

POLS 390

Politics & Popular Music

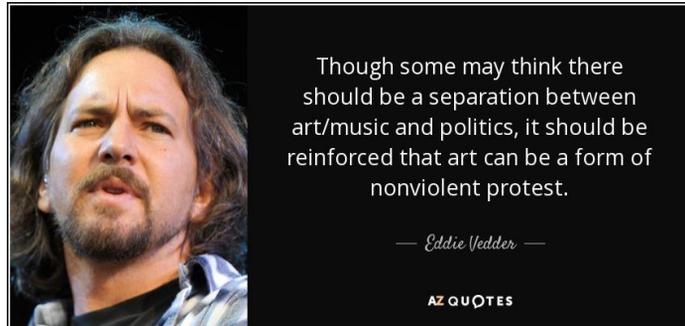
Online Course

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Office Hours: T TH 8-9:30am
 Zulauf 405



Beyoncé performs "Formation" at the Super Bowl, 2016.



Though some may think there should be a separation between art/music and politics, it should be reinforced that art can be a form of nonviolent protest.

— Eddi Vedder —

AZ QUOTES

No textbook required!
All course readings are free on Blackboard.



Ted Nugent and Kid Rock and their wives with Sarah Palin and President Trump in the Oval Office

In the United States, there has been a connection between music and politics since the nation's founding. Politicians, social movements, and the citizenry have routinely expressed political views through music. What messages are these actors sending? Are the messages being received? Is there something unique about music that changes the nature of the message? Music has been used for both pro-establishment and anti-establishment purposes. National anthems, patriotic songs, campaign songs, protest songs, and anti-war songs are just some examples of the ways in which politics and music intersect. Unlike other forms of music, political music is usually not ambiguous, and is therefore relatively easily discerned by listeners. In this course we will explore various types of political music and topical songs over time with an emphasis on contemporary music and how it relates to various social movements and issues particularly those involving race, class, and gender.

Through readings, discussion, films, and, of course, music, we will examine how artists such as Billie Holiday, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Marvin Gaye, and N.W.A. have had their political songs both understood and misunderstood by politicians and citizens alike. We will examine these issues through an historical examination of the development of American popular music from early blackface minstrelsy to blues, country, jazz, folk, rock, rap and how they directly led to the current music of today: popular hip-hop.

The Order of Things

Module 01 - Lecture – Politics & Popular Music: Introduction; Required Reading: 1) Desisoff, R. Serge and Mark H. Levine. 1971. "The Popular Protest Song: The Case of "Eve of Destruction." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 35(1): 117-22; 2) Fox, William S and James D. Williams. 1974. "Political Orientation and Music Preferences Among College Students." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 38(3): 352-71.

Module 02 - Lecture – The Origins of Popular Music: From Blackface Minstrelsy to Tin Pan Alley

Module 03 - Lecture – Blues, Jazz, and Country: The Segregation of Popular Music

Module 04 - Lecture – The Birth (and Death) of Rock 'n' Roll

Module 05 - Lecture – The Beatles – Group Years; Required Reading: 1) Atkinson, Peter. 2011. "The Beatles on BBC Radio in 1963: The 'Scouse' Inflection and a Politics of Sound in the Rise of the Mersey Beat." *Popular Music and Society* 34 (2): 163-75; Sullivan, Mark. 1987. "More Popular Than Jesus: The Beatles and the Religious Far Right." *Popular Music* 6(3): 313-26.

The Midterm Exam will cover Modules 01-05.

Module 06 - Lecture – The Beatles – The Solo Years; Required Reading: 1) Bari, Martha Ann. 2007. *Mass Media is the Message: Yoko Ono and John Lennon's 1969 Year of Peace*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park; 2) Blackburn, Robin and Tariq Ali. 1971. "Lennon: The Working-Class Hero Turns Red." *Ramparts*. (July): 43-50; 3) Elliott, Anthony. 1998. "Celebrity and Political Psychology: Remembering Lennon." *Political Psychology* 19(4): 833-52.

Module 07 - Lecture – The Singer-Songwriter: From Folk to Folk Rock and Beyond

Module 08 - Lecture – The 60s & 70s: Popular Music & Political Culture

Module 09 - Lecture – Musical Fragmentation: Metal, Punk, Disco, and Rap

Module 10 - Film: *Straight Outta Compton* (2015).

The Final Exam will cover Module 06-16.

