



MERCER
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number	Course Title	Credits
MUS156	History of American Pop Music	3
Hours: Lecture/Lab/Other 3 lecture	Co- or Pre-requisite None	Implementation Semester & Year Spring 2022

Catalog description:

Analytical and historical survey of American popular music with an emphasis on the period from 1950 to the present. Students will develop an understanding of the cultural, social, technological, and musical forces shaping each decade covered. Students will apply critical analysis to musical styles, instrumentation, and song structure in addition to issues of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender as formative factors influencing its evolution.

General Education Category:

Goal 6: Humanities
Goal 8: Diversity and Global
Perspective

Course coordinator:

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Required texts & Other materials:

Covach and Flory. What's That Sound, 5th edition, WW. Norton & Company, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-393-62416-8

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and explain a wide variety of pop musical styles and genres. [Supports ILGs #1,6,7,8; PLOs #3,6]
2. Understand that popular music is shaped by and, in turn, has an impact on the social, political, and cultural milieu from which it arises. [Supports ILGs #1,6,7,11; PLO #6]
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the chronological development of American pop music in the context of social, political, and historical forces affecting its evolution. [Supports ILGs #1,5,6,7; PLO #6]
4. Investigate, realize, and discuss the multicultural nature of American pop music as a hybridization and synthesis of disparate cultural influences including African, Latino, Caribbean, Scottish – Irish folk music, as well as European “art” music. [Supports ILGs #1,4,5,6,7; PLOs #3,6]
5. Analyze the role that fashion, archetype, and image play in the marketing and appeal of musical artists. [Supports ILGs #1,5,6,7,11; PLO #6]
6. Understand how technological advances such as radio, recording media, (analog discs, magnetic tape, CD's), electronic instruments, digital recording and editing software, and the internet create the circumstances under which new forms of popular music develop and, conversely, how new

forms of music serve as a catalyst for further technological development. [Supports ILGs #1,4,5,6,7,8,11; PLO #6]

7. Develop an individual “critical voice” demonstrated by the ability to analyze specific pieces of pop music, assessing their relative artistic merits, and defending his or her view to others both in writing and through discussion. [Supports ILG #1,6,7,8,11; PLOs #3,6]
8. Analyze and discuss the issue of racial and gender discrimination throughout the history of American pop music. [Supports ILG #1,5,6,7,8,11; PLOs #3,6]

Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILG):

Institutional Learning Goal 1. Written and Oral Communication in English. Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

Institutional Learning Goal 4. Technology. Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals.

Institutional Learning Goal 5. Social Science. Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.

Institutional Learning Goal 6. Humanities. Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

Institutional Learning Goal 7. History. Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

Institutional Learning Goal 8. Diversity and Global Perspective: Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples

Institutional Learning Goal 11. Critical Thinking: Students will use critical thinking skills understand, analyze, or apply information or solve problems.

Program Learning Outcomes for Music AS Program(PLO)

3. Analyze excerpts of musical compositions, working from a printed score, on the levels of harmony, rhythm, melodic contour, phrase structure, and large-scale formal structure.
6. Identify and distinguish the major periods in the history of Western music from the Middle Ages into the 21st century and cite the primary composers whose works

Units of study in detail – Unit Student Learning Outcomes:

Unit I [Historical and Social Context] [Supports Course SLOs #1,2,3,4,5]

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Identify important musical artists and classify the musical movements and time periods to which they belong.
- Describe, contrast, and compare various musical genres and styles and connect them in their proper chronological context.
- Illustrate the impact that social class, race, and gender had upon the careers of specific pop artists, the composition of their audiences, and on the history of pop music in general.
- Assess and discuss the effect that social and political forces such as the Viet Nam war, the drug culture, and the civil and women’s rights movements have on the popular music of the day.
- Thoughtfully examine and expound on the issue of censorship throughout the history of pop music (record burnings, radio play bannings, Elvis’ “waist-up only” appearance, as well as emendations of lyrics to mollify the fears of TV executives and advertisers).
- Examine isolated incidents of plagiarism in pop music, the resultant lawsuits against artists such as George Harrison and Stevie Wonder, considering whether the suits were justified and whether the alleged plagiarism was conscious or unconscious.

