The Birth of Hip Hop and Rap: Arson, B-boys, Taggers and DJs
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This course is upper-level undergraduate satisfying both diversity and fine arts prerequisites.

GRADUATE CREDIT FOR THIS COURSE: In order to obtain graduate credit for this course, you must satisfactorily complete a graduate level project with a topic and parameters approved beforehand by the course instructor.

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Birth of Hip Hop will examine the musical, social, political, cultural, and economic conditions that brought about Black and Latino urban youth culture in the late 1970s and early 1980's. It will attempt to define hip hop as an alternative culture based on the values of community and self-expression; its members communicate through specific forms of language, dance, fashion, street art, and music -- all of which are historically grounded in the history of the African American; and to a less degree, the history and plight of the American Latin@. The consciousness of the hip hop movement understands the history and contribution of the African American to American society and culture; and seeks to celebrate, claim recognition for, and continue to evolve the movement.

A central issue in hip hop is the notion of authenticity, which this course will define as an individual having a visceral connection to the culture's collected awareness of suffering, empowerment, and sense of unity; and who brings a sense of urgency to the resolution of social injustice through art. The uninhibited and sincere expression of the self through art within this cultural milieu constitutes hip hop authenticity.

Also, this course will seek to debunk myths about hip hop culture, which conflate the gangsta rappers with the tenets, ambitions, and identity of the greater hip hop cultural movement. However sincere and needed the movement’s initiation was, the values of these rappers, who have appropriated the accoutrements of hip hop culture and have been aggressively promoted by the lucrative mainstream music business, are in direct conflict with the community-centered values of hip hop culture: the narcissism, misogynistic behavior, greed and self-indulgence of the gangsta rapper, are in conflict with the hip hop ethos of sharing and expressing. For this
reason, this course will examine seminal artists, such as Afrika Bambata and The Roots, whose contribution to hip hop is significant, but whose exposure to the general public have been overshadowed by the gansta rappers' presentation by the mainstream media.

Hip hop and rap music (as well as their predecessors) will be examined in detail with emphasis on innovation, assimilation, meaning and influence; rap and modern R & B music and lyrics will be analyzed for their technical and interpretive qualities. A comprehensive examination of African American cultural traditions, which greatly influenced the birth of hip hop dance and rap, will be presented; these will include such traditions as signifying, the trickster, ancient African religious beliefs and the dozens.

Overarching course themes include cyclic processes of teen rage and white appropriation; and the role of the music industry in both phenomena. A comprehensive overview of African American musical and spiritual history and culture will be presented and will include the birth and development of a uniquely African American culture in Colonial America and the Antebellum South beginning with the Middle Passage, the travesty of slavery and its effect on American music and society, the lasting legacy of Minstrelsy, the birth of jazz and its function in American society, and special emphasis on the Civil Rights Movement and its subsequent influence on African American music and culture and on American society in general.

2. COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goals

1. To engage the students in a multidisciplinary narrative on the social history of African American music with special emphasis on its functions in the spiritual life and work life of the African, slave, and post-civil war African American; and to frame the ethos of hip hop culture within the context of its inheritance of the legacy of African American music culture.
2. To develop academic literacy through the critique of rap lyrics by teaching students to identify characteristics such as irony, tone, and point of view; and to analyze lyrics for plot, motif, character development and metaphor.
3. To develop academic literacy through exercises and assignments involving one-on-one comparisons of a canonical poem and a song lyric.
4. To help students develop critical social consciousness through the lessons learned in the music, lyrics, musician biographies and events studied in the course.
5. To speculate and discuss the future of hip hop


**Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will understand American history from the perspective of the victim and develop an awareness of our indebtedness -- both individually and collectively -- to the African American; students will be able put the history of American popular music, and especially rap music, into the context of the new American history and view it as a venue for the conflict and resolution of issues relating to racial strife in America.
2. Students will be able see similarities between the events and legacies of African American history and their own experiences as members of a subgroup.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the technical and interpretive qualities of hip hop music: first, through the study of historical precedents for rap and antecedent forms of art directly influencing the birth of rap; and then, through the analysis of seminal songs in the history of hip hop. Students will be able to do the same for the other components of hip hop: graffiti and street art, fashion, dance, and DJing.
4. Students will develop the skills to:
   a. discern styles of music, fashion and street art; and recognize schools of DJing and dance.
   b. be cognizant of minute details and formal strata in rap and hip hop songs
   c. overcome bias and prejudice when making musical choices; and then scaffold their non-judgmental attitudes of music to other facets of their lives.
5. Students will appreciate the skills and organization involved in the production and distribution of popular music
6. Students will understand how music functions in society and in our lives and the profound effect it can have on human behavior
7. Students will be able to debunk the myth of the gangsta rapper and come to realize that African American society and culture is not accurately represented in the work of mainstream rappers of the past two and a half decades, who have defined the African American in shallow, two-dimensional ways by portraying the male as narcissistic, violent, misogynistic, greedy, homophobic, and arrogant; and the female as a submissive and soulless utility.
8. Students will leave the course with vital life-skills for coping and success, which they learn by accessing philosophy and ethics through the analysis and interpretation of song lyrics and musician biographies; and by understanding the underpinning causes and effects of important events in the history of American music culture, which serve as examples of injustice, fortitude, perseverance, empowerment and pride within the context of conflict.
9. Students will come to understand that hip-hop and rap are a continuation of African American musical traditions; that rap and hip hop evolve out ages-old African American creative processes and traditions; and that rap’s acceptance or rejection by mainstream America is consistent with the reaction of the white establishment to previous generations of African American music.

### 3. ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS
Assignments and Projects
(all assignment descriptions and guidelines will be posted on Blackboard)

Informant-Focused Field Work Project
Follow and expand on a set of guidelines designed to determine the role of music in the informant’s life. No restrictions on length as long as the guidelines have been satisfied.

Video Analysis
Critique a rap poem, draw conclusions about the main message, and speculate on visual imagery conveyed in the poem. Critique the music (rhythm, mood, form, color, style) and assess how it conveys the meaning of the poem. Compare the poem to the artist’s official video, drawing conclusions about the video’s efficacy in conveying the meaning of the poem.
1 - 2 pages, single-spaced.

CD Review
Draw conclusions about the viability of the recording following a set of guidelines designed to reveal the artist’s authenticity (sincerity, expressive abilities, mastery of craft). One page, single-spaced.

Live Performance Review
Following a set of guidelines designed to discern the ethos of the audience, authenticity of the performers, and technical quality of the performance (performance, audio production, visuals). 3/4 page, single-spaced.

Deep Listening/Song Analysis
In two parts: document a timeline of the recording by notating the exact time instruments and vocals enter throughout the entire song. Discern the formal structure of the song; interpret lyrics to extract the message; evaluate the music’s efficacy in supporting and conveying the meaning of the poem. No length requirements.

Comparison: Canonic Poem and Rap Lyric
From a list of paired examples, the student chooses a poem and a song lyric to compare for themes, voice, inflection, irony, etc.

Listening Journal
Spend 10 minutes a day for 7 days (not necessarily consecutive days) in a seemingly quiet place documenting what you hear. Listen intently and beyond the obvious, describe your listening environment, and your state of mind at the end of each session.

Term Paper, Group Presentation Project or Dance Presentation Project
Chose one. Due at the end of the semester.
• Term paper is a thesis paper intended to prove or disprove something (rap music does/does not promote misogyny in men).
• Groups of 5 can present topics relative to the social history of rap (women in rap, rap influence on adolescence, etc.). Presentations should be multidisciplinary and presented in multimedia format.
• Students will present an overview of African American popular dance from the Ragtime dances to the current hip hop dances. Dance demonstrations, accompanied by music, will last about 20 seconds each with historical and sociological information presented by an MC before each dance.

Testimonial
Students learn positive values through the analysis of rap poems and musician biographies. Values learned include: love vs. hate (including self-love/hate), perseverance, doing the right thing, making amends, patience, integrity and self-confidence. Students are asked to write a short essay relating four of the learned values to their own life experiences.

Blackboard Discussions
Groups of 10 discuss issues relating to hip hop and society. Students first comment on the posted issue; and then, comment on other students' comments. Students evaluated on their ability to discuss an issue from the perspectives of disparate disciplines.

Discussion Topics
1) Women and Rap (not women in rap)
2) Is Gangster Rap the New Minstrelsy?
3) How is hip hop a continuation of African American musical traditions; how has it departed from tradition?

4. Evaluations

Blackboard Discussions
Discussion topics posted on Blackboard. You will be expect to comment on the topic; and then, comment on two of your peers' comments.

