

Wright State University Department of Music
Music 2900 African American Music: America and Beyond

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Office hours: Mondays/Wednesdays-1:00-3:00;Thursdays -12:30-1:30

Credit Hours: 3.0

Course Description

African American Music: America and Beyond is an interdisciplinary course that traces the evolution of African American music and culture from its roots in Africa to American Popular culture. The course provides an analytical perspective of the historical, and cultural influences that led to the development of Spirituals, Gospel music, Blues, Jazz, Ragtime, Rhythm and Blues, Soul, Disco, Rap and Hip Hop Culture. Additional topics include Slave Music, Minstrels, Black Musical Theater, African American Classical musicians, The Civil Rights Movement, The Music Industry and the role of race, segregation and politics that have influenced the expression of African American music and culture.

This course is part of the WSU General Education Program. To that end the following University Learning Objectives are addressed: The student will learn to:

- a) communicate effectively
- b) evaluate arguments and evidence critically
- c) apply the methods of inquiry to the arts and humanities
- d) demonstrate global and multicultural competence
- e) demonstrate understanding of contemporary social and ethical issues
- f) participate in democratic society as informed and civically engaged citizens

This course fulfills the requirements of the GE Core program in Area IV: Arts/Humanities
These goals which are specific to Area IV are:

4. Arts/Humanities <i>Tools for analysis and appreciation of the arts, philosophy, and religious thought</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Critically analyze significant creative, literary, philosophical or religious worksb. Understand and discuss the complex blend of imaginative vision, socio-cultural context, ethical values, and aesthetic judgment in creative, philosophical or religious worksc. Recognize, evaluate and respond to creative, philosophical or religious worksa. Develop appropriate and ethical applications of knowledge in the humanities or the arts
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Goals: Students in Music 2900 will be able to:

- Distinguish between the different styles of African American music by describing the musical characteristics and performance techniques.
- Recognize famous performing artists, composers and musicians according to the genre and historical period of music.
- Analyze the impact of slavery, race, segregation, and various social, political and economic issues upon the development of different styles of African American music.
- Develop skills in critical thinking, oral discussion, and debate through co-operative learning and reflection.
- Construct creative projects to develop skills in musical analysis, expository writing and research.
- Show ability to communicate effectively in writing.

Required Textbook:

Perriti, Burton W. *Lift Every Voice and Sing: The History of African American Music.* Lanham: Maryland. Rowman and Littlefield, Publishers, Inc. (2009)

Special Needs: Students who require special services during lectures or exams must notify the instructor immediately and contact the Office of Disability Services.

Integrated Writing Requirements: Music 2900 is part of the General Education program and requires all activities and will integrate the goals of the IW program in the following ways: Students will be expected to produce writing that

- Demonstrates their understanding of course content,
- Is appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,
- Demonstrates the degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course and,
- Shows competency in standard edited American English.

Grading of Writing

Writing Assignments will be graded according to a rubric distributed and discussed in class.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is required and counted towards the final grade.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Students will receive a 15 point reduction in their final grade per absence. Students who are more than 15 minutes late or leave early without permission will be counted as absent. Students who miss more than three classes will receive an F and be withdrawn from the class.

*Excused Absences: Students must notify the instructor by email no less than two hours before class in order to obtain an excused absence. The instructor has a right to determine which form of absence is considered excused or unexcused according to the circumstances.

Students who have been diagnosed with viral infections must submit a written admit form from the campus health clinic.

Classroom Code of Conduct

- All cell phones must be turned off during class.
- No texting or twittering during class.
- The use of laptops is prohibited.
- No talking or disruptive behavior during class.
- Students must remain in class during video and film presentations.
- Participation in discussions and activities is expected and encouraged as a part of the course requirement and will be considered as a part of your final grade.
- Please respect the rights and opinions of others.
- Cheating on exams is prohibited and will result in expulsion from the course.
- Plagiarism and the use of undocumented sources without copyright permission will result in an F. Students who are suspected of plagiarism will be reported to the University Academic Integrity Board for Violation of the Code of Conduct.

