

Music, Sexuality, and Gender

MUS 236

T/Th 10:10-11:30

Blum N217

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:30 PM or by appointment
Moodle2 Key: negotiateF15

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course surveys musicological approaches to the study of sexuality and gender, asking how music informs and reflects cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity. Taking wide-ranging examples that include opera, popular music, folk and indigenous musics, we will investigate how modern gendered subjectivities are negotiated through musical practices such as composition, performance and consumption. Class readings will include musicological, anthropological, feminist, Marxist and queer theory approaches. Students will practice writing skills in a variety of formal and informal formats, culminating in an in-class presentation based on original research.

MATERIALS

Most readings are available through the moodle2 site for this course. The following book is available for purchase at the Bard College Bookstore. All additional materials will be available through the Moodle2 site.

- Hubbs, Nadine. 2014. *Rednecks, Queers, & Country Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Participation (25%)

You will be expected to introduce a day’s topic at least once this semester. See below for comprehensive participation grading rubric. **n.b. Assignments and readings are due on the day listed on the schedule.**

2. Synthesis Papers (30%)

Throughout the term, you will write three “synthesis papers,” 5-7 pages in length, that distill and review the arguments of three authors read in class. At the last class meeting, you will submit a portfolio of this written work to me for evaluation. In some cases, you will be asked to revise your papers.

3. Midterm Project (15%)

We will experiment with modes of “storytelling” in digital environments. More information to come.

4. Final Project and Related Assignments (30%)

The final project will include a paper and in-class presentation. It can take a number of different forms tailored to your interests and abilities. A **literature review** describes and synthesizes the arguments and works of various authors (including, potentially, those read outside of class, in consultation with me). A **book review** focuses on one full monograph, and should be a sophisticated appraisal of that work's scholarly contribution. An ambitious project could be an **original ethnographic research paper** consisting of fieldwork conducted during the course of the semester. (This option is not for the faint of heart, but, if you intend to continue your studies in ethnomusicology or related disciplines, this may be an excellent opportunity to begin work on a more long-term research project. If the ethnographic research paper is the avenue you choose, please talk to me soon.) You may also choose to develop a **performance project** that develops themes discussed in class. This should be documented (audio/visual) and also requires a paper that discusses the ideas that motivate the performance project.

Whatever form you choose, **your final paper** should be 10-15 pages (not including the reference list), double-spaced, twelve-point font, with one-inch margins.

There will be a series of small assignments leading up to the final project.

5. Extra Credit

You can turn in extra credit assignments at any time during the semester. These assignments can be: lecture reviews from events happening around campus, in-depth reviews of class readings, or thoughtful reflections on your participation in a world music ensemble. One catch: you must consult with me before you submit an extra credit assignment.

HOW TO READ & LISTEN

Just like writing, reading and listening are skills that must be practiced diligently to be improved. Allocate the necessary time and attention that it takes to read or listen. Make sure you find a comfortable place, free of distractions and interruptions, and focus on the task of reading.

PARTICIPATION

This class will benefit greatly from your thoughtful, sustained and enthusiastic participation. To be optimally prepared, readings and other assignments should be given sufficient time. "Participation" comprises 30% of your final grade and includes not only contributing your voice and perspective in class discussion, but also listening and responding to your peers to enhance class discussions. Please come to class prepared to pose at least one discussion question based on the week's readings. The following is a rubric that outlines how participation will be graded:

A: You contribute to nearly every class meeting, raising interesting questions or problems that demonstrate your deep engagement with the readings and assignments. You are able to respond to the comments of others and contribute to the flow of discussion. Without your participation, our discussion would be substantially less productive.

B: You contribute sometimes, with comments that demonstrate good preparation. You are able to respond to the comments of others and contribute to the flow of discussion. Without your participation, our discussion would be less productive.

C: You contribute rarely, offering comments that demonstrate some preparation. You rarely respond to the comments of others and only occasionally contribute to the flow of discussion. Without your participation, our discussion would be about the same.

D: You contribute very rarely or not at all, making it difficult to evaluate your preparedness. Without your participation, our discussion would be unchanged.

