

Kickin' the Actual Factual: Hip Hop in American History

Summer 2014

014:302/512:226/087:321

Conklin 346 MTWTH1:00 -2:45

Course Objectives:

1. Place the development and evolution of Hip Hop culture within the historical context of the last forty years
2. Identify the key components of Hip Hop culture
3. Identify the major shifts in Hip Hop music and culture from the 1970s into the early twenty-first century
4. Differentiate rap techniques through analysis of lyrical content and musical style
5. Assess the notion of racial authenticity through Hip Hop dance, art and video
6. Debate the relevance of Hip Hop culture as a force of contemporary change in the United States

Course description:

Whether we like it or not, Hip Hop is “bigger than religion,” as Erykah Badu chanted in her song “The Healer.” The sheer volume of multi-ethnic, multilingual, interracial and cross class integration that Hip Hop culture has generated in the last forty years is matched by very few cultural phenomena in the history of this nation. Elements of Hip Hop have touched nearly every sector of our national culture, as well as they have reached into other continents. In light of this, it is imperative to examine the origins and evolution of Hip Hop in the US as a means of understanding its influence on contemporary national dialogues about race, gender, sexuality, class, politics and religion. Accordingly, this course, will explore the relationship of Hip Hop to contemporary social and political discourses by charting its history in the United States from the post World War II era into the early twenty-first century – approximately 1968 to present.

Instructor:

L. Hunter

How to Contact me:

La.hunter@rutgers.edu please CC all messages to lpbhunter@gmail.com

Office and Hours:

Conklin 320

Please request all office hours by email 24 hours in advance.

Required Text(s):

All required readings are posted on blackboard. Please be sure to read, save/print them before their dates of discussion.



Course Requirements

Presentation (15 points): In the last two weeks of the semester, you will each give a short presentation on your final project. A detailed guide will be provided.

Papers (25 points): You will be responsible for two short papers in the next six weeks; both will require you to analyze a historical document and consider the relevance of the social and political changes it presents to the development of Hip Hop culture.

Participation (10 points): Consistent participation in this course is vital to excelling in it, and thoughtful, open conversations are the only ways to keep it interesting and fun. To ensure this, we must each bring ourselves to every conversation. We must each question, challenge, critique and consider every point raised in class if we are to walk away from this semester with a strong command of the major issues that shape early American history. Accomplishing this for all of us will mean active participation in class dialogue and spirited involvement in the following activity:

The Cipher: Starting in the second week of class, each of you will take turns giving a brief artist spotlight or making a critique about something occurring in the Hip Hop world right now. You will introduce this to the class for opening or closing our discussions and explain the ways in which the historical trends and events we discuss have produced the artist/lyrical content/video/fashion/diasporic expression you have highlighted. An alternative way of approaching this is to discuss the ways that the artist/lyrical content/cultural expression you introduce influence the memory of our recent past, and the historical narrative we are living and making.

Quizzes (25 points): you will take four quizzes this semester, which will require you to engage the key elements of U.S. American Hip Hop culture. Each quiz will require you to demonstrate your understanding of its role as a historical force in the nation, its linguistic/rhetorical culture, its visual culture, musical culture and its economic relevance.

Exam/Take Home Assessment (25 points): This summer you will complete one short take home exam by the end of the third week of classes, and one major project that will count as your final exam grade. Guidelines for both of these assignments are available on blackboard and both will be discussed in detail well in advance of their respective due dates.



Course policies, resources & notes on success

Attendance & punctuality: Besides active participation, being in class is a key component to excelling in this course. Understandably, there will be times when each of us may be late or absent. In this case, let's agree to keep each other posted at least 24 hours AHEAD of time when we can. If this is not possible, and your late attendance or absence is not due to an emergency, it will count against you. Three incidences of lateness will equal one absence; each unexcused absence after this will lower your final grade by one half grade. Any student who misses six or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism): Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. The standard minimum penalties for students who cheat or plagiarize include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University. You are *REQUIRED* to insert an academic integrity pledge on ALL of your submitted work this semester. The pledge should read as follows: "On My honor I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment."

Accommodations: For any student who has been deemed eligible for special services, Rutgers provides accommodations and/or modifications in order to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in all Rutgers programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, requiring assistance and/or accommodation should speak with Disability Services in a timely manner.

