An Oral History of Sampling," *The Routledge Companion [...]*, pp. 83 - 95

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

### Week 5

June 29 – July 3, 2015

Focus: Techno /Trip-Hop/Downtempo

Brewster (*Last Night A DJ...*) chapter 10-12

Reynolds, "Feed Your Head: Intelligent Techno, Ambient and Trance," *Energy Flash*, pp. 155 – 186.

Margie Borschke, "The Extended Remix," *The Routledge Companion [...]*, pp. 104 - 111

## **Week 6**

July 6 – 10, 2015

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

Reynolds, "Roots 'n Future: Ungle Takes Over London," *Energy Flash*, pp. 237 – 254.

Reynolds, "America the Rave," pp. 274 – 312.

Reynolds, "Sound of Paranoia: Trip Hop, Tricky and Pre-Millenium Tension," *Energy Flash*, pp. 313 – 334.

Nate Harrison, "Reflections on the Amen Break," *The Routledge Companion* [...] pp. 444 – 452.

View and listen to multimedia material online and discuss on Blackboard

## **Week 7**

July 13 – 17, 2015

Focus: Dubstep

Reynolds, "War in the Jungle: Intelligent Drum and Bass Versus Techstep," *Energy Flash*, pp. 335 – 362.

Reynolds, "Digital Psychedelia: Sampling and the Soundscape," *Energy Flash*, pp. 363 – 379.

Reynolds, "Two Steps Beyond: UK Garage and 2step," *Energy Flash*, pp. 446 – 458.

Aram Sinnreich, "The Emerging Ethics of Networked Culture," *The Routledge Companion*, [...], pp. 227 – 245.

## **Week 8**

Focus: International Horizon

July 20 – 24, 2015

Rose (*Black Noise*), chapter 5

Eduardo Navas, "Culture and Remix: A Theory on Cultural Sublation," *The Routledge Companion* [...], 116 – 131.

Roy Christopher, "The End of an Aura: Nostalgia, Memory, and the Haunting of Hip Hop," *The Routledge Companion* [...], pp. 204 – 216.

Rachel O'Dwyer, "A Capital Remix," *The Routledge Companion* [...], pp. 323 – 332.

## **Week 9**

**July 27 – July 31, 2014**

**Final Text due on July 31 at 12 noon.**