Evaluation for this class

5 Quizzes X 10% each = 50%

Concert Report or Instrument Building Project and Presentation = 25%

Listening and Reflection Journal = 25%

Additional Information and Requirements:

Hand-outs

- All handouts will be distributed on line via Course Studio or by email. It is the student's responsibility to print out handouts for class. If you are unable to open documents due to incompatibility with the current system please go to the Dunbar Library to print them or CATS Help-Desk for a system upgrade.

Exams

- There are no make up exams. You must be available to take the exam at the scheduled time.

Assignments

- Assignments must be turned in on the date listed on the course outline or specified by the instructor. Assignments must be stapled and include your name and topic on each page.
- Late assignments will result in a points reduction per assignment.

Course Outline

- The course outline and calendar represents a general description of topics and assignment dates. The instructor has the right to adjust the topics and assignment dates according to their discretion. Students will be notified of any changes in advance.

Grades

- The instructor is not allowed to discuss or distribute grades by email or on line. Students must make an appointment with the instructor to discuss grades.

Office Hours:

- Please note the office hours located on the first page of the syllabus. The hours may change if faculty meetings are scheduled. Students may schedule appointments outside of office hours at the discretion of the instructor.
- The instructor is not available for consultation or office hours during the weekends, university breaks or holidays. Emails will be answered during the week.

Part I: Genres

- Week 1 Course Introduction/Definitions/Common Vocabulary
- Week 2 Secular Folk Music and Religious Music
- Week 3 Blues and Ragtime
- Week 4 Jazz/Musical Theater/Art-Classical Music
- Week 5 Rhythm and Blues/Funk/Disco/Techno/Hip Hop/Rap
(first draft of writing due)

Part II: Issues of mass Mediation

- Week 6 The Music Industry/The Gospel Industry
- Week 7 Profiles of Record Labels/Motown/Stax/Philadelphia International
- Week 8 Women in African American Music
- Week 9 Women in Gospel/Blues/Jazz/Rock
(Second draft of writing due)

Part III: Musical Agency

- Week 10 African American Music as Resistance
- Week 11 Antebellum Period
- Week 12 Civil Rights Period
- Week 13 Post-Civil Rights Period
- Week 14 In Class Presentations
- Week 15 In Class Presentations (final papers due)

Course Projects and Assignments

Final Project: You may select one of the options below. Please read the following directions carefully before you begin.

Concert Report

This project is in two parts. First, you will attend a concert and write a 4-5 page report based on the questions below. Second, during the last week of classes, you will summarize your report in a five-minute presentation and share your experience with the class. The report is due at this time. You are required to type your paper. Double spaced only, please- 4-5 pages of text (2000 words), not including title page.

I will not give you a list of concerts that “count” for this assignment. I want you to find a concert that is outside of your everyday experience. Check the local papers, do some internet searching, and make note of any concerts I announce in class. If you look carefully, you will discover a wide range of music from many different cultures in southwest Ohio. I realize that some concerts require ticket fees- remember to use your student ID for discounts!

I. Proposal

Before you attend a concert, you must get my approval. Once you have selected a concert, send me a brief proposal by email and tell me about the event- *who, what, when, where, and why you think it would be a good experience for you.* Yes, all music is “world music,” so please think about the best way to make your case.

IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT A PROPOSAL, YOU WILL FAIL THIS PORTION OF THE COURSE.

II. Content

I will base your grade on content, use of music vocabulary, and thoroughness. Be sure to answer every question in as much detail as possible. Your answers must be in complete sentences. Provide as much information as you possibly can- take pictures (if allowed), interview other audience members, go backstage and talk to the musicians, etc.

BE SURE TO ATTACH THE PROGRAM AND TICKET STUB! If there is no program and/or ticket for your concert, provide some other form of evidence- pictures, newspaper articles, etc. If you do not provide any evidence, I may not accept your assignment.

