



Seminar in Communication Theory: *Popular Music and Communication*

COMM 5343
CRN: 22912

Wed. 6:00 pm – 8:50 pm

HS/NRS #215

Spring Semester – 2018

Instructor: Roberto Avant-Mier, Ph.D.
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Phone: (915) 747.6588
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Required Texts:

- *Ecomusicology: Rock, Folk, and the Environment*, by M. Pedelty (2012, Temple Univ. Press).
- Other articles to be assigned by your instructor as needed. (Available online on Blackboard system)

Course Description:

The goal of this course is to increase the understanding of popular music as discursive, meaning-making, and symbolic behavior. This course engages theory and research in popular music studies, and will help you apply this knowledge in understanding popular music as meaning-making cultural practice. It will improve your understanding of communication beyond transmission views of (mass) communication and engage ritual/symbolic and critical/cultural perspectives. Thus, the course will also focus on social, societal, cultural, structural and historical dimensions of popular music, and also, on interdisciplinary research in popular music studies in addition to communication scholarship.

Course Objectives: After taking this course, you should be able to:

- Understand and discuss major trends in popular music research and analysis, and develop a working vocabulary of terms and concepts that relate to popular music theory and criticism – in addition to communication/media studies.
- Have an understanding of popular music's role as technical artifact(s), as cultural and ideological productions, as works of collaborative art, and as products usually of multinational corporations, and possibly, as agents of cultural change.
- Analyze popular music using different critical and theoretical approaches.
- Express (write) your own ideas about popular music in relation to meaning, signification, and representation.
- Become more reflexive and critical about popular music, and knowledgeable about popular music as communication.

Course Policies:

1. ATTENDANCE:

In accordance with the Dept. of Communication Attendance Policy, **ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED** as a condition of successful completion of all courses in the department. After missing any class session, a student is responsible for finding out about assignments, due dates, announcements, handouts, and so forth that were covered during the missed session, and for making up any missed work. The student is also responsible for obtaining class notes from a classmate for the session, and for learning the material from that session for any relevant exams or quizzes.

The equivalent of 1 week of absence from any course will reduce a student's course grade by percentage points on their eventual "Attendance & Participation" grade. However, absence from a combined total of 3 weeks of class meetings will result in automatic failure of the course. Thus, if the class meets once a week, 3 missed sessions equals automatic failure. If a course meets twice a week, 8 missed sessions will result in failure of the course, and a combined total of 9 missed class sessions will result in automatic failure of a course that meets 3 times per week. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Absences for any reason, including illness, personal crises, athletics or other extra-curricular activities are included in this total. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss 3 or more weeks of a particular course, then that student should not enroll in the course. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss an exam or quiz, then that student should not enroll in the course.

2. DEADLINES:

All assignments and exams/quizzes will be scheduled far in advance, and due dates for exams and assignments are announced in this syllabus. Therefore, you must plan your work and personal schedule far in advance to accommodate these deadlines and policies. Because the attendance policy dictates that you will (for the most part) be present in class, make-ups and late work are therefore largely irrelevant. Otherwise, for a few special cases at the discretion of your instructor, late work will be docked one letter grade for each day late (each calendar day, not each day of class).

3. EXAMS:

Make-up tests will not be given, except for emergencies. If a student misses an exam or quiz because of a documented emergency or situation, he/she will be required to fulfill an alternative assignment. Only in extreme circumstances will your instructor make arrangements with you to complete your coursework through alternative assignments.

4. ADA STATEMENT (Americans with Disabilities Act):

The University of Texas at El Paso seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) to make arrangements for accommodations in advance.

5. CASS POLICY (Center for Accommodations & Support Services):

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations & Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747.5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu. Or visit

their office located in the UTEP Union – East, Room #106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

6. PHONES / ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

Cell phones or other personal electronic communication devices are NOT permitted during class, so phones should be turned off AND put away during class. Laptops for note-taking are permitted, only with (a.) instructor permission and (b.) as long as the student sits in the front rows of the classroom. [Students cannot sit in the back rows when they are using laptops.]

7. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence, and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

8. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING SCALES

Assignments

* Attendance & Participation	20 %
Paper #1: Lit. Review	10 %
Paper #2: Analysis	10%
Final Paper:	30 %
Critical Reading Questions: (12x8.34) =	30 %

* Attendance & Participation Points Earned

0 -1 absences =	80-100% for attendance grade
1 - 2 absences =	60-79% for attendance grade
3 or more =	automatic failure of course / or "W"

Numeric Scale – Letter Grade Achieved

90-100 = A	80-90 = B	70-80 = C	60-70 = D	below 60 = F
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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE – Spring 2018

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Be ready to discuss:</u>
1	W 1/17	a. Introductions, syllabus & course overview b. Defining Popular Music & Communication	(Get the books/ materials!) Lecture/Discussion
2	W 1/24	a. Defining Popular Music & Communication (cont'd) b. Survival of the Harmonious c. African Talking Drums d. The Death of Queen Jane	Lecture/Discussion * Article by D. Bennett * Article by W. Ong * Article by A. Vannan
3	W 1/31	a. Remembering the Life & Music of Joe Hill b. On Popular Music c. "Heard It On the X" d. Popularizing Classical Music	* Article by D. Cochran * Article by T. Adorno * Article by R. Avant-Mier * Article by S. Vancour
4	W 2/ 7	a. Music as Political Communication b. Popular Music as Mode of Communication c. "Latinos in the Garage"	* Article by D.K. Dunaway * Article by J. Chesebro et al. * Article by R. Avant-Mier
5	W 2/14	a. Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange b. Rhetorical Ascription to Bob Dylan c. Popular Music and Communication (An introduction)	* Article by Irvine & Kirkpatrick * Article by Gonzalez & Makay * Article by J. Lull
6	W 2/21	a. Meanings in the Music (Symbolic Communication) b. Communicative Properties of Music c. Communication as Culture/Ritual	* Article by G. Lewis * Article by J. Lull * Article by J. Carey
7	W 2/ 28	Discussion about Papers (Readings to be announced)	TBA
8	W 3/ 6	a. Dimensions of Musical Taste b. The History of Sound Recording c. Gangsta Culture – Sexism & Misogyny	* Article by G. Lewis * Article by S. Jones * Article by b. hooks
9	W 3/14	SPRING BREAK	(No classes from 3/12 – 3/16)

10	W 3/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. "The Real Slim Shady" b. The Roots of Rap/Hip Hop c. The Discourse of Love in Hip Hop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Article by L. Calhoun * Article by W. J. Cobb * Article by Bell & Avant-Mier
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11	W 3/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PAPER #1 Due (Review of Literature, draft version) b. M. Pedelty: "Eco-musicology" (Introduction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ecomusicology</i>, "Introduction"
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12	W 4/ 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pedelty: "Global Music & the Environmental Crisis" b. Lady Gaga & popular music marketing c. Lady Gaga, gender, & branding pop stars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Ecomusicology</i>, Chapter 1 * Article by K. Lieb (Ch. 1) * Article by K. Lieb (Ch. 2)
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13	W 4/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. PAPER #2 Due (popular music analysis, draft version) b. "Honky Tonk Badonkadonk" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Article by D. Morris
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14	W 4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 'Sustainability & Sound: Ecomusicology... b. Pedelty: "Popular Music & American Soundscape" c. Pedelty: "Regional Geography in Song" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Article by Allen, et al. <i>Ecomusicology</i>, Ch. 2 <i>Ecomusicology</i>, Ch. 3
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15	W 4/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. "Decomposed: Political Ecology of Music" b. Music, Place & Identity in Appalachian Mining c. Pedelty: "Local Music: Tonic for the Troops?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Article by K. Devine * Article by T.D. Stimeling <i>Ecomusicology</i>, Ch. 4
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16	W 5/ 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Paper Presentations b. FINAL PAPERS DUE 	
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17	Wed. May 9 th	<u>FINAL EXAM</u>	7:00 – 9:45 pm (as per university schedule)
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*** 5/16 GRADES DUE !