

# *Popular Song Analysis*

**Level:** HE2  
**Code:** MU2.PSA  
**Credits:** 20  
**Convenor:** Tim Hughes  
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## **Aims:**

- To develop analytical strategies pertinent to a range of recorded popular music, and to employ these in discovering what, and how, popular music 'means'.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

On completion of this module, you should be able to:

- demonstrate key stylistic markers within popular music;
- utilise analytic techniques pertinent to popular music;
- develop criteria of judgement with respect to various areas of popular music

## **Content:**

- Demonstration of syntactic tendencies in popular music with respect to: form, repetition, timbre, rhythm & metre, texture and dynamics, harmony, melody, and lyrics;
- Discussion of key paradigms for meaning in popular music

## **Pattern of Delivery:**

- Spring Semester;
- 20 one-hour lectures and supporting tutorials.

## **Methods of Teaching/Learning:**

10 two-hour informal lectures, to include seminar time.

The majority of the sessions will demonstrate particular analytic approaches with reference to rhythm, form and harmony, melody and the voice, and texture. The remainder will be devoted to contextualising particular songs by means of the approaches introduced.

## **Methods of Assessment and Weighting:**

Coursework (100% of total assessment)

- Two brief analyses. These will be worth 25% of the module mark each, for a total of 50%.
- One extended essay in contextualised analysis, worth the remaining 50%.

## **Recommended Reading:**

Moore A, 2002: *Rock: The Primary Text* (Aldershot: Ashgate), particularly pp. 33-63, 120-126.

Other reading will be indicated during the course of this module.

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### Outline and Coursework Timetable, Spring 2006

Week 1:	16 January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis, What Is It Good For?</li> <li>• Methods of Analysis and Opening Your Ears</li> </ul>
Week 2:	23 January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form</li> <li>• Repetition, Groove and Flow</li> </ul>
Week 3:	30 January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rhythm and Meter</li> </ul>
Week 4:	6 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Sound”—Timbre, Instrumentation, Texture, Space, and Dynamics</li> <li>• The Studio, Production &amp; Engineering, Writing at an Instrument</li> </ul>
Week 5:	13 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmony</li> <li>• Melody</li> </ul> <p><b>First Analytical Assignment Set</b></p>
Week 6:	20 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lyrics</li> <li>• Persona/Image</li> </ul> <p><b>First Analytical Assignment Due (25% of grade)</b></p>
Week 7:	27 February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>• Intertextuality</li> </ul>
Week 8:	6 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Style</li> <li>• Semiotics</li> </ul> <p><b>Second Analytical Assignment Set</b></p>
Week 9:	13 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music in Life</li> <li>• Music in Society</li> </ul> <p><b>Second Analytical Assignment Due (25% of grade)</b></p>
Week 10:	20 March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis, What Is It Good For? (Redux)</li> <li>• Critique of Sample Analyses</li> </ul> <p><b>Final Project Set</b></p>
End of Term	24 April	<b>Final Project Due (50% of grade)</b>