

Course Syllabus for **GEO 2426 (section #3658)--Fall 2008**

Pop Music and Culture: A Geographic Perspective

Instructor: Dr. T.J. Fik, *Dept. of Geography, University of Florida*

Building/Room: CSE / E119

Tuesday – Periods 5-6 (11:45-1:40PM)

Thursday – Period 6 (12:50-1:40PM)

GEO 2426 -- Pop Music & Culture: A Geographic Perspective

Course Description

GEO 2426 is a course that highlights the geographic origins and diffusion of “pop music”, focusing on the geo-historical underpinnings of American music in its various manifestations. The course will provide an overview of American roots music and survey various and important regional styles. Emphasis is placed on analyzing music innovation, trends, and movements in relation to location, culture, counter-culture, and the social/geo-political climate. Also examined is the theory that music innovation and artistic expression are linked to the dynamics of the counter-culture (in response to mainstream trends), with innovations occurring at locations, places, and/or economies that can best be described as “marginalized” or socio-spatial remote.

Discussions and Power Point presentations will (a) trace the roots and lineage of various music styles or genres; (b) identify pioneering artists, trend-setting regions and cities; and (c) describe the diffusion of musical ideas across regions and geographic boundaries. The course will examine the importance of music and lyrics as modes of expression and the role of artists as agents of change. More importantly, the course will examine the broader social, economic, and cultural implications of the evolution of pop music and alternative counter-culture music scenes. Emphasis will also be placed on the evolution of popular music and the emergence and proliferation of various hybrid forms of music (e.g., the influence of folk, rockabilly, bluegrass, country and western swing, blues, boogie-woogie, and rhythm & blues/R&B in the creation of “rock ‘n roll”). The course will highlight the importance of the music of black Americans and the contribution of black artists (with emphasis on Delta and Chicago blues, Piedmont and country blues, R&B, gospel and soul, funk, jump blues, ska and reggae). Discussions will also focus on the punk and post-punk movements, cross-over artists, folk-rock, blues-rock, the corporate rock, new wave, goth and glam, shock-rock, rap and hip-hop, electronica/techno, etc.

This course will also examine the restructuring and organization of the music industry in spatial and economic terms. Discussions will include an analysis of the impact of technology, the effects of competition, the role of radio and television (and later video), Internet and digital music (file-sharing, MP3s), the rise of independent artists and “indie” labels, and the manufacturing and marketing of pop artists and music. Within this context the course will explore the influence of demographics, the growth of niche markets, the birth and evolution of the performing artist, the overt and covert commercialization of pop music, the ever-important impact of the counter-culture and underground music scenes, and the rise of artists to pop icon status. Artist profiles and music documentaries will be presented to supplement lecture material.

Office Hours for GEO 2426: Tuesdays and Thursdays (2:00PM–4:15PM)

Office: 3137 Turlington Hall (third floor, 2 doors down from main Geography Dept. office)

Course Requirements

Students are expected to write 2 “reaction papers” (of approximately 5 pages in length) in response to material and/or ideas presented in lecture or current pop music and culture events or phenomenon (with permission from instructor). Students must also complete a **final term project** on a related topic of their choice (with permission from the instructor) – an artist profile, overview of a music genre, or book review. Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and participate in classroom discussions. Attendance will be taken intermittently.

Course grades are based on a 250-point system:	points
Two reaction papers (25 points each) {Due dates: TBA in class}	50
Classroom Participation and Attendance	50
Term Project	150
{ Project due date: December 4th and submitted by the end of the class period }	-----
	250 total

Note: Poor attendance may result in 0 points for the classroom attendance/participation component! Attendance sheets will be circulated from time to time (to monitor attendance). No “Incompletes” will be given out for any reason. Students who fail to turn in all required materials by the specified due dates and times will receive a grade of “E” for the course. Failure to turn in a project “on time” (that is, by the project due date/deadline) will result in the loss of 50 points per each day late. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students turning in “manufactured” papers or cut-and-paste/downloaded replicas of already existing materials or articles found on the Internet will receive a grade of “E”. No exceptions. No make-ups for late submissions. No extra credit. No rewrites. If your name does not appear on an attendance sheet for a given day, you will be marked absent... no exceptions. Medical excuses must be validated.

