

T410
SPRING 2003
11:15–12:30 TR

ANALYSIS OF POPULAR MUSIC
SECTION 8405
M344

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Office hours: TR 10:00-11:00, and other times by appointment

In this course we will explore the wide range of ways in which popular music has been studied, consider relationships between popular music and other musical traditions, and develop skill in analyzing popular music. We will read current research on popular music within the fields of music theory, musicology, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies; we will also explore how certain classically oriented music-theoretical methods might be applied to popular music. The course will be run as a seminar, with class time consisting primarily of student discussion and presentation. Activities outside of class will include substantial reading, transcription of music from recordings, musical analysis, research, and various kinds of writing. The course will culminate in a research paper and presentation on a popular-music topic of your choosing.

Goals of the course include the following:

- Familiarity with the approaches that have been used to study popular music, both within music theory and in other fields
- Development of the ability to discover and explain substantial, significant, and meaningful features of a particular work of popular music
- Exposure to higher-level music theory
- Enhanced ability to write about music at a sophisticated level
- Enhanced ability to conduct independent analysis and research
- Enhanced awareness of the relationships and differences between “classical” and “popular” traditions
- Development of the ability to represent the sounds of popular music using musical notation and other graphic means
- Practical application of the aural skills you have developed
- Practical application of “written theory” knowledge both previously and newly acquired

Required Text

Moore, Allan F. *Rock: The Primary Text: Developing a Musicology of Rock*. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2001.

Other Materials

Most required readings will be drawn from books available in the reserve room of the Music Library. Other readings (primarily journal articles) will be made available either through E-reserves (<http://ereserves.indiana.edu>) or through Music Library personal reserves. As you will probably want to copy most of the required readings, you are advised to place funds on your ID card for this purpose.

WWW

Course website: <http://www.music.indiana.edu/som/courses/t410/t410home.html>

Course reserves: <http://www.dlib.indiana.edu/variations/reserves/>

IU electronic reserves (for certain assigned readings): <http://ereserves.indiana.edu/>

Class majordomo list: mjbutler_t410list@indiana.edu

Note: The majordomo list will serve as an important form of communication and will also be incorporated into various assignments. You will need to check your email on a regular basis. You have already been subscribed to the list using your indiana.edu address; if you do not use this account, please subscribe using the account that you do use. Directions are available from the IU Knowledge Base at <http://kb.indiana.edu/data/afst.html?cust=156237.38149.131>.

Approximate Organization*Weeks 1–6:*

- Introduction to the course
- What is popular music?
- How should we study popular music?
- Exploration of approaches to popular music in various disciplines: ethnomusicology, musicology, music theory, and popular music studies
- Transcription and analysis of popular music

Weeks 7–13:

Exploration of various topics in relation to popular music. These will include most, but probably not all, of the following:

- Rhythm and meter
- Harmony
- Classical theories/popular musics
- Authenticity
- Gender and sexuality
- The role of technology and the recording studio in musical creation
- Authorship and the concept of the musical work
- Intertextuality and style

Weeks 14–15:

Student research presentations

Grading

Participation in class discussions; attendance; preparation
 Portfolio
 Short Assignments
 Final Paper

Percentage

20%
 10%
 40%
 30%

100%

Notes:

- Because this course is a seminar, in which class meetings will consist largely of discussion, your attendance and active participation are especially crucial. You are expected to be present at every class; any unexcused absences will affect your grade. You should read all assigned readings carefully and thoughtfully before class and arrive prepared to discuss them.
- You will need to do independent work outside of class on a regular basis. This will be particularly important in preparing the final paper. In general, you should expect to spend at least 4 hours outside of class for each class meeting.
- A grade of F on the final paper will result in an F in the course.

Grading scale:

90-100%=A-, A, A+

80-89%=B-, B, B+

70-79%=C-, C, C+

60-69%=D-, D, D+

below 60%=F

For each range, plus (+) grades will be the top 2.5% and minus (-) will be the bottom 2.5%. Thus 97.5% is the lowest possible A+; 92.5% is the lowest possible A; and so on.