Also D: You contribute to discussions but your comments demonstrate unsatisfactory preparation and do not enhance the flow of conversation. Without your participation, our discussion would be improved.

ATTENDANCE

You are expected to attend every class meeting. After two unexcused absences, I reserve the right to lower your grade. Come to class five minutes early; late arrivals will be counted as absences. In-class assignments cannot be made up. If you miss class, you are responsible for whatever we covered during our meeting.

IN-CLASS TECHNOLOGY PROTOCOLS

Please bring paper and a writing implement to every class. Cherish class meetings as a protected space: eighty minutes free from social media, web surfing, and online shoe shopping. I strongly prefer that you not use your laptop for any reason in the classroom. If you text, tweet, update your status, or do whatever else besides take notes in my classroom, you will be excused and counted as absent for that day.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take plagiarism very seriously. When in doubt, cite. If you paraphrase, always cite. If you are borrowing ideas, cite. We will cover some of the basics of how to cite in class. If specific questions about attribution of ideas or intellectual property arise, please bring your questions to me or raise them in class.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 24: First Synthesis Paper*

October 15: Midterm Projects

October 27: Second Synthesis Paper*

November 5: Final Paper Proposals*

November 17: Revised Proposals and Reference List

*November 18: Debo Band at Fisher Center LUMA Theater, 7 PM.

November 24: Third Synthesis Paper*

December 10: Portfolio (of revised synthesis papers)*

December 8, 10, 15: Final in-class presentations

December 17: Final papers due (via e-mail) by 5 PM

**These papers should be printed and are due at the beginning of class.*

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

**This schedule is a draft, subject to change pending the interests of the class and directions we take in discussion. Please refer to the moodle site for the correct week-by-week schedule.*

ONE – THE BASICS

Tu 9/1 **Introductions**

Th 9/3 **Failing Well**

- Maus, “Music, Gender, and Sexuality”
- Halberstam, “Introduction: Low Theory.”

TWO – DEFINITIONS

Tu 9/8 **Music, Gender, Sex**

- Cusick, “On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex”
- Koskoff, “From Women to Gender” and “Imaginary Conversations.”

Th 9/10 **Music and Sexuality**

- Cusick, Suzanne G., Judith Peraino et. al. “Music and Sexuality.”

THREE – FEMININE ENDINGS

Tu 9/15 **Listening for Gender**

- McClary, “Introduction: A Material Girl in Bluebeard’s Castle”

Th 9/17 **Madwomen**

- McClary, Susan, “Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen.”
- Coulombe, “The Insatiable Banshee: Voracious vocalizing... Riot Grrrl... and the Blues.”

FOUR – CLOSET QUESTIONS

Tu 9/22 **Composers and their Sexual Orientations**

- Taruskin, “Pathetic Symphonist: Chaikovsky, Russia, sexuality and the study of music.”
- Thomas, “Was George Frederic Handel Gay?: On Closet Questions and Cultural Politics.”

Th 9/24 **Schubert’s Sexuality**

- Agawu, “Schubert’s Sexuality: A Prescription for Analysis?”
- Brett, “Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire.”
- Oestreich, “Taking Schubert Off a Cracking Pedestal.”
<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/19/books/books-of-the-times-taking-schubert-off-a-cracking-pedestal.html>

◆ *In-class guest:* Prof. Christopher Gibbs

◆ *First Synthesis Paper Due IN CLASS*

FIVE – THE GENDERED VOICE

Tu 9/29 **Operatic Singing**

- Clement, “Through Voices, History.”
- Koestenbaum, “Opera Queens.”

Th 10/1 **Castrati**

- André, "Haunting Legacies: The Castrato in the Nineteenth Century."
- Watch (in class): excerpts from *Farinelli*

SIX — GOING GAGA

Tu 10/6 **On Lady Gaga**

- Apolloni, "Starstruck: On Gaga, Voice, and Disability."
- Halberstam, "Introduction" and "Gaga Feminism for Beginners."