Politics & Popular Music Syllabus Page 2



“Woman in the Nigger of the World. Think About It. Do Something About It.”
-- John Lennon, 1972

Course Requirements

On-Line Participation

You are required to go to the discussion board on Blackboard and for each forum post one (and not more than two) messages (roughly 3-4 sentences) about the relevant course material or anything that relates to the course. You can either start your own thread or respond to a post that has already been made either by the instructor or another student. You should also read the posts that the other students in the class make. Your participation grade will be posted at the end of the course and is based on making at least one quality post in each of the different forums. Thus, making one quality post in each forum will earn you a perfect score for participation. You must complete all of your posts by the end of the semester by the date and time posted on the syllabus. No exceptions.

Mid-Term Exam

The mid-term will be an on-line, objective test consisting of both true-false and multiple choice questions. Once you begin the exam, you will have 30 minutes to answer 25 questions. Each question is worth 4 points each for a total of 100 points. The test will cover all of the material listed on the syllabus up until mid-term exam point on the syllabus. The test will be available on Blackboard throughout the semester. You may take the test at any time but you must complete it before the end of the course on the date specified on the syllabus.

Research Paper

You are required to do a research paper on some aspect of politics and popular music such as an artist, song, album, concert, political candidate or campaign, or any topic that fits with the course. Some topics are too broad and must be narrowed down. For example, “The Beatles” is far too broad a topic. “The Beatles and the Vietnam War” is narrower and therefore more appropriate. If you are unsure of whether your topic is appropriate be sure to check with the instructor. The paper must be 5-6pp., double-spaced, in length and uploaded to Blackboard through SafeAssign. Be sure to read the Paper Requirements document on Blackboard for details.

Final Exam

The final exam is the same format as the midterm but will only include the course material covered AFTER the midterm exam.

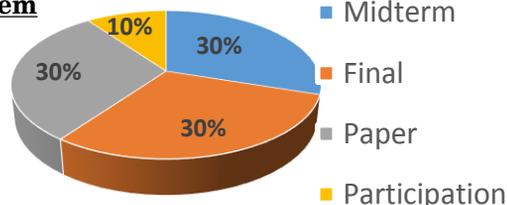
Due Dates! No Late Work Allowed. ☹️

- All Discussion Board posts must be completed by Friday Dec 8 Noon.
- Term Papers due by Friday Dec 8 Noon.
- Both exams must be completed by Wed Dec 13th Noon.

Your Grade

Grading System

93.5-100 = A
89.5-93.4 = A-
86.5-89.4 = B+
83.5-86.4 = B
79.5-83.4 = B-
74.5-79.4 = C+
69.5-74.4 = C
59.5-69.4 = D
0-59.4 = F



Recommended (but not Required) Reading

Aidi, Hisham, “America’s Hip-Hop Foreign Policy,” *The Atlantic*, March 20, 2014. <http://m.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/03/americas-quest-to-win-over-muslim-youth-with-rap/284522/>

Getten, Larry, “Every Song You Love Was Written by the Same Two Guys,” *New York Post*, Oct 4, 2015. <http://nypost.com/2015/10/04/your-favorite-song-on-the-radio-was-probably-written-by-these-two/>

Hiatt, Brian, “Natalie Maines: A Dixie Chick Declares War on Nashville,” *Rolling Stone*, May 30, 2013. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/natalie-maines-a-dixie-chick-declares-war-on-nashville-20130530>

Rich, Nathaniel, “Hit Charade: Meet the Bald Norwegians and Other Unknowns Who Actually Create the Songs that Top the Charts,” *Atlantic*, October 2015. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/hit-charade/403192/>

Jeffries, Michael P., “The Love Letter That Shook Hip-Hop,” *The Atlantic*, July 6, 2012. <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/07/the-love-letter-that-shook-hip-hop/259510/>

Saraiya, Sonia, “Iggy Azalea’s Strange Year,” *Salon* (2014). http://www.salon.com/2014/12/06/IGGY_AZALEAS_STRANGE_YEAR_WHAT_HER_LATEST_TWITTER_FE

The Fine Print

Cheating and Plagiarism - PLAGIARISM, SIMPLY DEFINED, IS TAKING SOMEONE ELSE’S WORDS OR IDEAS AND REPRESENTING THEM AS BEING YOUR OWN. It is specifically prohibited by University regulations, which state: “Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.” (Undergraduate Catalog)

Accessibility Statement - Northern Illinois University is committed to providing an accessible educational environment in collaboration with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Any student requiring an academic accommodation due to a disability should let his or her faculty member know as soon as possible. Students who need academic accommodations based on the impact of a disability will be encouraged to contact the DRC if they have not done so already. The DRC is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 (V) or drc@niu.edu. To assist NIU in providing an accessible and inclusive environment, the following suggested accessibility statements are provided for departmental and programmatic use. Please contact a DRC staff member with questions or concerns about regarding access for and inclusion of students with disabilities at NIU.