Assignments*Final Paper*

One of your most important accomplishments this semester will be an analytical paper of 3500–4500 words (about 12–15 pages) on a popular-music topic of your choice. You will work on the paper throughout the course, selecting and refining your topic at an early stage and then researching it as the semester unfolds. The paper must incorporate your own musical analysis, draw upon music-theoretical concepts discussed during the semester, and include at least one transcription (by you) of a substantial portion of music. In short, it should have a significant music-theoretical component and should demonstrate a close and productive engagement with the sounds of the music you are studying. Aside from these stipulations, however, the focus of your study and the approach you use are up to you. You might decide, for instance, to incorporate some of the methods and perspectives of other disciplines we will study during the course of the semester, or to consider relationships between musical patterning and broader sociocultural issues.

The paper will unfold in several stages, with the following due dates:

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| a. Preliminary topic ideas | due Tuesday, 1/28 |
| b. Topic proposal & preliminary bibliography | due Tuesday, 3/4 |
| c. Partial draft with transcription | due Tuesday, 4/8 |
| d. Final version | due Tuesday, 4/22 |

Information about the first stage has already been posted to the website; read this now and begin to think about possible topics. More detailed information about the later stages will be posted to the website as the course progresses.

Short Assignments

Throughout the course of the semester, you will be given short assignments that will encourage you to interact with and develop further understanding of various concepts and methods discussed in class. There will be about one assignment per week, except in weeks where a component of the paper is due. Although these assignments will not form an official part of your paper, many of them may feed into it. For instance, you might use them to explore your topic from a particular perspective, to try out a certain approach before incorporating it into your paper, or as a means of narrowing your focus and developing a thesis.

Reading Responses

For each assigned reading, you will be expected to write a short response of at least two paragraphs (150–200 words total, though you are free to write more). The response should show that you have read and thought about the work, but it should not simply summarize it. You might go about this in a variety of ways: for instance, you might choose a particular issue discussed in the work, explain the author’s position with respect to that issue, and then offer your own reaction to his/her position. Or you might write about a question that the reading left you with—for instance, an area in which the author’s argument seemed to be inconsistent or incomplete, or some topic or point that you’d like to read more about. A third possibility would be to choose a piece of music familiar to you (or, a work from the course reserves) and write about it from the point of view of some issue discussed in the reading.

The style of these responses can be informal, but your remarks should still be coherent and thoughtful. You will be asked to include one response from each week in a portfolio that you will turn in at the end of the semester.

Your response is due by 11:00 a.m. on the day for which the reading is assigned. Send your remarks to me by email. Since you will need to keep your responses for your portfolio, it will probably be easiest for you to prepare and save them in a word-processing program; when you send them to me, however, please paste the comments directly into a message rather than sending an attachment.

I will read each response you send me; though I will not normally give detailed commentary or specific grades, I may write back to you privately at times. In addition, after each class I will choose responses from five students and post them to the class email list within 24 hours. The students chosen will change from class to class so that everyone will get more or less equal “airtime” during the course of the semester. Please read and think about your classmates’ remarks; you will be asked to respond to at least five different remarks in your portfolio.

On a fairly regular basis I will ask two or three students to select a recording, bring it to class, and discuss it in relation to a reading assignment. When you are asked to do this, your comments in class will substitute for your written response to that particular reading.

Portfolio

At the end of the semester you will turn in a portfolio that represents your work outside of class during the semester. The portfolio will contain the following elements:

- a. One reading response from each week of the course (15 in all)
- b. At least 5 responses to *unassigned* readings of your choosing. These may come from materials read in preparation for your paper, but you are also encouraged to explore other areas of interest to you.
- c. At least 5 responses to comments posted by your classmates on the email list
- d. Any other materials that reflect your independent work during the semester (transcriptions that you decided not to include in your paper, short analyses, other miscellaneous writings...)

Though the writing style of these materials can still be informal, in the manner of the responses turned in for each class, the best portfolios will show evidence of ideas polished and refined through the course of the semester. In other words, use this as an opportunity to look back at what you wrote earlier in the semester and see how your ideas have changed; you are encouraged to revise and add to your earlier responses as appropriate.

Student Info Sheet

Please fill out and return by Thursday, January 16

Name:

Prefer to be called:

E-mail:

Degree:

Class:

Major(s)/Primary instrument:

Other instruments:

Hometown:

Other courses taken/in progress:

T351: in progress ___ completed ___

T331: in progress ___ completed ___

M401: completed ___

M402: in progress ___ completed ___

**Other upper-level theory
or music history classes taken: _____**

Briefly describe your background in popular music as a performer and listener. What are some of your favorite popular music styles? What musicians are you a fan of?

Are there any topics within popular music that you are particularly interested in? What are you hoping to gain from this course?