

**KUTZTOWN UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA**

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC  
COLLEGE OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

**MUS 293 Hip-Hop Music and Culture**

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Office hours: By appointment

**I. Course Description**

The class will present a broadly chronological overview of the development of hip hop from the late 1970s through to the present. We will concentrate largely on the music, paying special attention to how it has been able to both reflect and shape the contexts of its production. There will be a lot of listening, alongside readings from the assigned text and other sources that will be available via D2L. Each week there will be material that is required (i.e. you might be tested on it) alongside material that will allow you dig into things in more detail and provide more context for your final research papers.

Prerequisite:           None

3 Semester Hours

**II. Course Rationale**

Emerging from street parties in New York in the 1970s, hip-hop music and culture has risen from local obscurity and evolved into an art form with huge economic success and worldwide cultural impact. This corporate owned, media produced, multi-billion dollar enterprise both exploits and normalizes the most negative representations of stereotypical “Blackness.” Despite this, underground hip-hop culture has become an international form of cultural expression and resistance rooted in a long history of African Diaspora aesthetic production and political struggle. Thus, hip-hop is both a form of cultural and political resistance and an exploitive capitalistic venture. This course will examine the ways in which hip-hop can be both a positive force for change and a negative exploitive force, while paying tribute to the spaces it provides for the youth to communicate new ideas and new ways of defining reality.

**III. Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- A. Develop a basic set of skills for discussing the structure and function of hip-hop songs.
- B. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between various hip-hop artists and their representations.
- C. Identify the people, the places, specific music, and important benchmarks that have made hip-hop a global culture.
- D. Examine the connection and lineage between hip-hop and African American musical traditions.
- E. Examine the complex relationship between media social constructions, representation, and globalization in the African Diaspora.
- F. Enhance student understanding of various political conditions that influence cultural movements in hip-hop.
- G. Explore the various ways hip-hop musicians are analyzed, interpreted, and discussed in popular culture.

#### **IV. Assessment**

Assessment of each student's level of accomplishment with reference to the course objectives will be based upon a subset of the following:

- 20% Attendance and participation
- 15% D2L quizzes based on readings
- 20% Midterm exam
- 20% Final exam
- 25% Final paper (5 pages)

- The Midterm and Final exam will be held during class in week 5 (April 30th). It will be multiple choice and will consist of listening identification and analysis questions along with factual questions drawn from the lectures and readings.
- There will be a few quizzes on the lectures and readings. These will be announced in class and administered through D2L.
- In the final paper (which should be about 5 pages long) you should choose one song from the "additional" listening category and write a detailed analytical paper on it.

#### **V. Instructional Resources**

Baker, Houston, Jr. *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Cepeda, Raquel. *And It Don't Stop: The Best American Hip-Hop Journalism of the Last 25 Years*. Faber and Faber. 2004.

Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2005.

Dyson, Michael Eric. *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip Hop*. New York, NY: Perseus Books Group, 2007.

Eshun, Kodwo. *More Brilliant than the Sun*. London, UK: Quartet Books Limited, 1999.

Fricke, Jim, and Charlie Ahearn. *Yes, Yes Y'All: Oral History of Hip-Hop's First Decade*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 2002.

Forman, Murray. *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal, eds. *That's the Joint!: the Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2004.

Forsyth, Mark. *The Elements of Eloquence: How to Turn the Perfect English Phrase*. London: Icon Books, 2013.

George, Nelson. *Hip Hop America*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2005.

Johnson, T. Hasan. *You Must Learn!: A Primer for the Study of Hip-Hop Culture*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunt Press, 2012.

Keyes, Cheryl. *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Mook, Richard. *Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2015.

Perkins, William Eric, ed. *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995.

Potter, Russell. *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism*. New York, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.

Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

Rose, Tricia, and Andrew Ross, eds. *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Stolpe, Andrea. *Beginning Songwriting: Writing your own Lyrics, Melodies and Chords*. MA: Berklee Press, 2015.

Watkins, S. Craig. *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006.