

Course Syllabus

MU-022-1 Survey of American Popular Music
Spring Terms, Deane Chapel, MW 12:45-2:35
Steve Hodson, Music Building

Required Text:

Starr & Waterman, *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MP3*, 6th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Course Description:

A historical survey of the music of American popular culture.

Course Overview:

Music theory is not emphasized in this course: there are other classes for that. *A Survey of American Popular Music* develops listening skills that lead to appreciating and enjoying American popular music. It is designed to increase your enjoyment of works of musical art from the inside out: you will be introduced to the ways in which music is put together and taught how to listen to a wide variety of musical styles. This course presents an ideal opportunity for General Education to enrich your life through the musical arts. Last but not least, the course contains special emphasis on Jazz & The Blues in America.

General Education:

This course fulfills the category of *Working Artistically of the Common Inquiries* of the General Education curriculum.

Description of this category as found in the Westmont College Catalogue: Students will expand their understanding of the fine arts and performing arts, including music, visual arts, or theatre. Students will develop and expand perceptual faculties, develop physical practices integral to the art form, and explore the critical principles which guide artists in the area.

While this course focuses on the interpretation of music in the context of culture, performance of music will also be emphasized. Our own *performances* of music will include singing songs, playing homemade and improvised instruments, and exploring percussion instruments. Our *compositions* will result from explorations in organizing sound—and words—for expressive purposes. Since all members of the class will participate in these creative projects unless absent from class for considerable periods of time, grade credit for these activities will be included under *attendance*.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to do the following:

1. demonstrate artistic processes and interpretive understanding in an artistic production through performing, composing, and engaging with musical works (Assessed through listening journal, concert reports, group presentations, and participation in in-class performances)

Commented [MOU1]: Learning outcome from GE Combined Document

Commented [MOU2]: Aligns with both certification criteria

2. demonstrate musical literacy through familiarity with the repertoire and musical periods of American Popular Music (*Assessed through chapter quizzes, unit test, final exam, and group presentations*)
3. clearly articulate responses to diverse styles and performances (*Assessed through listening journal and concert reports*)
4. contextualize compositions and performances within their appropriate cultural and political context (*Assessed through listening journals, concert reports, and group presentations*)

Commented [MOU3]: Aligns with “interpretive understanding in an artistic production” of Learning Outcome from *GE Combined Document*

Commented [MOU4]: Aligns with “interpretive understanding” of Learning Outcome from *GE Combined Document*

Class Attendance and Participation:

The Course Outline in the syllabus details the pages in the textbook that you must read and the repertoire that you must listen to and analyze prior to each class discussion. Most class periods will also include music-making through singing and playing of course-related repertoire, improvisation, and composing songs in various styles.

Commented [MOU5]: Each student will participate as singer and/or instrumentalist, as we learn and perform songs in groups with and for one another; each student will also compose songs in group settings with prompts related to various styles of American popular music.

Chapter Quizzes:

You are required to take the quiz at the end of every chapter and record your score on our Canvas site.

Listening Journal:

Music history is primarily a history of musical artworks—its expression, content, meaning, and context. Writing about pieces will help facilitate engaging with the music. The main project of the semester is a listening journal within which you will discuss your deepening understanding of selected musical works through the discipline of repeated listening. You will work on this journal throughout the semester. You may write about theoretical aspects (pitch, harmony, texture, dynamics, form, tempo, rhythm), content and meaning (what is the piece about; what does it express), or context (why and for whom was it written).

Commented [MOU6]: Students will develop an “interpretive understanding in an artistic production” through deeper engagement with music from a theoretical perspective and specific, interpretive contextualization.

Concert Reports:

To further enrich your educational experience, we will attend two concerts—preparing for these events by studying in depth the music to be heard. As you can see, considerable emphasis is placed upon listening to and writing about the music you will hear throughout the semester, in particular music discussed in our textbook and selections presented at the concerts we will attend. You are required to attend at least two concerts, featuring popular music. Your one-page concert report should offer analytical comments about the music, its context, and the performance.

Commented [MOU7]: “Interpretive understanding in an artistic production” is experienced and analyzed within the context of a live performance.

Group Presentations:

Group presentations will explore stylistic traits, musical works, and lives of individual composers.

Unit Tests:

The unit tests will consist of fill-ins, matching, definitions, and essay prompts.

Final Exam:

The final exam will cover material from the whole semester.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation	15 points
Chapter Quizzes	15 points
Concert Reports	15 points
Journal Entries	15 points
Group Presentations	10 points
Unit Tests	20 points
Final Exam	10 points
Total	100 points

Grading Scale (See, on the Westmont College Webpage, Academic Policies: Grades)

100-97 A +	96-93 A	92-90 A -
89-87 B +	86-83 B	82-80 B -
79-77 C +	76-73 C	72-70 C -
69-67 D +	66-63 D	62-60 D -

Course Outline:

Week 1

Themes and Streams of American Popular Music

Week 2

Popular Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Week 3

Social Dance and Jazz, 1917-1935

Week 4

The Golden Age of Tin Pan Alley Song

Week 5

Race Records and Hillbilly Music, 1920s

Week 6

The Swing Era, 1935-1945

Week 7

The Postwar Era, 1946-1959

Week 8

Rock 'n' Roll, 1954-1959

Week 9

American Pop and the British Invasion, 1960s

Week 10

Country, Soul, Urban Folk, and the Rise of Rock, 1960s

Week 11

The 1970s: Rock Music, Disco, and the Popular Mainstream

Week 12

Progressive Country, Reggae, Salsa, Punk, Funk, and Rap, 1970s

Week 13

The 1980s: Digital Technology, MTV, and the Popular Mainstream

Week 14

Hip-Hop, Alternative Music, and the Entertainment Business

Week 15

The Internet Age, 2000-

Writers' Corner:

Writers' Corner, Westmont's writing center, is a creative space where student writers can find friendly "test readers" as they develop projects for professors, employers, and others. Tutors support peers as they mature into more skillful and confident writers. Tutorials are free of charge, and you may meet with us online or in Voskuyl Library 215. Make an appointment using WConline at <https://westmont.mywconline.com/>

Accommodations:

Students who have been diagnosed with a condition that meets the criteria of a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by ODS. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. Please contact the website for more information <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/>

Honor and Respect in the Classroom:

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Further, our Diversity Matters document indicates that as we abide by these commandments, we learn to honor and respect one another. In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please talk with the instructor as soon as

possible. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Westmont's [academic integrity policy](#) prohibits us from "present[ing] another's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing and other creation for their users. Therefore, students should NOT substitute AI-generated content or ideas for original academic work. Westmont faculty members design assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic generative process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.

It is possible for original academic work (e.g., a student-authored essay) that has been grammar-checked or proofread by AI editing tools (including ChatGPT and Grammarly) to be flagged by AI detection tools on [Turnitin.com](#), etc. Our [academic integrity policy](#) does not prohibit students from using AI editing tools unless the extent of usage meets the threshold for plagiarism. However, a student should seek permission from an instructor PRIOR to an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task. Failing to do so may result in that student's work being flagged for disciplinary action.