Th 10/8 **The Transgendered Voice**

- Goldin-Perschbacher, "'Not with You But of You': 'Unbearable Intimacy' and Jeff Buckley's Transgendered Vocality."
- Constansis, "The Changing Female-To-Male (FTM) Voice."

SEVEN — TEENS & TWEENS

Tu 10/13 ** FALL BREAK // NO CLASS **

Th 10/15 **Teens & Tweens**

- Bickford, "Tween Intimacy and the Problem of Public Life in Children's Media: 'Having It All' on the Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana*."
- Hunt, "There is Only One Direction."

◆ *Midterm Project Due*

EIGHT — BLUES WOMEN

Tu 10/20 **Gendered Audiotopias**

- Kun, "Life According to the Beat"
- Halberstam, "Queer Voices and Musical Genders."

◆ Watch: "Saint Louis Blues" (1929)

Th 10/22 **Bessie**

- In-class film screening of *Bessie*
- Davis, "I Used to Be Your Sweet Mama: Ideology, Sexuality, and Domesticity"

NINE — BORN NAKED

Tu 10/27 **What is Camp?**

- Sontag, "Notes on Camp"
<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Sontag-NotesOnCamp-1964.html>
- Butler, "'Some of Us Can Only Live in Songs of Love and Trouble': Voice, Genre/Gender, and Sexuality in the Music of Stephin Merritt."

Th 10/29 **Drag and the Politics of Lip-syncing**

- Kaminski, Elizabeth and Verta Taylor, "We're Not Just Lip-Syncing Up Here": Music and Collective Identity in Drag Performance."
- hooks, "Is Paris Burning?" *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, pp. 145-156.
- Watch: *Paris is Burning* (selections) and RuPaul's Drag Race (in class)

◆ *Second Synthesis Paper Due*

TEN — THE GENDERS OF GENRES

- Tu 11/3 **Masculinities**
- Walser, "Forging Masculinity: Heavy Metal Sounds and Images of Gender."
 - Neal, "Kanye West is not a Feminist but I am!"
 - Morris, Mitchell. "Black Masculinity and the Sound of Wealth: Barry White in the Early 70s."
 - Batten, Carrie. "We Invented Swag: NYC's Queer Rap."

Th 11/5 **Rednecks, Queers & Country Music (Part I)**

- Hubbs, Part I ("Rednecks and Country Music")

◆ *Final Paper Proposals Due*

ELEVEN – EAR, NECK, THROAT

Tu 11/10 **Rednecks, Queers & Country Music (Part II)**

- Hubbs, Part II ("Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music")

Th 11/12 **Queer Ears**

- Peraino, "Queer Ears and Icons: Sign Systems."

TWELVE – RITUALIZED GENDER

Tu 11/17 **Masquerade in Bulgaria**

- Creed, "Gender and Sexuality."

◆ *Revised Proposals and Reference List*

Th 11/19 **Women's Gamelan in Bali**

- Bakan, "From Oxymoron to Reality: Agendas of Gender and the Rise of Balinese Women's *Gamelan Beleganjur* in Bali, Indonesia."

THIRTEEN – SOCIALIST POP & GENDER

Tu 11/24 **Chinese Popular Music**

- Baranovich, "Negotiating Gender in Post-Revolutionary Popular Music Culture: Reconstructing Manhood, Womanhood, and Sexuality."

◆ *Third Synthesis Paper Due*

Th 11/26 ** THANKSGIVING // NO CLASS **

FOURTEEN – PERFORMING PIOUS FEMININITY

Tu 12/1 **Performing Religion & Femininity in Egypt**

- Van Nieuwkerk, "On Religion, Gender, and Performing: Female Performers and Repentance in Egypt."

Th 12/3 In-class workshop on final projects! Bring outlines and drafts of final papers.

FIFTEEN

Tu 12/8 FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Th 12/10 FINAL PRESENTATIONS

◆ *Portfolio Due in class!*

SIXTEEN

Tu 12/15 FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Th 12/17 FINAL PAPERS DUE by 5 PM. Email to msonevyt@bard.edu

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