

# Musical Protest in the United States

MUS 261— FALL 2016

T/Thurs 11:50-1:10

Blum N210

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**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2:00-4:00 PM or by appointment

**Moodle2 Key:** ohioF16



## COURSE OVERVIEW

Can a song change a mind? Can a song change the world? This seven-week class will survey episodes of musical protest in the United States from the Civil War to the #BlackLivesMatter movement. We will consider what the function, potential, and limits of musical protest have been in transforming American civic life. Our course will examine peace and abolition songs composed during the Civil War era, anti-capitalist and labor songs, songs against fascism, music of the Civil Rights Era, Vietnam War, Iraq War, activist music festivals, compositions that protest nuclear power and environmental damage, and recent music that addresses police brutality and structural racism. We will consider acts of musical protest aligned with "the right side of history" as well as music that challenges this very notion. We will include pieces that critique gender, class, and racial inequality in the United States, as well as pieces against violence, greed, and complacency. We end by analyzing songs that protest the very genre of "protest music." Students will be required to write weekly reading and listening responses and produce a final research project around a single act of musical protest. You do not need to read musical notation to take this class.

## MATERIALS

Please bring a notebook and writing implement to every class meeting.

All reading and listening materials will be available through the **Moodle2** site. **The enrollment key for this class is "ohioF16."**

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

### 1. Participation 30%

See below for comprehensive participation grading rubric. ***N.B. Assignments and readings are due on the day listed on the schedule.***

## 2. Weekly Course Blog Posts 30%

Following our first class meeting, you should log into our course blog. Every week, you should post a song (can be a YouTube file or link to elsewhere on the Internet) that reflects that week's theme. Your post should be between 250-500 words in length. It should include a rationale for why that song is a "protest song," and how it matches the themes discussed in the week's readings. You may also post a cover version by a song discussed in class, in which case your post should reflect on the difference between original and cover, and how—if at all—it changes the meaning of the song as a "protest song."

## 3. Film Report 10%

In the first weeks of the semester, you should watch a documentary film about an iconic protest musician or movement, and write a three-page response to the film. The film report is due at the start of class on September 22. The following three films are recommended, but other films are also possible, so long that you get my approval in advance:

- "Pete Seeger: The Power of Song" (2007)
- "What Happened, Miss Simone?" (2015)
- "Radical Harmonies: Woodstock Meets Women's Liberation" (2002)

## 4. Final Project 30%

Your final project for this class can take one of two forms:

- **Option 1:** Compose a protest song, record it and/or notate it. Submit an accompanying 4-5 page paper in which, in addition to elucidating some of the process of composing the song, you also reflect on how your composition challenges, affirms, or rejects the ideas encountered through course readings and listening assignments. It is possible to pursue this option in a team of two, in which both members of the team will submit individual papers. Speak to me early if you wish to collaborate with a classmate.
- **Option 2:** Write a 7-8 page research paper that deepens your understanding of a particular social movement, musical icon, or protest genre. Your research paper should include, at minimum, three scholarly sources not drawn from the syllabus.

You will submit a final project proposal in class on September 29. Your final projects should be posted on the course blog by Friday, October 14 at 9 PM.

## 5. Extra Credit

You may turn in extra credit assignments at any time during the first half of the semester.

These assignments can be: lecture reviews from events happening on campus that you link to topics in our class, additional reports on topical films, or in-depth reviews of class readings. The only (small) catch is this: you must consult with me before you submit an extra credit assignment.

## 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 day'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 little 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 pinning your favorite pair of shoes to a digital wall. I strongly prefer that you not use your laptop in the classroom. If I find you texting, tweeting, updating your status, etc., 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 an idea, cite. We will cover some of the basics of proper academic writing and attribution 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

August 31: First course blog post due  
 September 22: Film report due (hard copy, in class)  
 September 26: Aaron Fox lecture, 5 PM, location tbd  
 September 29: Final project proposals due  
 October 14: Final project due on course blog by 9 PM

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

*\* Please refer to the moodle2 site for the updated week-by-week schedule.*

### ONE — WHAT IS A PROTEST SONG?

**T 8/30: Singing Out the “right side of history”?**

**Th 9/1: What can music *do*?**

#### **Read:**

- Shank, Barry. 2014. "The Anthem and the Condensation of Context." In *The Political Force of Musical Beauty*, 38-71. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Selections from [The Anti-Slavery Songbook](#) (1843)
- [“The Instant Protest Song”](#) (*The New Yorker*)