III. Format

An effective report is more than just a list of questions and answers. Weave your information together into a narrative describing the entire experience. Avoid the passive voice, write in the first person, and insert your own personality.

IV. Questions:

1. What instruments were used in the concert? Under what classifications (chordophones etc) do they fall? If you cannot find the name of the instrument, describe it using the vocabulary you have gained in the class.
2. What types (genres) of music were performed? Does the music fall under any categories discussed in class or in the text? Please describe the music you heard.
3. Was there any singing or dancing? How important was this to the music? Who were the performers? Did they wear any special costumes?
4. Where there any “composers” listed or mentioned? Was the music improvised at any point? How do you know?
5. How did the musicians interact with each other? How did they acknowledge or interact with the audience? Did this help or hinder your enjoyment of the music?
6. What feeling or mood did each movement or section of the performance seem to have?

7. What was/were the most important elements for getting the music across to you? (melody, texture, rhythm, tempo, etc.)

8. What was unique about the concert? What did you like/not like?

One final thought- this assignment is about analysis and thoughtful observation, not about criticism. Avoid writing in the tone of a newspaper or magazine music critic. I want to know what you saw/heard/felt, not what you think a group of performers do well or could do better!

INSTRUMENT BUILDING PROJECT

The basic requirement is simple: build a musical instrument that works, demonstrate the instrument in class, and write a paper describing what you did, how you did it, and the significance of the instrument in the culture or context of its use. The paper must be at least 2000 words and written in the same manner as a term paper.

You may select a musical instrument project from the internet, or you may select an instrument from any genre we have studied, or any instrument that piques your curiosity. If you select this project, you must take the following steps:

1. Write a brief proposal of your project and email it to me. Tell me what instrument you are building, and your outline or plan for completion.

IF YOU DO NOT SUBMIT A PROPOSAL, YOU WILL FAIL THIS PORTION OF THE COURSE.

2. Once your proposal is approved, obtain your raw materials and get to work!
3. You are required to do an in-class presentation with your instrument. These will take place during the last week of class.
4. Please prepare a 2000 word typed paper of your experience for this presentation and turn this in with your instrument. You should outline your *entire* experience- where did you get the raw materials, how did you go about building the instrument, what are some of the problems you encountered, are you confident that your instrument actually works, where is this instrument actually used, etc.

Listening and Reflection Journal

This portion of the course is designed to help you organize, reflect, and respond to the ideas we are going to cover. This is an opportunity for you to articulate your personal and intellectual reaction to the music and cultures you encounter in each class session. I will give you questions at least once a week. Questions will often be directly related to small group activities, class discussions, and listening assignments. I will provide you with feedback and the opportunity to revise your work. The objectives of your journal can be summed up in the following points as articulated in the universities IW learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate your understanding of course content,
- Is appropriate for the audience and purpose of a particular writing task,
- Demonstrates the degree of mastery of disciplinary writing conventions appropriate to the course and,
- Shows competency in standard edited American English.

Organization:

- Do not attempt to write the entire document at the last minute!
- Each entry must be at least one FULL page long (about 2-3 paragraphs.)
- The final draft must be typed, single-spaced is acceptable. If you are submitting any unusual or alternative entries, please make sure they are legible or organized for ease of reading.
- The complete journal is due at the end of the term. No exceptions.

Grading:

Each journal is assigned a letter grade, A-F.

- There are 10 total entries
- Each entry is worth 10 points
- Any missing entries will result in an automatic deduction of 10 full points
- I will not accept hand-written text entries
- Quality, clarity, and thoroughness are important.
- Content and Style are entirely up to you. Some suggestions for alternative approaches include writing poetry, short stories, or artwork. Try to balance your entries to include several approaches.
- If you have any questions, please email me for clarification. You may send sample entries for comments or questions at any time.
- Please avoid excessive use of profanity or colloquial expressions (e.g. "know what I'm saying?").
- Please avoid the excessive use of negative or disparaging remarks about the course content. What you think and feel is important, but the overall point is for you to articulate your ideas in an organized and thoughtful manner.