Additional notes: Writing is critical in this course and much of what you will be writing about will require you to engage issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, and morality in a sophisticated way. In light of this, I encourage you to utilize me as a resource and a sounding board in addition to any online resources, the library and the writing center. Additionally, feel free to send me drafts of assignments and ask me questions via email.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	WHAT TO READ	WHAT TO LISTEN TO	WHAT TO WATCH	WHAT'S DUE
1	May 27	Introductions & What is Hip Hop?				Please confirm your email address once you receive an email from me.
	May 28	The New Directions of "People's Power"	Excerpts from <i>The World the Sixties Made</i> (Introductions 1-2)	Listen to: James Brown's "I'm Black and I'm Proud" & Curtis Mayfield's "We People Who are Darker than Blue" or "Don't Worry If There's Hell Below, We're All Going to Go"		
	May 29		Excerpts from <i>Civil Rights Advocacy for the Poor</i> (ch. 1) & Joseph Peniel "Rethinking the Black Power Era" in <i>Journal of Southern History</i> (August 2009)	Listen to: James Brown's "I'm Black and I'm Proud" & Curtis Mayfield's "We People Who are Darker than Blue" or "Don't Worry If There's Hell Below, We're All Going to Go"		
2	June 2	Crack Consciousness & the "Concrete Jungle"	"Necropolis: The Bronx and the Politics of Abandonment" & "Making a Name: How DJ Kool Herc Lost His Accent and Started Hip Hop" in <i>Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation</i>	Grandmaster Flash "The Message" & Afrika Bambaataa "Planet Rock"		
	June 3		<i>Ronald Reagan and the 1980s</i> (introduction) & select Pres. Reagan speeches			
	June 4		Excerpts from <i>The 1980s: A Critical and Transitional Decade</i> (Ch.7) & "The Rise of the Post Civil Rights Era" in <i>Can't Stop Won't Stop</i>			
	June 5		Brian McJune Cann "Affect, Black Rage, and False Alternatives in the Hip Hop Nation" in <i>Critical Methodologies</i> (August 2013) & Elizabeth Grant "Gangsta Rap, the War on Drugs & the location of African American identity in Los Angeles 1988-1992" in <i>EJOAC</i> (April 2002)			
3	June 9	Gender Storytelling, Gangsta Rap & Hood Narratives	Excerpts from <i>The New Jim Crow & America in the 1990s</i>	"Gangsta" Rap folder on blackboard	Hip Hop Videos folder 1	
	June 10		Crystal Belle "From Jay-Z to Dead Prez: Examining Representations of	Some ladies of Hip Hop folder on blackboard	Hip Hop Videos folder 2	

			Masculinity in Mainstream versus Underground Hip Hop Music & “From Fly Girls to Bitches and Hos” <i>Chickenheads Come Home to Roost</i>			
	June 11		Kara Jane Lombard “Men Against the Wall: Graffiti(ed) Masculinities” in <i>The Journal of Men’s Studies</i>		View graffiti founders folder on blackboard In class viewing: <i>Style Wars (1983)</i>	
	June 12		We Don’t Wear Tight Clothes: Gay Panic and Queer Style in Contemporary Hip Hop” in <i>Popular Music and Society</i> (July 2012)			Midsemester take home exam due June 14 @ 10 pm via email and blackboard Turnitin Link
4	June 16	Hip Hop poverty & consumer culture	Excerpts from <i>The Big Payback: The History of Business and Hip Hop</i> (Ch. 6 – Cops & Rappers 1991-1995) & Rachel E Dwyer “Contained Dispersal: The Deconcentration of Poverty in US Metropolitan Areas in the 1990s” in <i>City and Community</i> (Sept. 2012)			
	June 17		Excerpts from <i>The Big Payback</i> (Ch. 7 – Keeping it Real 1993-1999) & Mark Anthony Neal “Nigga: 21 st -Century Theoretical Superhero” in <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> (August 2013)	Listen to: Biggie Smalls’ “Juicy” and “Everyday Struggle” or Nas’ “New York State of Mind” and “Halftime”		
	June 18		Excerpts from <i>The Big Payback</i> (Ch. 8 – An American Dream 1999-2007)		Watch: Jay-Z folder on blackboard	
	June 19		“Becoming the Hip Hop Generation” in <i>Can’t Stop Won’t Stop</i>	Jay Z’s “Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)”		
5	June 23	Twerk, Twerk, Twerk	Darren E. Grem “The South’s Got Something to Say: Atlanta’s Dirty South and the Southernization of Hip Hop America” in <i>Southern Cultures</i> (Winter 2006)		In class viewing – <i>Dirty States of America</i>	
	June 24		“Hip Hop Demeans Women” & “There Are Bitches and Hos” in <i>Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop and Why it Matters</i>			
	June 25		Andrean Clay “Like An Old Soul Record: Black Feminism Queer Sexuality and the Hip Hop Generation” in <i>Merideans</i> (2008)	Nicki Minaj “Pills & Potions” or “Superbass”		

	June 26				Big Freedia interview linked on Blackboard In Class viewing of Big Freedia documentary	
6	June 30	Where are We now?	Read: "21 st Century Jeremiad: Contemporary hip-hop and American tradition" in <i>European Journal of American Culture</i> (2008)			
	July 1					Final presentations
	July 2					Final presentations
	July 3					Final presentations