Instructor Bio

Timothy J. Fik is an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, University of Florida (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). He earned a Master of Arts in Economic Geography (1986) from the State University of New York at Buffalo and a Ph.D. in Geography & Regional Development from the University of Arizona (1989). Author of several books and over thirty journal articles, his research interests include regional analysis, quantitative methods, spatial price competition, real estate modeling, market-area analysis, regional economic development, interaction modeling, recreational and coastal resource management, and musicology. Dr. Fik is an accomplished musician, writer/arranger, producer, and guitarist with over 25 years experience as a professional musician playing in regional bands that have opened concerts for numerous National Acts including Black Oak Arkansas, Kentucky Headhunters, Blackfoot, Confederate Railroad, Oak Ridge Boys, Wade Hayes, Shenandoah, Mark Chestnut, Daryle Singletary, Ricky Van Shelton, Doug Stone, Gary Allan, Chad Brock, Steppenwolf, Platinum Blonde, Blotto, The Romantics, Talk Talk, and the Psychedelic Furs. He is currently working on finishing a book on “the Blues” (forthcoming Fall 2009).

Note: No textbooks are required for this course.

Recommended Reading List...

- "*The Sounds of People and Places*" (paperback edition), George C. Carney (editor), Rowman & Littlefield (1994);
- "*Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory*" (paperback edition), Thomas Swiss (editor), Blackwell (1998);
- "*What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*" (paperback edition), Mark Anthony Neal, Routledge (1998).
- "*Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*" (paperback edition), Timothy Taylor, Routledge (1997);
- "*Popular Music of the Non-Western World*" (paperback edition), Peter Manuel, Oxford University Press (1990);
- "*Generation Ecstasy*" (paperback edition), Simon Reynolds, Routledge (1999);
- "*Sweet Soul Music: Rhythm and Blues and the Southern Dream of Freedom*" (paperback edition), Peter Guralnick, Back Bay Books (1999);
- "*Fast Food, Stock Cars, and Rock-n-Roll*" (paperback edition), George Carney (editor), Rowman & Littlefield (1995);
- "*Reggae Routes: The Story of Jamaican Music*" (paperback edition), Kevin O'Brien Chang and Wayne Chen, Temple (1998);
- "*Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place*" (paperback edition), George Lipsitz, Verso (1997);
- "*Interpreting Popular Music*" (paperback edition), David Brackett, Univ. of Calif. Press (2000);
- "*Lost Highways: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians*" (paperback edition), Peter Guralnick, Back Bay (1999);
- "*Hot Stuff: A Brief History of Disco*" (paperback edition), John-Manuel Andriote, Harper Collins (2001);
- "*Hip Hop America*" (paperback edition), Nelson George, Penguin (1998);
- "*The Music of Black Americans*" (3rd edition), Eileen Southern, Norton (1997);
- "*The Death of Rhythm & Blues*", Nelson George, Plume/Penguin (1988);

“*The Devil’s Music: A History of the Blues*”, Giles Oakley, Da Capo Press (1997);

“*The Power of Black Music*”, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., Oxford University Press (1995);

Kong, L. (1995) "Popular Music in Geographical Analysis," *Progress in Human Geography* 19 (2): 183-198.

Leyshon, A. (2001) "Time-Space (and digital) Compression: Software Formats, Musical Networks, and the Reorganization of the Music Industry," *Environment & Planning A* 33 (1): 49-77.

Nash, P.H. and G.O. Carney (1996) "The Seven Themes of Music Geography," *Canadian Geography* 40 (1): 69-74.

Sadler, D. (1997) "The Global Music Business as an Information Industry: Reinterpreting Economies of Culture," *Environment & Planning A* 29 (11): 1919-1936.

Scott, A.J. (1999) "The US Recorded Music Industry: On the Relations Between Organization, Location, and Creativity in the Cultural Economy," *Environment & Planning A* 31 (4): 1965-1984.

Reaction papers – short essay format... 5-pages minimum; written in response to topics, subjects, discussions or debates brought up in class, articles you have read, or documentaries you have watched, etc. For example, students from past semesters have written reaction papers with the following titles:

- **Punk Music: The “Counter-Culture” goes Mainstream**
- **Revisiting Woodstock (‘69, ‘94, and ‘99)**
- **The Role of Technology in the Distribution of Music**
- **Philadelphia Soul and the Neo-Soul Movement**
- **Video killed the radio star / Internet killed the video star**
- **MP3s and File sharing: The Controversy Continues**
- **Ten Things I Dislike about Pop Music/Culture**
- **Explicit Lyrics, Censorship, and Big Brother**
- **The Death and Rebirth of Rock ‘n Roll**
- **Pop Music and the Corporate Influence: Pros and Cons**
- **Pop Stars and Icons: made, bought, and sold**
- **American Idol – True Talent or Glorified Karaoke?**
- **Nashville Star – Country Music’s American Idol**
- **The Lip Syncing Phenomenon**
- **“Selling Out” (Going National)**

References or bibliography may be attached (when and where applicable).