Unit II **[Musical Structure and Development]** [Supports Course SLOs #1,2,3,4,7,8]

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Identify and describe typical pop song structures and conventions, such as 32-bar song form and 12-bar blues, and distinguish them from non-pop forms such as sonata, rondo, art songs, or free jazz.
- Comprehend and discuss how disparate musical idioms such as blues, classical music, and ethnic and world music's have been absorbed and adapted for use in modern pop forms such as funk, heavy metal, and progressive rock.
- Assess the degree to which the cultural identities and aspirations of various racial and ethnic groups have found expression in American pop music (African American, Appalachian and rural poor white, Latino, and Caribbean) and have contributed to the evolution of both the sound and structure of the music.
- Intelligently assess the relative artistic quality of the work of various pop artists specifying the criteria used in his/her evaluation.
- Recognize the basic structural, rhythmic, melodic, and orchestral techniques employed in various pop music genres and be able to group related styles, e.g. Rock-a-billy, surf, funk and R & B.
- Engage in deep listening, becoming sensitized to the defining nuances of musical detail that characterize and differentiate the various pop music genres.

Unit III **[The Role of Image, Fashion, and Archetype]** [Supports Course SLOs #4,5,6,7,8]

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Identify and describe the relationship between artist image, or persona, and specific musical styles or eras along with the role of fashion in projecting the image.
- Identify obvious iconic or archetypal artists (such as Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, Bob Marley, James Brown, Prince) and describe the ways in which their archetypal status embodies the expression of cultural and social values and meaning.
- Assess the degree to which an artist's use of image and fashion is connected with, or motivated by, a social or political statement and the degree to which the desired effect is achieved.
- Assess the degree to which an artist's use of image and fashion is purely cosmetic and commercial in nature.
- Cite and identify the recurrence of specific personae and fashions throughout the history of pop music as archetypal, and analyze the impact of these archetypes on both a conscious and unconscious level.
- Distinguish between the confessional artist and those employing artifice in terms of their respective use of image, archetype, and fashion.

Unit IV **[The Impact of Technology]** [Supports Course SLOs #3,5,6,7,8]

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- List and describe the major technological advances during the period studied and discuss their impact on the development of pop music on the levels of both recorded and live performance.

- Analyze recordings from different eras, identifying the time period to which they belong based on the recording techniques employed.
- Describe the impact that new technologies have on the conception and composition of pop music.
- Explain how the format of delivery (live concert, radio, TV, 45, LPO, CD, etc.) shapes the content and perception of pop music.
- Assess the degree to which the evolution of pop music composition and production serves as a catalyst for further growth of technology.

Unit V **[High Art/Low Art Controversy]** [Supports Course SLOs #2,3,4,5,6,7,8]

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Discover and develop their individual critical voice.
- Evaluate the criticism of others in a thoughtful manner.
- Understand and explain the conventional critical evaluation of the major artists covered in the course and explain any deviations from the accepted view.
- Select an artist that the student believes is of major importance and be able to write a forceful justification in terms of artistry, image, impact and influence.
- Come to an individual conclusion as to the factors leading to critical success and to commercial success and assess why they do not always coincide.

Evaluation of student learning: [Evaluates SLO's #1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8]

Each student's attainment of these objectives will be assessed using the following means of evaluation.

Evaluation Tools	% of Grade
Completion of and performance on weekly reading and writing assignments	20%
Midterm visual and aural test of student's ability to identify performers, musical structures, styles and chronological context	20%
Completion and presentation of a research paper whose content will focus on an artist or genre, the degree of his/her/its social relevance, his/her/its place in the chronology of the music and impact on its further evolution	20%
A written "review" of a recording using appropriate journalistic language and employing established norms of critical analysis	20%
Attendance and participation in class discussion	20%