SPRING 2011
AFST/MUSC/PERF 327: POPULAR MUSICS IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA
PROFESSOR: David Donkor, dadonkor@tamu.edu
Office Hours: Wed 2pm-4:pm or by appointment
Office: Academic 105B Phone: 862 8531

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Examination of a range of popular musics from the twentieth century that have emerged in conjunction with the historical global spread of peoples and cultures from the African continent; technical knowledge about music not required; focus on social and cultural contexts for popular music.

Prerequisites: Junior or senior standing or approval of instructor.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify a range of popular musics from the 20th century that have emerged from the African continent.
- Discuss the African Diaspora as a product and process of circum-Atlantic flows.
- Examine the African continental heritage and the early “New World” experiences of slavery.
- Analyze Diasporic reconnections with the African continent.
- Identify musical forms/styles including blues, mento, ska, rocksteady, reggae, calypso, soca, highlife, hip-life, kwaito and Afrobeat.
- Engage in thoughtful discussions of Diasporic music in written form and in film.
- Apply and hone skills in the areas of engaged and critical reading, writing, and thinking, and in active listening and articulate speaking.

INTRODUCTION

This course examines a range of popular music from the 20th century that have emerged in conjunction with the global spread of peoples and cultures from the African continent. With a view of the African Diaspora as a product and process of circum-Atlantic flows (or transatlantic circulations) we will examine the African continental heritage and the early “New World” experiences of slavery; popular music in the United States and the Caribbean (particularly Jamaica); and then the Diasporic reconnections with the African continent. Musical forms/styles in our focus will include blues, mento, ska, rocksteady, reggae, calypso, soca, highlife, hip-life, kwaito and Afrobeat. Our approaches to these will be historical, cultural and critical/political.

This course will not have a traditional lecture format. Rather students will collectively and actively participate in the thoughtful discussion of readings and films viewed. We will strive to create a sense of community in which each and every one of us is recognized as a student, teacher, and scholar with individual ideas and insights worth exploring. The assigned readings, writings, and other activities planned for this course are intended to hone students’ skills in the
areas of engaged and critical reading, writing, and thinking, and in active listening and articulate speaking — all skills that are important in the broader academic and professional worlds.

REQUIREMENTS

Class Attendance
Your daily attendance is required. See TAMU Student Rule 7 for details regarding excused absences: http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07. You begin the semester with 100 pts. You will be allowed two unexcused absences without penalty. Each unexcused absence after this will result in the lowering of your course grade by one letter grade. Example: If you have three unexcused absences at the end of the term and have a course average of B, your final course grade will be C.

Participation
Your full and enthusiastic participation in class discussion sessions is required. Such participation is part of your daily grade. Overall consistent quality participation may earn you additional points. Classes will often involve collective discussion of assigned materials, sometimes under the guidance of the instructor and at other times under the facilitation of one or more students. For this format to work, all students must come to class having read the assigned reading and prepared to discuss it and to ask and answer questions of each other as well as the instructor. While assessment of your participation will depend heavily on your regular constructive verbal contributions to discussions, in recognition of the fact that individual students have different participation styles, the following will also be taken into account: active and respectful listening to fellow classmates and instructor; partner and small group conversations; and appropriate use of office hours and e-mail to address questions, confusions, or thoughts relating to specific readings, to assignments, or to the course in general. “Ad hoc” assignments announced throughout the semester will form part of your participation.

Reading/Viewing Reaction Papers
Required readings for this class will be available electronically or given as handouts. Reading assignments are listed under the date on which they will be discussed, so students are expected to read the assignments before coming to class on that date. Handouts may not be listed. If not listed it is likely to be something short and easy to read. We will complement our readings with viewings of documentary and feature films. I may assign “OC” (out of class) viewings for each of which you could be asked to write a one page viewing reaction paper. Viewings tagged “IC” (in class) will take place during the class session. Over the course of the semester each student will write up to 10 reading-reaction papers (RRP) based on assigned readings. These papers should be between 1.5 and 2 pages long, double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman, with 1” margins around the page. The papers should not be mere descriptions or summaries but rather your individual reactions to the readings/films. This means an expression of your opinions, confusions, insights, critiques, questions, etc. It almost goes without saying that they should not contain off-topic ruminations. You are not required to write a reading-reaction paper for the week you facilitate a discussion. This exception does not apply to the viewing-reaction papers. A reaction paper is due in class on the day the reading/film is listed unless you are informed otherwise. A late RRP will be penalized with a 10 point reduction for each class day late (i.e. 20 point reduction for second class day late, and so on). You are exempt from a reaction paper on the day(s) you are a discussion facilitator.
Discussion facilitation
Each student will serve as a discussion facilitator once during the semester. Facilitators must submit a list of 3-5 main points/arguments in the assigned readings, a list of 3-5 questions for discussion, and a copy of their presentation outline. All these three items should be handed to Dr. Donkor at the beginning of class on the day of facilitation. The student-facilitator also has to make the questions available to the rest of the class—either as a hardcopy or in electronic (power point or word) form for projection.

