

WMST 488R • Fall 2011

Senior Seminar: Gender & Popular Music

(abbreviated course outline for web)

Tuesdays 3-5:30pm

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Course Description

“How could you not talk of identity when talking about music? ... All musical listening is a form of confrontation, of encounter, of the meeting of worlds and meanings, when identity is made self-aware and is, therefore, menaced through its own interrogation.”

- Josh Kun, *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2005), p.13

This women’s studies senior seminar is an interdisciplinary exploration of gender and popular music, drawing from such fields as American, African American, and ethnic studies; ethnomusicology; media and cultural studies. Popular music is an especially fruitful area of inquiry for women’s studies scholars because it is a realm in which gender identities and feminist communities are creatively formed and expressed. Additionally, by de-familiarizing accessible forms of music, we can learn to critique power and social inequalities in contemporary and historical contexts.

The course will survey a range of genres and performance styles circulating in the U.S. from the early twentieth century to the present. At times we will interrogate the organizing frames of “gender,” “popular,” and “music” in the course title, in an effort to rethink boundaries and limitations of those categories. Part of our task will also be to analyze how notions of national belonging and citizenship are produced and contested in “American” popular music. Course texts are informed by intersections of feminist, disability, critical race, transnational, and queer theories; and include work by historians, ethnographers, journalists, documentary filmmakers, and musicians themselves.

Assignments and in-class activities will develop your skills in research, writing, presentation, and collaboration. In our discussions of readings, we will pay particular attention to scholars’ modes of inquiry, examining texts not only for their content but also for how a project is put together. For example: What sources do scholars (and filmmakers, etc.) turn to for documenting women as producers and consumers of popular music, and for representing gender and other modalities of social difference? How do different disciplinary locations and writing/presentation styles construct questions of identity in popular music in divergent ways? We will apply insights from these inquiries toward your own production of a final research paper.

Our activities in class will work toward completion of your project in incremental stages. These will include instruction on how to conduct research online and at the UMD library; how to create and publish a blog; how to compile and write an annotated bibliography; how to construct a paper outline with an argument supported by evidence; how to communicate scholarly research

effectively in a talk, using presentation software such as PowerPoint or Keynote. The success of these activities will partly depend on work that you do outside of class to prepare. Over the course of the semester, we will strive to make the research process transparent and to create a collaborative and supportive intellectual community.

Course Objectives

- to analyze significant issues of women, gender, identity, and power in contemporary studies of popular music in the U.S.
- to gain an understanding of how social and/or cultural differences, inequalities, and/or relations of power circulate in popular music
- to survey approaches to the study of women/gender in popular music from a range of disciplinary locations, across fields in the humanities, arts, and journalism
- to practice and improve skills in research, writing, collaboration, digital media and oral presentation

Semester Schedule and Course Readings

This syllabus is subject to change as we move through the course; students will be notified in advance of any changes to readings, assignments, exams or grading. All readings are to be done before the date under which they are listed. Please bring readings to class (hard copy or electronic format) so that you may reference them during discussion.

WEEK 1

Tues 9/6: Greetings, Course Overview

Read “Reading, Writing, Citing” and (optionally) “How to Read” PDFs; available on ELMS, under Course Documents

In class: Watch and discuss *Radical Act* documentary (1995)

WEEK 2

Tues 9/13: Introductions to Music and Gender

Moisala, Pirkko, and Beverley Diamond. “Music and Gender—Negotiating Shifting Worlds,” introduction to *Music and Gender*, edited by P. Moisala and B. Diamond (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1-19.

Rustin, Nichole T., and Sherrie Tucker. “Introduction,” *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 1-28.

Recommended (read as much as you can):

McClary, Susan. "Feminine Endings in Retrospect" and ch. 1, "Introduction: A Material Girl in Bluebeard's Castle," in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, reprinted with a new introduction, 2002), ix-xx, 3-31.

Recommended websites:

Feminist Music Geek: <http://feministmusicgeek.com/>

Women's Audio Mission: <http://www.womensaudiomission.org/>

WEEK 3

Tues 9/20: Popular Music, Identity, Time and Place

Kun, Josh. "Introduction: Strangers Among Sounds," *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 1-28.

Lipsitz, George. "Crossing Over: The Hidden History of Diaspora," ch. 2 in *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 26-53.

Halberstam, Judith. "What's That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives," ch. 7 in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York University Press, 2005), 152-87.

In class: Watch excerpts of documentary *Who Took the Bomp?: Le Tigre on Tour* (2011)

Recommended:

Rodgers, Tara. One or more of these interviews: Susan Morabito, Giulia Loli (DJ Mutamassik), Rekha Malhotra (DJ Rekha), in *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

WEEK 4

Tues 9/27: Black Women's Performance as Social History

Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), selected chapters TBA.

Vogel, Shane. "Lena Horne's Impersona," ch. 5 in *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), 167-93.

Recommended (on gender & sexuality in vocal performance):

Hayward, Eva. "The Sexuality of Androgynous Singing," *IndyWeek.com*, July 6, 2011. <http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/the-sexuality-of-androgynous-singing/Content?oid=2601437>

**** IN CLASS: Visit UMD library / meet with librarian for overview of resources**

WEEK 5

Tues 10/4: Pop Celebrity, Cultural Memory, and Mourning

Paredes, Deborah. "Preface" and "Introduction: Selenidad and Latinidad in the 1990s," in *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), xi-xvii, 1-30.

