2014

287-01B American Music & the Roots of Cool

John Keene
Xavier University Weekend Degree
Spring Semester 2014
American Music & the Roots of Cool (SOCL 287 - 01B)
Course Syllabus (Three pages)

Description: This course addresses the influence of music in American life - the impact of music in society as well as social problems expressed through music. With emphasis on the American experience, special attention is paid to popular cultural and mass cultural forms of music – especially soul, jazz, rhythm and blues, and country – as well as how people use music to claim a social identity and to establish social boundaries between themselves and others.

Instructor: John J. Keene, Department of Sociology.
Email: KeeneJJ@xavier.edu; Tel: 513.931.4641 (8:00 am to 6:00 pm)

Goals and Objectives: In this course, we will focus on the manner that the audience interacts with the creators of music and the forces that determine its access to the public. We will also examine how both musicians and audiences continue to search for authenticity, and the manner in which music not only reflects our culture but also serves to drive certain cultural movements as well.

Class sessions will take place on consecutive Saturday mornings (with the exception of March 30) in Room 349 Smith Hall from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Class meetings will commence with an hour-long discussion of the text. Following a short break, there will be a lecture and video presentation by the instructor and/or guest speaker.

Questions for Exploration:

1. In what way could jazz, blues, country, and R&B (rhythm and blues) be considered terms synonymous with social and cultural movements in the United States?

2. How did swing music serve as an expression of youth culture during the early 20th century? Does this association of American music with youth culture start (or continue) a tradition witnessed in modern times in similar manner?

3. In what way did jazz represent a model of social democracy for Americans at home and the world at large?

4. How do culturally diverse audiences share agreement as to “authenticity” with regards to music? What role does the media play in creating or perpetuating cultural stereotypes of what is “authentic” in style, image, and integrity?
Grading Agenda:

1. 20% of the final grade will be a subjective evaluation of class participation and an evaluation of attendance according to Weekend Degree guidelines.
2. 80% of the final grade will be based on an evaluation of two essay examinations. Each examination will count for 40% of the final grade.

Required Reading:

Three texts (at two/three weeks per book) will be covered (plus e-reserve articles), with one-third of each text assigned each week. The first third of *Swingin’ the Dream* will be assigned during the pre-assignment session prior to the start of Class One.


Additional Short Readings from E-Reserves will include (but not be limited to) chapters from the following:


Weekly Agenda:

**Pre-assignment Session, March 9, 2014:** Introduction to the course; grading agenda. Reading assignments listed below are to be read prior to the scheduled class session. Students without access to Internet should see the instructor for accommodation.

1. **March 15, 2014:** Discussion of *Swingin’ the Dream* Preface through Chapter 4 (pages xi – xiii, 3 – 119).
2. **March 22, 2014:** Discussion of *Swingin’ the Dream* Chapters 5 through 7 (pages 120 – 210), and Chapter 9 (pages 241-253); discussion of DVD *Strange Fruit*.
3. **March 29, 2014:** Discussion of *Creating Country Music* - book introduction through Chapter 3 (pages 3 – 54); discussion of DVD *The Carter Family*. 
4. **April 5, 2014:** Discussion of *Creating Country Music* Chapters 4 through 8 (pages 54 – 136). Chapter 13 of *Creating Country Music* is assigned for the final class session (see below on May 4). The instructions for [Exam One take-home will be distributed](#) at the end of this class session.

5. **April 12, 2014:** Instructor’s conclusion to *Creating Country Music* and introduction to *Deep Blues*. **Exam One take-home is due and in-class question concluded** during the final part of this class session.

- **April 19, 2014:** No class due to Easter/Passover break.

6. **April 26, 2014:** Instructor’s introduction to *Deep Blues* and discussion of the Chicago blues experience. Assigned reading is *Deep Blues* Prologue (pages 1 – 20), and Chapters 3 – 4 (pages 95 —169);

7. **May 3, 2014:** *Deep Blues* and discussion of the Memphis blues experience. Assigned reading is Chapters 7 “Kings of Rhythm” (pages 217 – 253), and *Creating Country Music* Chapter 13 (pages 205—220). **Exam Two Questionnaire (take home) will be distributed** at the end of this class session.

8. **May 10, 2014:** Discussion of *Deep Blues* and discussion of the British blues experience. Assigned reading is the Epilogue “World Boogie” (pages 255 through 277). **Exam Two take-home is due and in-class question concluded (in class)** during the final part of this class session.

**Make-up Classes**: The University allows a maximum of two additional Sunday class sessions to be required in the event of class cancellation due to weather emergency, national emergency, etc. Please allow for the possibility that a make-up class may be scheduled for **8 days after** a cancelled Saturday class session in the event of weather (or other) emergency. That would be Sunday of the following week, and this would be considered a class where attendance is recorded. Check your email for notification.

**ACCELERATED COURSE POLICY**

Accelerated courses are especially designed for working adults. They are intense learning experiences with fewer in-class contact hours and more independent study. Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory, and students are required to complete a pre-assignment before the first class session.

**Pre-assignment**: Students are expected to prepare for the first class by completing a pre-assignment **before** the first class session.

**Attendance**: Students are expected to attend all class sessions. If a class must be missed, the student should communicate with the instructor before that class concerning the absence. A student may miss one class (or its equivalent) with an excused absence without penalty; more than one absence (excused or unexcused) results in a full letter grade deduction (towards the 20% attendance evaluation) for each class missed.