Reading Quizzes
Posted on Blackboard, in multiple-choice format. One quiz for each assigned reading. All quizzes are either online or taken at home and brought to class on a scantron. Save your answers to the question sheet; we will discuss the quizzes in class.

Lecture Quizzes
Same as reading quizzes: Posted on Blackboard; some lectures supported by Powerpoint Presentations; quizzes in multiple choice or true/false format.
Video Quizzes
Same as reading quizzes: Posted on Blackboard; some lectures supported by Powerpoint Presentations; quizzes in multiple choice or true/false format.

Essay Exams
Presented in class, choose from a list of speculative questions, exams will be presented at the end of each major section. Essay exams will be more heavily weighted than quizzes and assignments.

Streams of Knowledge
• Lectures
• Reading
• Images
• Videos
• Music
• Blackboard

Grading
Reading/lecture quizzes weighted by a factor of one
Assignments weighted by a factor of two
Term project weighted by a factor of three
Essay Exams weighted by a factor of four
Discussions weighted by a factor of three
Attendance +/- 5 points added/subtracted from final average

5. TEXTBOOKS and ASSIGNED READING*
_African American Music: Introduction_
Melonee Burnim, Portia Maultsby, editors.

COURSE POLICIES

Zero tolerance for any behavior that disrupts the class:

• Interfacing with cell phones in any way
• Talking during the delivery of content (content includes lectures, music, videos, etc)
• Rude, insulting behavior or comments
• Disrespect of any kind
• Leaving early (make arrangements with the professor, if you must leave early)
Course Requirements

Participation: Students are expected to participate in class. Participation is a vital part of your education and a skill that you will need to be successful throughout your career. Professors tend to remember students who participate in class and at some point you will need letters of recommendations from your professors. Sleeping or appearing to sleep in class, refusing to respond to the Instructor, unauthorized texting or other use of personal electronic devices in class, or acts that show a clear attitude of contempt toward the class, the Instructor, classmates or visitors will be penalized by points off the student’s participation grade. This should be extremely rare.

Homework: All homework is due at the beginning of class on the due-date. Any work posted or turned in after the beginning of class will be counted as late, and subject to late penalties. Other daily responsibilities: Check Blackboard and your UTEP email account daily for announcements/updates.

Tests/exams: Quizzes will be posted on Blackboard and due dates are listed in the Course Calendar. There will be four benchmark essay exams. These essays need be comprehensive, but that does not mean that they need to be long. Points off for verbosity; points added for terse, but thorough essays. Get to the point, meet the objectives and write with proper grammar.

Papers or other writing assignments: Major written assignments in this class include those listed above under “grading.” All written assignments done outside of the classroom must be completed and submitted printed on paper, single-space. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted. Oral reports: A group presentation and the final collective presentation.

Required Policy Information

Attendance / Lateness Policy: In this course you are required to attend all classes, except in the case of university-sponsored activities or other excused absences. Other excused absences (proof may be required) are:
Medical — a contagious illness or other diagnosed debilitating condition is affecting the student’s ability to attend class;
Family Medical — the student is responsible for the care of a sick, injured or disabled person and the provision of that care affects the student’s ability to attend class;
Death of Family Member — the death of a person who is considered to be a member of the student’s family or who is otherwise considered to have a sufficiently close relationship to the student that the person’s death is considered to be a showing of good cause for temporary absence;
Military Duty — active duty service as a member of the Texas National Guard or the armed forces of the United States is considered to be a showing of good cause for temporary absence;
Work Schedule — the temporary change of the student’s work schedule that is beyond the control of the student, and that affects the student’s ability to attend class.
Other Emergencies, here defined as an immediate threat to life and property, or unexpected events that interrupt public access to the university.
If you miss a class for any reason, excused or unexcused, you are still responsible for getting with someone else in the class, finding out what you missed, and turning in a summary of the class that you missed.

Attendance will be taken at every class, by means of a sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign in. If you do not sign in, you are counted as absent. For example, the fact that your car didn’t start in the morning is no excuse for missing class. Every student needs to have some other backup arrangement ready to get to campus on time in case regular transportation plans fail or are not available.

You are required to make non-emergency medical and dental appointments, or interviews, outside of class time.