#### **Listen/Watch:**

- [Morehouse College Glee Club performs “Lift Every Voice and Sing”](#) (1978)
- [Ray Charles performs “Lift Every Voice and Sing” on The Dick Cavett Show](#) (1972)
- [Bob Dylan, “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll”](#) (1963)
- [Young Jeezy, “It’s a Cold World”](#) (2013)

## TWO — WAR

### T 9/6: This Machine Kills Fascists

#### Read:

- Lieberman, Robbie. 1995. "This Machines Kills Fascists". In *'My Song Is My Weapon': People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930-50*, 50-66. Champagne, Illinois: Illini Books.
- Seeger, Pete. 1968. *Pete Seeger: Sings and Answers Questions (liner notes)*, 1-8. New York, NY: Folkways Records & Service Corp. Sound recording with liner notes.
- Kaufman, Will. 2011. "Introduction." In *Woody Guthrie, American Radical*, xv-xxv. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press.

#### Listen/Watch:

- [Woody Guthrie "All You Fascists Bound To Lose"](#) (1944)
- [Pete Seeger, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy"](#) (1967)
- [Bob Dylan, "Masters of War"](#) (1963)
- [Propagandhi, "The Only Good Fascist Is a Very Dead Fascist"](#) (1996)

### Th 9/8: Eve of Destruction

#### Read:

- Rodnitsky, Jerry. 2006. "The Decline and Rebirth of Folk-Protest Music." In *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, edited by Ian Peddie, 17-29. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Denisoff, Serge and Mark H. Levine. 1971. "The Popular Protest Song: The Case of "Eve of Destruction"." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* no. 35 (1):117-122.
- Hsu, Hua. 2016. "[Cruel Optimism: The Daunting Ambition of Anohni](#)" in *The New Yorker*.

#### Listen/Watch:

- [Barry McGuire's performance of "Eve of Destruction" on Hullabaloo](#) (1965)
- [Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, "Ohio"](#) (1970)
- [Dandy Warhols, "Ohio"](#) (2000)
- [John Prine, "Sam Stone"](#) (1971)
- [Jimi Hendrix, "Star Spangled Banner" at Woodstock](#) (1969)
- [Bright Eyes, "When The President Talks to God"](#) on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (2005)
- [Anohni, "Drone Bomb Me"](#) (2016)

## THREE — RACE

### T 9/13: Listening for Resistance

#### Read:

- Levine, Lawrence. 2006. "African American Music as Resistance." In *African American Music: An Introduction*, edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, 587-598. New York and London: Routledge.
- Reed, T. V. 2005. "Singing Civil Rights: The Freedom Song Tradition." In *The Art of Protest*, 1-39. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- "We Shall Overcome" (Folkways Records Album #FH5591) liner notes

#### Listen/Watch:

- [Harry Belafonte performs "John Henry" at Carnegie Hall](#) (1959)
- [Nina Simone, "Mississippi Goddam"](#) (1965)
- [Charles Mingus, "Fables of Faubus"](#) (1960)
- [Archie Shepp, "Malcolm, Malcolm—Semper Malcolm"](#) (1965)
- [Pete Seeger performs "We Shall Overcome" in Berlin](#) (1967)

### Th 9/15: From "Strange Fruit" to "Formation"

#### Read:

- Brooks, Daphne. 2016. "[How #BlackLivesMatter Started a Musical Revolution](#)" in *The Guardian*

- Davis, Angela. 1998. "'Strange Fruit'." In *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 181-197. New York: Random House.
- Hobson, Janell. 2008. "Everybody's Protest Song: Music as Social Protest in the Performances of Marian Anderson and Billie Holiday." *Signs* no. 33 (2): 443-448.
- Reagon, Bernice Johnson. 1987. "Let the Church Sing 'Freedom'." *Black Music Research Journal* no. 7:105-118.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [Marian Anderson, "My Country 'Tis of Thee" \(1939\)](#)
- [Billie Holiday, "Strange Fruit" \(1939\)](#)
- [NPR story on "The Strange Story of the Man Behind 'Strange Fruit'" \(2012\)](#)
- [Sweet Honey in the Rock, "Amen" \(1989\)](#)
- [Gil Scott-Heron, "Whitey On the Moon" \(1970\)](#)
- [Beyoncé performs "Formation" at the Super Bowl \(2016\)](#)
- [Kendrick Lamar performs "The Blacker the Berry" and "Alright" at the Grammy Awards \(2016\)](#)

