

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE

HISTORY OF POPULAR MUSIC

DD1021 A2 3(3-0-0) Fall 2000

M, F: 1:00-2:30

**Instructor:** Geoffrey Whittall  
L-119  
539-2823  
Geoff.Whittall@gprc.ab.ca

History of Popular Music serves as an introduction to a number of North American popular music styles. This course focuses on popular music from the beginning of this century to the present day, with an emphasis on the evolution of the various musical styles and the placement of these styles in their social contexts. Both assigned readings and critical listening are important aspects of the course, and exams and quizzes will reflect material from readings and recordings. Recordings will be on reserve for you in the library. They will be related to, and reflect, information covered in the readings. In addition to the required text, additional readings will occasionally be assigned. Those readings will be put on reserve in the library. Topics covered in the course may include the developments in and relationships between blues, jazz, gospel, country, folk, musicals, vaudeville, and rock. When you have completed this course, you should have a good perspective of the history and evolution of popular music in North America during this century.

**Prerequisite:** This is an introductory course that requires no previous knowledge of music and no prerequisite courses. To give you a starting point, we will spend some time at the beginning of the course building a basic musical vocabulary.

<b>Evaluation:</b>	Unit quizzes	30%
	Mid-term examination (October 23)	20%
	Term research project (due December 1)	20%
	Final examination	30%

**Term Project:** You will demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of an aspect of the course through a research project resulting in the creation of a formal academic paper. Topics should be chosen in consultation with the instructor, and an outline of your proposed project worth 5% of the total paper grade will be due by November 6. The paper is due on December 1. It must be a minimum of 1500 words in length, and must be typed. A list of suggestions for possible topics is appended to the end of this outline. Be aware: you will probably have to order through inter-library loans many of the sources you will need for the paper. Order early, or you will find writing your paper extremely difficult.

**Required Texts:**

Garofalo, Reebee. 1997. Rockin' Out: Popular Music in the USA.  
Boston: Allyn and Bacon.  
GPRC. 2000. Course Pack of additional reading.

DD 1021 Outline Page 2

**Progression Policy:** All students in a Fine Arts Department course who are absent from more than 20% of one of their classes may be told to leave that class. Further, if students fail to complete and submit 85% of the graded requirements of the term mark, they will not be allowed to write the final exam, or complete the course. In such a case, the student will automatically receive a failing grade of DB (debarred). See P. 29 of the 2000-2001 Calendar for more details. Students should receive timely notice if they fall below the 85% submission requirement. They have the right to appeal to the registrar should they be told to leave the class.

It is a Fine Arts Department guideline that students will lose 10% a calendar day for submitting projects after the due date. After seven days, a grade of zero (0%) will be recorded.

**Academic Conduct:** It is your responsibility as students to present only your own work when submitting homework or projects for grading. Read and be familiar with pages 27 and 28 of the 2000-2001 Calendar. Penalties for academic dishonesty can be severe, and are not worth risking.

**Schedule:**

- Unit One Minstrelsy, Tin Pan Alley and the Theater
- Unit Two The African-American Tradition and Influence: Work song, Ragtime, Blues, Jazz,
- Unit Three Country Music and the Anglo-American Tradition  
(Commercialization of Hillbilly Music, Country music to "Nashville" sound)
- Unit Four Rock and Roll, Rock, and Post-Rock Musics

Possible research topics may include any aspect of popular music that interests you, with the exception of biographical portrayal of artists. Some examples of ideas are listed below.

- music as process or product: live performances vs. recorded performances or use of video
- political and social activism
- propaganda
- advertising
- a specific theme in music, such as romance, fantasy, government, sex (sexism?), spirituality, unemployment, the supernatural, history, social commentary, racism, fear, humour, satire, nonsense, etc.
- use of symbolism
- concept albums
- creolized or cross-pollinated genres such as Zydeco or Tex-Mex
- comparing original and cover versions of the same songs (live or studio covers of recorded originals)
- in-depth studies of specific genres
- careful analysis of the works of a single composer or small group of composers. (e.g. themes in the works of John Lennon, the musical evolution of Elton John [through different lyricists and/or band members], comparing the works of Paul McCartney and John Lennon, etc.)
- genres that we will not cover in class, such as Folk, Zydeco, Hip Hop, House, or Acid-Jazz
- topics in Canadian Native popular music
- popular musics from other parts of the world, e.g. Soukous, Celtic, Folk, Folk Rock, Cine Music, Soca, Tango, Mbaqanga, JuJu, Bhangra, Flamenco, or Isicathamiya
- the impact of technology (and its changes) on popular musics of all kinds
- the effects of situations such as globalization, urbanization, etc., on various musics