Midterm Exam
You will write take-home midterm exam (120 pts) covering readings/films from the first day of class to mid-semester. Midterms submitted late will be penalized with a 10 point reduction for each class day late (i.e. 20 point reduction for second class day late, and so on).

Final Exams
You will also write a final take-home exam covering readings/films/plays from mid to end of semester. Exams submitted late will be penalized with a 5 point reduction for each day late (i.e. 10 point reduction for second day late, and so on)

Course related announcements and info
You are required to check your e-learning daily for announcements and course related information that I might send you. You are also required to see a production of My Children My Africa in conjunction with our discussion of post apartheid Kwaito Music. You will receive information about Performance Studies and Africana Studies programs, some of which you may attend for extra credit.

Percentage Distribution

1. Participation------------------10% (100pts)
2. Discussion Facilitation-------10% (100pts)
3. Reaction Papers---------------40% (400pts)
4. Midterm Exam----------------20% (200pts)
5. Final Exam--------------------20% (200pts)

EVALUATION and ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
900–1000 POINTS (90%) = A
800–899 POINTS (80%) = B
700–799 POINTS (70%) = C
600–699 POINTS (60%) = D
599 POINT or less = F

An Aggie does not lie, cheat, steal or tolerate those who do.
(See http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu)
EMAIL POLICY
In all cases I shall strive towards, but cannot assure, a response to your emails in 24 hours. Barring unforeseen circumstances I will respond to your emails within 2 days of receipt.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT (ADA) POLICY STATEMENT
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information, visit http://disability.tamu.edu/.

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**WEEK ONE**

Thu 1/20
- Introduction/Syllabus, etc.

**MAPPING THE FIELD: AREAS AND KEY CONCEPTS**

**WEEK TWO**

Tue 1/25
- View (IC): *The Language You Cry: Story of a Mende song*, Inko Productions; produced and directed by Alvaro Toepke and Angel Serrano; written by Alvaro Serrano. San Francisco, Calif.: California Newsreel [1999]

Thu 1/27

**THE AFRICAN HERITAGE**

**WEEK THREE**

Tue 2/1
- View (IC) *Dance at court (Section on Ghana)*, story by Rhoda Grauer; a production of Thirteen/WNET in association with RM Arts and BBC-TV. West Long Branch, NJ: Kultur, [1993]
- View (IC) *West African Instruments*, directed by David R. Hopfer; produced by
WWVU-TV in co-operation with the Creative Arts Center, West Virginia University.
Lincoln, NE: GPN Educational Media, [1978].

Thu2/3


THE MAKING OF A DIASPORA

WEEK FOUR

Tue 2/8

Thu 2/10

AFRICAN AMERICAN BLUES: THE BEGINNINGS

WEEK FIVE

Tue 2/15

Tue 2/17
2. Jahn, Janheinz, “From Blues—the Conflict of Cultures” in WMAFOYL, 28-31
### HIP-HOP SPEAKING NATIONALISM AND GENDER

**WEEK SIX**

**Tue 2/22**
- View (IC) *Nobody Knows My Name*, Unleashed Entertainment, written, produced and directed by Rachel Raimist. New York, NY, Women Make Movies [1999].

**Thu 2/24**

### APPROPRIATIONS/ “MAINSTREAMING?”

**WEEK SEVEN**

**Tue 3/1**
- View (IC): *Crossing Over*, script & direction by Christopher Laird, Wallace Bampoe-Addo; producer, Christopher Laird; National Film & Television Institute of Ghana and Banyan. Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago: Banyan Archives, [1988]

**Thu 3/3**

### CARIBBEAN CRUCIBLE

**WEEK EIGHT**

**Tue 3/8**

**Thu 3/10**
- View (IC) *Caribbean Crucible* Third Eye Productions for Channel Four in association with RM Arts; producer, Penny Corke ; directed by Dennis Marks. Publisher: Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, [2003]
## SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES

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<td>Tue 3/15</td>
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## REGGAE, RASTAS AND THE GLOBAL MARLEY

### WEEK NINE

**Tue 3/22**  
View: *Land of Look Behind*

**Thu 3/24**  

## HIGHLIFE—WEST AFRICAN REPERCUSSIONS

### WEEK TEN

**Tue 3/29**  

**Thu 3/31**  

## GLOBAL HIP-HOP: AFRICAN REINVENTIONS

### WEEK ELEVEN

**Tue 4/5**  
View (IC) *Living the Hiplife*, Coltan Media; Evidence Films; producer-director, Jesse Weaver Shipley. Ed New York: Third World Newsreel [2007].
Thu 4/7


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**SOUL TO SOUL: CIRCUMATLANTIC CONNECTIONS**

**WEEK TWELVE**

**Tue 4/12**

- View: *Soul to Soul*

**Thu 4/14**

- View: *A History of Soul*
- Attend My Children My Africa

**MUSIC AFTER APARTHEID: KWAITO!**

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

**Tue 4/19**

- View/Listen: TBA

**Thu 4/21**


**BLACK POWER: FELA’S AFROBEAT**

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

**Tue 4/26**

View: *Music is the Weapon*

**Thu 4/28**


**EXAM WEEK**

**Tue 5/3**

TBA