

Comm 410: Radio, Records, and Popular Music

Spring 2006

Tuesdays and Thursdays

11:10-12:25

Bolton 018

Professor Eric W. Rothenbuhler

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Office hours:

1:30-3:30 Tuesdays, Thursdays, and by appointment.

Readings:

Mark Katz, Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music. Berkeley:

University of California Press, 2004.

Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, & Jason Toynbee (Eds.), The Popular Music Studies Reader.

New York: Routledge.

Selections from other books and journals available on closed reserve and as photocopies.

See the supplementary bibliography at the end of the syllabus for additional suggestions on various topics related to the course.

Description:

This is a course about the interaction of communication technologies and media industries in the evolution of American popular music, from the 1920s to today. We will examine musical aesthetics, style, and expression in relation to the record and radio industries, their growing audiences, and some major issues of changing social order, including race, class, sex, regionalism, urbanism, and migration. In regard to technology we will address the phonograph, radio, sound film, jukebox, tape recorder, transistor, multi-track studio, digital recording, and digital distribution. In regard to music we will give special attention to jazz, blues, country, and the rise of rock and roll, focusing on the 1920s through the 1950s. Students will be asked to bring examples of more recent music from their own collections to class to illustrate key concepts from the readings and lectures. In regard to theory the class will use a wide range of concepts from communication theory, sociology, anthropology, musicology, history, and elsewhere. We will emphasize four conceptual points of view, examining popular recorded music as music, as business, as technology, and as communicative activity.

There are no formal prerequisites for the class other than junior or senior standing. Other senior level course work in communication, sociology, American history and other humanities and social sciences will be very helpful. Musical education and experience will be very helpful. I will aim to teach the few basic concepts of musicology needed in the class, but some students may need to put extra work into this outside of class.

In addition to deepening your analytic perspective and historical knowledge in regard to American popular music and media, I hope this course will also produce a sense of wonder and appreciation, even love, for the exuberant diversity of American musical expression.

Grading:

There will be two exams, each worth 25% of the course grade. A research paper due late in the semester will be worth 30% of the course grade. Informed participation in class discussion and prepared participation in classroom exercises will count for 20%. The exams may include multiple choice, matching, and short answer questions, they may also include take home essay questions. Exams may require identification or analysis of music or audio examples played during the exam period. The research paper will require extensive additional reading and independent analysis. Successful papers will use concepts from throughout the class and the student's independent reading in original analyses of musical cases selected for the student's own interests. Details will be available in a handout during the first few weeks of class. All students are required to meet with me at least once to discuss their research papers.

Other course policies:

Attendance and participation: Both listening and talking, as appropriate given the size of the class, are expected of all students. We will try to have as much discussion as lecture. I will call on people to share their thoughts about our readings. On designated days students will be asked to bring examples of music to play and talk about in class. I will expect everyone to attend and to be prepared every day. The exceptions are, of course, for university-approved absences.

Due dates and make up exams: There will be no late papers, no missed deadlines, and no make up exams—unless prior arrangements have been made or there is a genuine emergency. The final exam, which will be held at the university-scheduled time, cannot be changed. Of course we can make arrangements to work around university-approved absences or other circumstances genuinely beyond your control; talk with me as soon as possible. Please note that your attendance to jobs, internships, other classes, family events, and relationships are not genuinely beyond your control. If an emergency prevents you from meeting a deadline or attending a test, contact me as soon as possible and then, with proper documentation of the emergency, we can make other arrangements.

Additional readings: There are recommended readings listed in the supplementary bibliography at the end of the syllabus. I can offer other suggestions as well. Please do stop by the office if you would like to talk about additional readings.

Listening: Sound and music are the central objects of analysis in this class. Of course we are all listening all the time, even when we are asleep. We have strong habits of listening. In this class, though, we want to listen more, differently, and deeper than normal. We have to put more into our listening so that we can get more out of it. The homework assignment for every single day of the semester is to open your ears and listen

thoughtfully; work to break your listening habits, and work to become aware of the qualities of sound of the world you live in.

You will find listening assignments along with the reading assignments in the course schedule. These are designed to help you apply some of the ideas in the readings. You should always be ready to discuss your listening using the terms and modes of analysis we are learning in the readings. Periodically I will ask people to bring examples to class and we will take turns listening to each others' music and discussing what we hear.

In class I will play pieces of music to illustrate points from the readings, lecture, or discussion. You need to be able to hear the illustration clearly and quickly. That will depend on your already having spent time listening to music for the purpose of hearing what is discussed in the readings. You should listen to music to identify the points made in each week's readings, either the very music discussed, or music for which the same issues are relevant. This type of listening is just as important as the assigned reading; you are not prepared for class unless you have done both. Evans Library has listening facilities and music and audio collections you can use and music is ubiquitously available elsewhere (your own collections, your parents, radio, jukeboxes, the internet, public libraries, etc.)—just remember to listen thoughtfully.