Note: The reference list/bibliography does not count as a page of text.

Term Projects

Artist profile – an overview of an artist or group (highlighting their material, contribution(s) to a music genre, major influences and musical lineage, links to particular regional styles, etc). Format: Term Paper and/or Power-Point presentation, with CDs, music files, photos, etc. Past examples include:

Bob Dylan... in the footsteps of Woody Guthrie (from the Dust Bowl to NYC)
Michael Jackson – from Motown to the World
The Orlando-Based Boy Band Phenomenon
Pink Floyd: uncharted musical territories
The Dixie Chicks: Country-Fried Controversy
Bob Marley: First Global Pop Superstar?
John Lennon: Imagine...
The British Invasion
The Omaha Music Scene
90's Grunge: The Seattle Sound
The Folk Music Resurgence
New vs. Old Country: the Sounds of Nashville
The Origins and Evolution of Techno
Hip-Hop: The Message and the Messengers (Old school, New school, East coast, West coast, Native Tongues, and Bling-Bling).

Note: An overview of a music genre or a book review is also acceptable. Examples:
Kentucky Bluegrass to “Newgrass”
R&B: The Southern Gospel Influence
Sweet Soul Music: R&B and the Southern Dream of Freedom (book review)
Generation Ecstasy and the Origins of Techno

Term project guidelines:

- (1) Term projects/term papers must focus on a topic related to popular music and pop culture and have a significant geo-historical, regional, socio-political/economic, and/or cultural component;
- (2) Permission to pursue a given topic must be obtained from the instructor; and
- (3) Term projects/term papers must be turned in by the posted due date (Dec 4th, by the end of the class period). No exceptions.
- (4) Students may choose one of two project options:

Option 1. Power-point presentation (submitted on CD or flash-drive) –
Must be the content equivalent of a (25-30 page) term paper
Approx. → 55-60 power point slides... properly referenced (Graphics and Photos may be used).

Option 2. Term Paper (25-30 pages of original text) with an attached bibliography or reference list...submitted on CD or flash-drive—as a Word file or as hardcopy (that is, on paper). If you choose the CD or flash-drive option, make sure your file(s) are on the CD or flash-drive, and make sure that the files can be opened using Microsoft Word or PowerPoint.

Note: Term papers/term projects will not be accepted via e-mail.
...Again, no papers or projects will be accepted via e-mail!
Reaction papers will not be accepted via e-mail.
In short, I do not open e-mail attachments from students. No exceptions.

GEO 2426: Pop Music & Culture – A Geographic Perspective

List of topics (not necessarily in order)...

- Course overview and “Pop” – Definitions and Interpretations
- Woodstock Generations (69, 95, 99)
- Rap Music & Hip Hop Culture
- The “50’s Era” and the birth of “Rock ‘n Roll” -- the Golden Age (overview);
50’s rock ‘n roll documentary (video);
- “Blues” and Rhythm & Blues (roots and evolution) - regional styles and pioneering artists: Delta Blues, boogie-woogie and barrel-house piano, Piedmont and country blues, electric and urban blues, Texas blues, the music of Chicago, Kansas City, and St. Louis, and its link to Ragtime, swing, jazz.
- “Blues-Land” music documentary (video)
- The music of New Orleans, southern Louisiana, and vicinity (R&B, Cajun, Zydeco, Caribbean/Island, Dixieland influence)
- Western Swing (Texas-Oklahoma origins)
- Kentucky Bluegrass (east and central Kentucky); “Newgrass”
- Country Music (overview): roots country – hillbilly, mountain, and “Old-time” music; Nashville vs. Honky Tonk/Outlaw country; and “new country”
- American Folk music, from the Dust Bowl to New York City
- British Invasion, blues revival, and 60’s psychedelic rock; “Britain Invades America, America Strikes Back” (video); Waves of the British Invasion
- “Doo-wop” and the early vocal groups
- Soul Music (Motown, Memphis, and the Sound of Philadelphia) - “Soul Music” (video); its southern Gospel connection; Neo-soul
- The 1970’s: American music: West coast, Midwest, and New York; FM radio; corporate and arena rock; easy-listening/soft rock; disco; bubble-gum and 70’s teen idols; early heavy metal
- Punk rock and Post-Punk (from America to London... and back again)
- 1980’s recap...from Hair Bands to New Wave
- Ska and Reggae; Bob Marley documentary
- Alternative & Lesser-known American roots genres
- Techno and Electronica (time permitting)