If you miss class for any reason, excused or unexcused, you are still responsible for learning the material covered and turning in all work. You will be held accountable for all the material covered in every class, through either attendance or through make up work, not just on tests. If you do not make up missed work, you may lose all credit for that work, plus extra penalties for refusing to participate. LEAVING DURING CLASS, AFTER HAVING SIGNED-IN AND TURNED-IN WORK DUE ON THAT DAY, IS UNETHICAL AND IS GROUNDS FOR DROPPING YOU FROM THE CLASS.

Withdrawal: Simply not attending classes does not constitute official withdrawal, so please see your advisor in order do so. If you simply stop attending this course, you will be counted as absent and will receive grades based on work completed up to your last attendance as well as missing class requirements assigned during your absence. In cases of extreme absenteeism (here defined as the total equivalent of two weeks worth of absences any time in the semester, for any reason including excused absences), you may possibly be dropped at the Instructor’s option without notice, with a grade of “W” if the infractions occur prior to April 2. However, if the last infraction happens on or after April 2 or if the majority of your absences are unexcused, you will automatically fail the course. AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE IS LITTLE VALUE IN SKIPPING CLASS.

Tardiness and the "Ten Minute Rule"
If the instructor is more than ten minutes late for class without notice or advance arrangement, you may leave without being counted absent. If you arrive more than ten minutes late for class (or leave class early before being dismissed), you will be counted absent.

Policy for late work: Assignments submitted after class begins on the due date will be penalized one letter grade for every day late.

Students who fail to submit assignments on time do not receive feedback on performance. Therefore, it is important to submit work before deadlines for full credit and proper feedback. To earn a passing grade (“A,” “B,” or “C”) students must have completed all major assignments, paragraphs, and essays, even if they are too late to get points. If a major assignment is over three calendar days late, the student faces failure for this assignment. However, in order to pass the class students must still complete all major assignments in good faith. "Better late than never."
Policy for missed tests: The only formal “test” in this course is the Final Exam. Students failing to sit for the Final Exam will receive a grade of "F" for the course. Any student who will not be able to attend the Final Exam at the scheduled date and time may take the exam early.

Policy for extra credit: Extra credit is available for certain extra event reports related to the theme of this course, or for participation in certain other special events. Ask the instructor for details if interested. Extra credit may also be offered at the Instructor’s option for extraordinary work clearly beyond the level of the course. This latter type of extra credit is rare, and may not be requested.

Copyright Statement Some of the materials in this course are copyrighted. Violation of US copyright law can result in civil damages up to $100,000 for each work copied. Copying of textbooks is not “fair use” under the Copyright Act. The “fair use doctrine” only permits non-commercial copying of part (in general, not more than 10%) of a copyrighted work. Do not bring a copied textbook to this class. Your cooperation is expected.

1.3 Student Conduct: [From the Handbook of Operating Procedures: Student Affairs]

Each student is responsible for notice of and compliance with the provisions of the Regents’ Rules and Regulations, which are available for inspection electronically at http://www.utsystem.edu/bor/rules/homepage.htm.

1.3.1 Scholastic Dishonesty: [From the Handbook of Operating Procedures: Student Affairs]

It is the official policy of the University that all suspected cases or acts of alleged scholastic dishonesty must be referred to the Dean of Students for investigation and appropriate disposition. It is contrary to University policy for a faculty member to assign a disciplinary grade such as an "F" or zero to an assignment, test, examination, or other course work as a sanction for admitted or suspected scholastic dishonesty in lieu of normally charging the student through the Dean of Students. Similarly, students are prohibited from proposing and/or entering into an arrangement with a faculty member to receive a grade of "F" or any reduced grade in lieu of being charged with scholastic dishonesty. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

1.3.12 Plagiarism: [From the Handbook of Operating Procedures: Student Affairs]

"Plagiarism" means the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own academic work offered for credit, or using work in a paper or assignment for which the student had received credit in another course without direct permission of all involved instructors.

Students with Disabilities Policy: If you have or suspect a disability and need an accommodation you should contact Disabled Student Services Office (DSSO) at 747-5148 or at dss@utep.edu or go to Room 106 Union East Building.

Syllabus Change Policy:
Except for changes that substantially affect the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Class meeting dates: Mondays and Wednesdays. In case of absence, or if class is ever cancelled due to circumstances beyond Instructor control, students are still expected to complete and submit all assignments shown on the Calendar if at all possible.