In addition to listening to assigned material before class and again in class, I encourage you to spend one additional hour every week outside of class thoughtfully listening to music for purposes of learning. This would not be your normal music listening. This should be listening to new music, listening in a new way, in a context or by a medium different than your usual, or for purposes of examining ideas from the course. Again you can use the library facilities, the internet, record stores, your friends, jukeboxes, and more.

Showing that you can use ideas from class to discuss your music listening will be an important part of the participation grade.

Special accommodations: If you require accommodation for a disability, please contact me during the first week of class so that I may make arrangements for you. "The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B-116 of Cain Hall, call 845-1637, or e-mail ssd@tamu.edu"

Academic honesty: Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of scholastic dishonesty will not be committed in this course. Please familiarize yourself with the University's penalty for these offenses. Please see <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/>

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal or tolerate those who do.”

Course schedule

Note: Changes are possible so that we can adjust to fit students' interests, schedule guest speakers, or respond to current events.

Week One:

1-17, Introduction

1-19, Guest lecture: Antonio La Pastina, Brazilian culture and music in the US.

Week Two:

1-24, Guest lecture: La Pastina, cont. Ch. 15 in PMSR, Kahn-Harris, The relationship between the global and the local within the extreme metal scene.

1-26, PMRC, Ch. 30, Rick Altman, The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Music

Week Three:

1-31, Katz, Ch. 1, Causes.

2-2, cont.

Week Four:

2-7, Katz, Ch. 2, Making America More Musical

2-9, Katz, Ch. 3, Capturing Jazz

Week Five:

2-14, Katz, Ch. 4, Aesthetics Out of Exigency

2-16, Katz, Ch. 6, The Turntable as Weapon

Week Six:

2-21, Katz, Ch. 7, Music in 1s and 0s

2-23, Katz, Ch. 8, Listening in Cyberspace

Week Seven: Midterm

2-28, Review

3-2, Exam

Week Eight:

3-7, Eric Rothenbuhler & Tom McCourt, The economics of the recording industry (in A. Alexander, J. Owers, R. Carveth, C. A. Hollifield, & A. N. Greco, Eds., Media economics: Theory and practice, 3rd ed., available as photocopy).

3-9, PMSR, Ch. 26, Simon Frith, The Industrialization of Music

Spring Break

Week Nine:

3-21, PMSR, Ch. 27, James P. Kraft, Musicians in Hollywood

3-23, PMSR, Ch. 28, David Hesmondhalgh, The British Dance Music Industry

Week Ten:

3-28, PMSR, Ch. 29, Dominic Power & Daniel Hallencreutz, Profiting from Creativity?

3-30, PMSR, Ch. 31, Andrew Goodwin, Rationalization and Democratization in the New Technologies of Popular Music

Week Eleven:

4-4, PMSR, Ch. 32 & 33, Paul Théberge, Music/Technology/Practice, and Kodwo Eshun, Futurhythmachine

4-6, PMSR, Ch. 34, Marjorie D. Kibby, Home on the Page

Week Twelve:

4-11, PMSR, Ch. 35, Eric W. Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt, Commercial Radio and Popular Music

4-13, PMSR, Ch. 36, Bob Hanke, “Yo Quiero Mi MTV!”

Week Thirteen:

4-18, PMSR, Ch. 37, Jeff Smith, Popular Songs and Comic Allusion in Contemporary Cinema

4-20, PMSR, Ch. 38, Dave Laing, Anglo-American Music Journalism

Week Fourteen:

4-25, Catch up

4-27, Review

Final Exam:

Friday, May 5, 3:00-5:00, Bolton 018

Supplementary Bibliography

This is a listing of other valuable readings on various topics of the course.

General sources and anthologies, history, theory, and analysis.

- Michael Chanan, Repeated takes: A short history of recording and its effects on music.
 Evan Eisenberg, The recording angel: The experience of music from Aristotle to Zappa.
 Simon Frith (Ed), Facing the Music. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.
 Simon Frith & Andrew Goodwin (Eds.), On Record: Rock, Pop, & the Written Word.
 New York: Pantheon Books.
 William Howland Kenney, Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
 James Lull (Ed.), Popular Music and Communication (2nd ed.). Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992.
 Andre Millard, American on Record: A History of Recorded Sound. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
 Keith Negus, Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction. Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.
 Derek B. Scott, Music, Culture, and Society: A Reader. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
 Roy Shuker, Understanding Popular Music. New York: Routledge, 1994.

On music as music; musicology and aesthetics in popular music studies.

