

*Department of Humanities and Social Sciences*  
**COM 380-002: MUSIC AND SOCIETY:**  
***“A Brief History in Music”***

Wednesday, Friday  
10:00 - 11:20 am  
FMH 106

Prof. Gonzalo Valencia-Peña  
Email: [gav6@njit.edu](mailto:gav6@njit.edu)  
Office Hours: By appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will explore music and its relationship to societies throughout history. We will attempt to understand what music is, why human beings listen to music, what it means to different people and cultures, and how music functions in our own lives.

We will listen to and analyze a wide variety of music from the earliest records available to current music in the 21st century. Every possible genre will be explored and advocated for from jazz to pop to rock to renaissance to classical to hip-hop to jingles to opera to techno to country to whatever the instructor and students wish to explore. We will also cover the role technology has played in transforming how we experience and create music, from the development of the earliest instruments to the advent of recording techniques to the current use of AI.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

- ❖ Describe and analyze a variety of contexts in which music, individuals, and societies intersect.
- ❖ Develop listening skills to engage with a variety of genres and traditions.
- ❖ Reflect on and evaluate your personal musical preferences and relate them to larger societal contexts.
- ❖ Articulate informed perspectives through discussion, writing, and presentations.

**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS:**

- ❖ *A “listening journal.”* It can be any PHYSICAL/PAPER notebook; **It may NOT digital.** This will encourage us to engage in “active listening” away from screens. Expect journal to be turned in for physical review throughout the course.
- ❖ A smartphone or technological device from you can experience audio/video references.
- ❖ Personal headphones that work with your device; wired or wireless.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS/RESOURCES:**

- ❖ *A Little History of Music* by Robert Philip; ISBN-10: 0300257740
- ❖ *Music is History* by QuestLove; ISBN-10: 1419751433
- ❖ *This Is Your Brain on Music* by Daniel J. Levitin; ISBN-10: 0452288525
- ❖ *Music and Technology: A Very Short Introduction* by Mark Katz; ISBN-10: 0199946981
- ❖ *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction* by Barry Stephenson; ISBN-10: 9780199943524
- ❖ *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday and the Biography of a Song* by David Margolick; ISBN-10: 0060959568
- ❖ *The Story of Music: From Babylon to the Beatles: How Music Has Shaped Civilization* by Howard Goodall; ISBN-10: 1605986704
- ❖ *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* by Alex Ross; ISBN-10: 0274885395

**GRADING CRITERIA:****In-Class Participation (20%)**

Students are expected to show up on time and ready to participate in in-class activities & discussions. This includes attendance.

**Homework Assignments (10%)**

Weekly assignments that will include a variety of activities, such as reading materials, listening to music, watching videos, and writing entries into a “listening journal.”

**MIDTERM - Event/Concert Response Essay (20%)**

Students will write a short essay where they reflect on their personal experience during a live music event.

**FINAL - Listening Exam (25%)**

Students will listen to musical excerpts that are representative of what has been covered throughout the course and will have to answer questions relating to them.

**Listening Journal (25%)**

Students will turn in their journals at the end of the course on the day of the final exam. If students wish to recover their journals after they are graded, they must reach out and pick up will be arranged.

**GRADING SCALE:**

90 - 100 = A

77 - 79 = C+

60 - 69 = D

87 - 89 = B+

70 - 76 = C

0 - 60 = F

80 - 86 = B

60 - 69 = D

**ATTENDANCE POLICIES:****Absences**

Unexcused absences will count against your participation grade. Three unexcused absences will result in a full letter grade deduction from your overall participation grade. If you have extenuating circumstances for any reason and miss a class you must contact the Dean of Students Office.

**Absences for Religious Observance:**

Students must inform their instructors in writing of any conflicts between course requirements and religious observances, ideally by the end of the second week of classes and no later than two weeks before the anticipated absence.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

The Office of Accessibility Resources and Services works in partnership with administrators, faculty, and staff to provide reasonable accommodations and support services for students with disabilities who have provided their office with medical documentation to receive services.

If you are in need of accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services to discuss your specific needs.

## **COURSE BREAKDOWN**

*Breakdown listed is subject to change and/or be adapted based on teacher's discretion and student progress*

### **UNIT I: Foundations**

- ❖ **Music & Society**
  - Defining terms and exploring personal connections
- ❖ **Music & Technology**
  - Oral traditions to streaming platforms
- ❖ **Music & Ritual**
  - Group chants, folk traditions, religious music

### **UNIT II: Music, Identity, & Culture**

- ❖ **Music & Race**
  - Spirituals, country, blues, jazz, “motown”, rock, hip-hop
- ❖ **Music & Women**
  - Women throughout music history
- ❖ **Music & Class**
  - “Classical” vs “Pop” vs “Punk”
- ❖ **Music & Nation**
  - National anthems and propaganda

### **UNIT III: Music & Power**

- ❖ **Music & Resistance**
  - Civil rights movement and anti-war music
- ❖ **Music & Politics**
  - State control, censorship, protest songs
- ❖ **Music & Religion**
  - Sacred music traditions across cultures
- ❖ **Music & Commerce**
  - The “music industry”, pop stars, consumerism

### **UNIT IV: Music & Modern Times**

- ❖ **Music & Globalization**
  - World music, cultural appropriation vs. exchange
- ❖ **Music & Media**
  - Film scores, advertising, social media
- ❖ **Music & Health**
  - Music therapy, communal singing
- ❖ **Music & Beyond**
  - The future of music & society

## **UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

*Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:*

*<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.*

*Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at [dos@njit.edu](mailto:dos@njit.edu).*

## **POLICIY ON GENERATIVE AI:**

This course will stay in accordance with all rules and policies set by NJIT with regards to A.I. (artificial intelligence). Students are expected to work without the use of A.I. assistance in order to better develop and enhance their personal skills in this content area. As such, AI usage is not permitted to aid in your assignments under any circumstance.