American Studies 311
POPULAR CULTURE AND THE MEDIA:
SPACE AND PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC
DRAFT

Instructor: Dr. Kyle Riismandel
Teaching Assistant: Maxi Wardcantori
Contact: kyle.riismandel@rutgers.edu
Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 230-350PM
Classroom: Hill 106
Office: Conklin Hall, 243
Student Office Hours: Book time with Kyle Riismandel: Office Hours - American Studies 311

Course Description:
In this class, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of space, place, and culture in late 20th century urban America. In particular, we focus on the co-constitutive relationship of musical forms and cultural scenes in their home cities. Though we will be looking at individual scenes and distinct places, we will also consider the broader implications of these cultural productions particularly with regard to race, class, gender, and capitalism as well as formal and informal regulation of people and other relationships of power within space.

The course will be divided into five units:
- Hip-hop in the South Bronx, 1976-1984
- Hardcore punk in suburban Los Angeles, 1976-1984
- Gangsta rap in Los Angeles, 1988-1994
- Putting It All Together/Making Connections

Learning Objectives
- Identify and analyze different types of primary sources in their historical context
- Identify and analyze secondary sources with a focus on argument and evidence
  - Identify and analyze the social construction of identities and spaces such as race, class, gender, nation, city, suburb
- Learn and practice analytical writing
- Practice implementing feedback on written and oral communication

ASSIGNMENTS
YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THE COURSE. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC F. ASSIGNMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED LATE IN SOME CASES BUT CAN INCUR A PENALTY OF UP TO 1/3 OF A LETTER GRADE PER DAY LATE.

Listening Quizzes
These quizzes will test your knowledge of the important songs and artists studied throughout the semester. There will be one in-class quiz for Units 1-4.

Papers
You will complete two paper assignments based on prompts distributed during the semester. These papers will ask you to think critically about the productions of space and power in the communities we are studying while making connections to broader historical changes in postwar America.

Listening Questions
Listening questions will be distributed for each section. They are designed to prepare you for discussion by thinking and writing about how to analyze popular music as a primary source. You must upload your responses to the proper Turnitin link for credit.

Reading Quizzes
Four times during the semester, you will complete a multiple-choice reading quiz on Canvas. These quizzes are designed to test reading comprehension of that day’s assignment. Your lowest score will be dropped.

Recap Paper
We begin each class with a short discussion of the big takeaways from our last class session. This assignment asks you to lead that recap discussion as well as submit a short (300-600) written recap that will be posted to Canvas.

Your recap should include the key analytical takeaways from a lecture and/or discussion. That means, you should articulate what we learned or now understand about that week’s theme or topic.

The goals of this assignment are to:
- Articulate to yourself and your classmates what we learned or understood about the previous class’s theme or topic
- Prepare for questions on the final exam that will rely on your knowledge of these larger analytical points
- Practice historical writing including synthetic description and analysis

Class Participation:
Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities, to be respectful to the instructor and their fellow classmates, to arrive to class on time, and to stay focused on what is happening in our classroom.

Participation will be assessed on the quality of contributions to class discussions. Quality participation demonstrates the following:
- Understanding of the historical context as gleaned from lectures and readings
- Completion of and engagement with that week's assignments such as readings, listening to playlists, watching videos, and worksheets
- A willingness to engage in critical assessment of course texts and lectures
If you have questions about this grade or ways to participate more effectively, do not hesitate to contact me or come to office hours. Further, do not wait to contact me or your TA if you are falling behind or having trouble understanding course content. I am here to help so please let me know how I can do so.

**Your final grade will be calculated as follows:**
- Listening quizzes: $4\% \times 4 = 16\%$
- Production of Space Assignment: $5\%$
- Papers: $18\% \times 2 = 36\%$
- Listening Questions: $3\% \times 4 = 12\%$
- Participation: $12\%$
- Reading Quizzes: $3 \times 3\% = 9\%$
- Recap: $5\%$
- Big Takeaways: $5\%$

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**
Given the pandemic, I understand that attending class may not always be possible. So, I encourage you to attend class as much as you can because class time is crucial to learning. However, if you miss class to attend a university sponsored event, to observe a religious holiday, or due to a documented illness, those absences will be excused. In addition, I encourage you to contact me if you miss class for any other reason so that you can get caught up on class material.

**Classroom Conduct**
In this course, we welcome intellectual inquiry and thoughtful discussion of difficult questions, but hate speech and disrespectful comments will not be tolerated. We must come to class with an open mind, a willingness to learn, and fundamental respect for the humanity of each person in the room and the historical actors we discuss.

**Office hours/student appointments**
My office hours are times set aside to meet and speak with students. Please use the link on Canvas to book an appointment. I am also available to meet at other times if students are unable to make it to my office during these times. Feel free to send me an email to set up a meeting if you’d like to talk or have any questions about course topics, assignments, or grades.

**Academic dishonesty**
Students are expected to obey the Rutgers honor code, and I will enforce this code to its fullest extent. The goal of this course is to evaluate your understanding of course materials and ability to express that understanding. Cheating, plagiarizing or otherwise violating the code of academic integrity not only breaks the trust between professor and student but keeps you from learning course content and improving writing and critical thinking skills. I am here to help so if you are having trouble, do not cheat, ask me for help.
Generally speaking, it is a violation of the academic integrity code to:

- Use someone else’s words or ideas without attribution
- Copy content from someone else’s paper, quiz, or exam
- Pay for course assignments to be complete by someone else

The university’s policy on academic integrity is available at:
http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/

**Cell phones, Laptops, Tablets, Etc.**

Students must turn off and stow their cell phones before class begins. Under no circumstances may students answer their phones, make calls, send text messages, or use their cell phone in any manner during class hours unless approved by me before class begins. I understand that cell phones have become central to many of our lives, but their use in class is a distraction for not just the user but others in class.