- Simon Frith, Performing rites: On the value of popular music.
 Griel Marcus, Corrupting the absolute (in Frith & Goodwin, Eds., On record).
 Susan McClary & Robert Walser, Start making sense! Musicology wrestles with rock (in Frith & Goodwin).
 Roy Shuker, Understanding popular music, Chapter 6, Texts and genres.
 Robert Walser, pp. 39-56, Running with the devil: Power gender, and madness in heavy metal music.

On music, business, and industry.

- Robert Burnett, The Global Jukebox: The International Music Industry. New York: Routledge, 1996.
 Mary Harron, McRock: Pop as commodity (in Simon Frith, Ed., Facing the music).
 Geoffrey P. Hull, The recording industry, esp. Chapters 1, 2, 6, & 7.
 Keith Negus, Music Genres and Corporate Cultures. New York: Routledge, 1999.
 Eric Rothenbuhler & Tom McCourt, The economics of the recording industry (in A. Alexander, J. Owers, R. Carveth, C. A. Hollifield, & A. N. Greco, Eds., Media economics: Theory and practice, 3rd ed.).
 Shuker, Chapter 2, The music industry.
 Harold L. Vogel, Entertainment industry economics: A guide for financial analysis (4th ed.), esp. Chapters 1 & 5.

On music and technology.

- Andre Millard, America on record, Introduction, Ch. 6, The machines, and Ch. 12, The record.

Michael Chanan, Repeated takes: A short history of recording and its effects on music. Paul D. Greene & Thomas Porcello (Eds.), Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Evan Eisenberg, The recording angel: The experience of music from Aristotle to Zappa.

Steve Jones, Rock formation, Chapters 1 & 2: Technology and popular music; The history of sound recording.

Jonathan Sterne, The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Paul Théberge, Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making Music / Consuming Technology. Hanover, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Music as social activity; audience, communication, and social structure.

Susan D. Crafts, Daniel Cavicchi, & Charles Keil, My music.

Lawrence Grossberg, Is there Rock after Punk? (in Frith & Goodwin).

Lawrence Grossberg, Rock and Roll in Search of an Audience (in James Lull, Ed., Popular Music and Communication, 2nd ed.).

Stuart Hall & Paddy Whannel, The young audience (in Frith & Goodwin).

Dick Hebdige, Style as Homology and Signifying Practice (in Frith & Goodwin).

William Howland Kenney, Recorded music in American life: The phonograph and popular memory, 1890-1945, Ch. 1, Two “circles of resonance”: Audience uses of recorded music.

James Lull, Popular Music and Communication: An Introduction (in Lull).

David Riesman, Listening to popular music (in Frith & Goodwin).

Shuker, Chapter 1, Popular culture, popular music, and media literacy; and Ch. 9, Audiences, fans, and subcultures.

Jazz and Blues in the 1920s and 1930s

Millard, Ch. 5, Recorded sound in the jazz age, and Ch. 7, Competing technologies.

Chanan, Chapters 4, Recording electrified; Ch. 5, Enter the talkies.

Rick Kennedy, Jelly Roll, Bix, and Hoagy: Gennett studios and the birth of recorded jazz.

William Howland Kenney, Chicago jazz: A cultural history, 1904-1930, Chapter 5, Chicago's jazz records.

Kenney, Recorded music, Ch. 6, African American blues and the phonograph: From race records to rhythm and blues.

Swing Music and the Culture Industry System

Millard, Ch. 8, Empires of sound, and Ch. 9, Swing and the mass audience.

David W. Stowe, Swing changes: Big band music and New Deal America.

Country Music in the 1920s and 1930s

Richard A. Peterson, Creating country music: Fabricating authenticity. See especially, Chapter 3, Renewable tradition: The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers, and Ch. 7, Barn dance in the air.

Kenney, Recorded music, Ch. 7, Economics and the invention of hillbilly records in the south.

Commerce and Creativity in the Emergence of Rock and Roll.

Chanan, Chapter 6, Of LPs, EPs, DJs and payola.

Philip H. Ennis, The seventh stream: The emergence of rocknroll in American popular music.

Millard, Chapter 11, Rock 'n' roll and the revolution in music.

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

Studio Practices and Recording Aesthetics

Chanan, Chapter 8, The record and the mix.

Jones, Chapters 6, The process of sound recording; Ch. 7, Technology and the musician; Ch. 8, Rock, roll, 'n record.

Edward R. Kealy, From craft to art: The case of sound mixers and popular music (in Frith & Goodwin).

Millard, Ch. 13, The studio, and Ch. 14, Perfecting studio recording.

Shuker, Chapter 5, making music.

Jonathan D. Tankel, The practice of recording music: Remixing as recoding, Journal of Communication, 1990, 40 (3), 34-46.