Barnes, Brooks. "A Star Idolized and Haunted, Michael Jackson Dies at 50," *New York Times*, June 25, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/26/arts/music/26jackson.html?pagewanted=all>

Powers, Ann. "A Performer Who Kept Transcending Boundaries," *Pop & Hiss, The L.A. Times music blog*, June 25, 2009. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/music_blog/2009/06/michael-jackson-a-performer-who-kept-transcending-boundaries.html

Als, Hilton. "Michael." *New York Review of Books*, August 13, 2009. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/aug/13/michael/?pagination=false>

Harris-Perry, Melissa. "The Black Funeral of Michael Jackson," *The Nation*, July 8, 2009. <http://www.thenation.com/blog/black-funeral-michael-jackson>

Jefferson, Margo. "Michael Jackson: The King And Us," *The Washington Post*, June 27, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/26/AR2009062603485.html>

WEEK 6

Tues 10/11: Music Journalism and Feminist Movements

Marcus, Sara. *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), selected chapters TBA.

Recommended:

McDonnell, Evelyn. "The Feminine Critique: The Secret History of Women and Rock Journalism," introduction to *Rock She Wrote: Women Write About Rock, Pop, and Rap*, edited by E. McDonnell and A. Powers (New York: Delta, 1995), 5-23.

**** IN CLASS: Discussion with special guest, Sara Marcus, author of *Girls to the Front***

**** Marcus will also give a public talk at 7 PM that evening, details TBA**

WEEK 7

Tues 10/18: Masculinity, Technological Mastery, and Musical Expertise

**** MEDIA ARCHIVE assignment due at beginning of class**

Bring to class: your idea(s) for a final paper topic; we will brainstorm together

Keightley, Keir. "'Turn It Down!' She Shrieked: Gender, Domestic Space, and High Fidelity, 1948-59," *Popular Music* 15, no. 2 (May 1996), 149-177.

Stoeber-Ackerman, Jennifer. "Gendered Ears," *Sounding Out! The Sound Studies Blog*, October 26, 2009: <http://soundstudiesblog.com/2009/10/26/gendered-ears/>

WEEK 8

Tues 10/25: Women as Instrumentalists; All-Women Jazz Ensembles: 1940s, 2010s

Bring to class: preliminary list of sources from web & library searches on your topic

Tucker, Sherrie. "Introduction: 'It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't in the History Books,'" ch. 1, "Working the Swing Shift: Effects of World War II on All-Girl Bands," and "Conclusion: Postwar Changes, Familiar Refrains," in *Swing Shift: 'All-Girl' Bands of the 1940s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 1-29, 33-69, 317-34.

Recommended (listen to/read at least one NPR report):

NPR report, "Women In Jazz: Taking Back All-Female Ensembles" (6 min 31 sec): <http://www.npr.org/blogs/therecord/2010/10/29/130915265/the-mosaic-project>

NPR report, "Nine Women In The Room: A Jazz Musicians' Roundtable": <http://www.npr.org/blogs/therecord/2010/11/01/130978669/nine-women-in-the-room-a-jazz-musicians-roundtable>

NPR report, "America's 'Sweethearts': An All-Girl Band the Broke Racial Boundaries" (8 min 15 sec): <http://www.npr.org/2011/03/22/134766828/americas-sweethearts-an-all-girl-band-that-broke-racial-boundaries>

In class: Watch excerpts, *Sister Rosetta Tharpe: Godmother of Rock 'n' Roll* (BBC documentary)

WEEK 9

Tues 11/1: Women's Music of the 1970s

Hayes, Eileen. *Songs in Black and Lavender: Race, Sexual Politics, and Women's Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), selected chapters TBA.

Sandstrom, Boden. Review of *Songs in Black and Lavender*, in *American Music* (Summer 2011): 273-75.

****IN CLASS: Watch *Radical Harmonies* documentary (2002); Q&A with special guest, co-producer of the film, Dr. Boden Sandstrom, UMD Musicology & Ethnomusicology**

WEEK 10

Tues 11/8: Gendered Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop

Bring to class: your final paper research question; we will discuss and revise together

Perry, Imani. "B-Boys, Players, and Preachers: Reading Masculinity," and "The Venus Hip Hop and the Pink Ghetto: Negotiating Spaces for Women," chs. 4 and 5 in *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 117-90.

WEEK 11

Tues 11/15: Expanding Musical Boundaries: Pauline Oliveros's Sonic Experimentalism

Bring to class: working bibliography of primary & secondary sources; we will edit and amend, and workshop annotated bibliographies

Mockus, Martha. "Intonation" and "Meditation," chs. 1 and 3 in *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1-16, 37-88.

Recommended:

Rodgers, Tara. Interview with Pauline Oliveros in *Pink Noises*, 27-33.

Oliveros, Pauline. "Preface," *Deep Listening: A Composer's Practice* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), xv-xix.

WEEK 12

Tues 11/22: Social Constructions of Disability; Music in Deaf Communities

****FINAL PAPER PROSPECTUS due at beginning of class**

Wendell, Susan. "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability," *Hypatia* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 104-24.

Lane, Harlan. "Construction of Deafness," ch. 6 in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 79-91.

Glennie, Evelyn. "Hearing Essay," http://www.evelyn.co.uk/hearing_essay.aspx

D-PAN website & videos:

http://articles.cnn.com/2009-02-01/living/ypwr.forbes_1_music-videos-deaf-people-lapin
<http://www.d-pan.com/>

Improvisation Across Abilities: Adaptive Use Musical Instruments

http://www.unitedstatesartists.org/project/improvisation_across_abilities_adaptive_use/about/updates; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABqABv7MnmM>

DVD screening (?) time TBA: *Touch the Sound: A Sound Journey with Evelyn Glennie* (2005).

WEEK 13

Tues 11/29: Presentations of Work-in-Progress

WEEK 14

Tues 12/6: Presentations of Work-in-Progress

WEEK 15

Tues 12/13: Final Class / Review / Individual Meetings

**** Fri 12/16: FINAL PAPER due via e-mail no later than 6 PM ****