Essentially, you are in class approximately 3 hours a week. Please be present and prepared when you are here. If you would rather text or surf the internet, please do not come to class.

**Accommodations**

If you require an accommodation, please complete the Registration form on the ODS website at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. For more information, please visit the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, Suite 219 or contact odsnewark@rutgers.edu. I am happy to do anything to help you learn so registering with ODS and having them supply instructors with proper guidance will help us do that.

**Course Schedule**

**WEEK 1**

Tuesday – Introductions/Syllabus Review/What is Culture?
Thursday – The Social Production of Space

Secondary Source – Please use the reading guide on Canvas so you read the right parts and to help you understand this text
- Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, “Introduction”

Learning Objective: Understand space as a product of social relations in a particular historical context

**PRODUCTION OF SPACE ASSIGNMENT DUE BY 230PM VIA CANVAS**

**WEEK 2**

**TUESDAY**

Lecture – The South Bronx and Urban Crisis

**THURSDAY**

Discussion

Primary Source
- Screen on your own - 80 Blocks from Tiffany’s (1979)

Secondary Source
- Evelyn Diaz Gomez, *The Bronx*, Ch. 7
WEEK 3
TUESDAY
Lecture – The South Bronx and Urban Crisis
THURSDAY
Discussion
Primary Source
- Screen on your own - 80 Blocks from Tiffany’s (1979)
Secondary Source
- Evelyn Diaz Gomez, The Bronx, Ch. 7

WEEK 4
TUESDAY
Lecture: The Birth of Hip-Hop
THURSDAY
Discussion
Primary Sources
- Spotify playlist “South Bronx and Early Hip-Hop”
Secondary Source
- Tricia Rose, Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America, Ch. 2
Learning Objectives:
- Understand the transformation of the Bronx from suburban enclave to a borough in crisis
- Understand how and why hip-hop emerged there

HIP HOP LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE
READING QUIZ 1

WEEK 5
TUESDAY
Discussion
Primary Source
- Wild Style (1982)
THURSDAY
Secondary Source:
- Joe Austin, Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City, 75-107.
Learning Objective: Analyze hip-hop as a cultural production and how it shaped the space of the South Bronx

Reading Quiz #2 - Austin

Unit II – Hardcore and the Suburbs of Los Angeles

WEEK 6
TUESDAY
Lecture: Postwar Suburban Los Angeles
THURSDAY
Discussion
Secondary Source
- Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Los Suburban Angeles*, Chapter 6 and Epilogue

Learning Objective: Understand the growth of California as a suburban state and the implications of this shift on race, class, and power.

**Early Hip-Hop Listening Test**

**WEEK 7**
**TUESDAY**
Discussion
Primary Sources:
- Spotify playlist “Hardcore Punk”
- Screen on your own: *The Decline of Western Civilization* (1981)
- Punk Zines [https://archive.org/details/MaximumRocknrollNo.01982](https://archive.org/details/MaximumRocknrollNo.01982)

**THURSDAY**
Discussion Continued
Learning Objective: Understand the tenets and sounds of hardcore punk as part of the landscape and culture of suburban LA

**HARDCORE LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE**

**Unit III – Gangsta Rap and Los Angeles**
**TUESDAY**
Paper workshop
**THURSDAY**
Lecture: Deindustrial Los Angeles and Gangsta Rap

**PAPER ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE NOVEMBER 15TH BY 5PM VIA CANVAS**

**Hardcore Listening Test**

**WEEK 9**
**TUESDAY**
Discussion
Primary Sources
- Gangsta Rap Playlist

**THURSDAY**
Secondary Source
- Eithne Quinn, *Nuthin’ but a “G” Thang: The Culture and Commerce of Gangsta Rap*, Ch. 4 “Straight Outta Compton: Ghetto Discourses and the Geographies of Gangsta”

Learning Objective: To analyze and understand the visual component of Gangsta Rap culture and how it produced the space of South Central LA

**GANGSTA RAP LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE**

**Reading Quiz #3 - QUINN**
UNIT IV – Seattle and Grunge

WEEK 10
TUESDAY
Lecture: From Logging to Logging On – An Industrial History of Seattle
THURSDAY
Discussion
Secondary Source
James Lyons, Selling Seattle: Representing Contemporary Urban America, Ch. 4

GANGSTA RAP LISTENING QUIZ

WEEK 11
TUESDAY
Discussion
Primary Sources
- Spotify playlist “Grunge”
  Screen on your own - Hype! (1996)
THURSDAY
Secondary Source
- Ryan Moore, Smells Like Teen Spirit: Youth Culture and Social Crisis, Ch. 4 “Young, Gifted, and Slack

SEATTLE GRUNGE LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE

Unit V – Putting It All Together/Making Connections

WEEK 12
TUESDAY
Discussion
Big Takeaways
Grunge Listening Test
THURSDAY

WEEK 13

WEEK 14
TUESDAY.
Discussion
The New Jim Crow
Secondary Source
- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Golden Gulag: Prison, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California

PAPER #2 DUE DECEMBER 15TH BY 5PM VIA CANVAS