## **FOUR — CLASS**

### **T 9/20: Which Side Are You On?**

**Read:**

- Roy, William G. "Organizing Music: The Fruits of Entrepreneurship." In *Reds, Whites, and Blues: Social Movements, Folk Music, and Race in the United States*, 126-154. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [Florence Reece, "Which Side Are You On" \(1931\)](#)
- [The Almanac Singers, "Which Side Are You On" \(1941\)](#)
- ["Requiem for Mike Brown" \(2014\)](#)
- [Frederic Rzewski, "Which Side Are You On" \(1978\)](#)

### **Th 9/22: Songs Against Complacency**

**Read:**

- Filene, Benjamin. 1991. "'Our Singing Country': John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past." *American Quarterly* no. 43 (4):602-624.
- Hubbs, Nadine. 2014. "Intro." In *Rednecks, Queens, & Country Music*, 1-20. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [Leadbelly, "Bourgeois Blues" \(1937/8\)](#)
- [Woody Guthrie, "This Land Is Your Land" \(1940\)](#)
- [Phil Ochs, "Love Me, I'm a Liberal" \(1966\)](#)
- [Against Me!, "Baby, I'm an Anarchist" \(2002\)](#)
- [Against Me!, "I Was A Teenage Anarchist" \(2010\)](#)
- [Foo Fighters, "Keep It Clean \(Hot Buns\)" protests the Westboro Baptist Church \(2011\)](#)
- ◆ Film report due (hard copy, in class)

## **FIVE — GENDER & SEXUALITY**

### **T 9/27: Genres of Complaint**

**Read:**

- Berlant, Lauren. "Introduction (selection)." In *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*, 1-23. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Davis, Angela. 1998. "Blame It On the Blues." In *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 91-119. New York: Random House.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [Bessie Smith, "Backwater Blues"](#) (1927)
- ['Ma' Rainey, "Hustlin' Blues"](#) (1929)
- [Jeannie C. Riley, "Harper Valley P.T.A."](#) (1968)
- [Peggy Seeger, "Gonna Be an Engineer"](#) (1970)
- [Sheila Kay Adams sings the murder ballad "Lady Isabel & The Elfin Knight"](#) (2011)
- [Carrie Underwood, "Church Bells"](#) (2016)

**Th 9/29: Is the Personal Political?**

**Read:**

- Keenan, Elizabeth K. and Sarah Dougher. 2012. "Riot Grrl, Ladyfest and Rock Camps for Girls." In *Women Make Noise: Girl Bands from Motown to the modern*, edited by Julia Downes. Supernova Books.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [Bikini Kill, "Rebel Girl"](#) (1993)
- [Sonic Youth, "Swimsuit Issue"](#) (1992)
- [Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, "Same Love"](#) (2012)
- [Melissa Etheridge, "Uprising of Love"](#) (2014)
- ◆ Final project proposals due

**SIX — ENVIRONMENT**

**T 10/4: It's The End of the World As We Know It**

**Read:**

- Pedelty, Mark. 2012. "The Musical Nation: Popular Music and the American Soundscape." In *Ecomusicology: Rock, Folk, and the Environment*, 49-82. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [The Louvin Brothers, "Great Atomic Power"](#) (1962)
- [Tom Lehrer, "We'll All Go Together When We Go"](#) (1967)
- [Talking Heads, "\(Nothing But\) Flowers"](#) (1988)
- [Ani DiFranco, "Your Next Bold Move"](#) (2001)

**Th 10/6: "Free the Land. Protect the Sacred."**

**Read:**

- Amsterdam, Lauren. 2013. "All the Eagles and the Ravens in the House Say Yeah: (Ab)original Hip-Hop, Heritage, and Love." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* no. 37 (2):53-72.

**Listen/Watch:**

- [Sacramento Knox, "El Zocalo"](#) (2015)
- ◆ In-class final project workshop

**SEVEN — FINAL PROJECTS**

**T 10/11 — FALL BREAK, NO CLASS**

**Th 10/13: In-class final project workshop**

- ◆ Submit final projects via class course blog on Friday, 10/14 at 9 PM