

## **ART160: HISTORY OF MUSIC / GOSPEL CHOIR (3 credit hours)**

Instructor: Chie NAGANUMA

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Meeting times: Tue. 18:30-20:00

Thu. 18:30-20:30

Fri. 15:30-17:00

**DESCRIPTION:** This course comprises two objectives: to understand the historical and social background of American popular music (1920s-70s) and to participate in a black gospel choir to experience one of the musical styles of non-classical origin.

First, the class is designed to assist students in recognizing the cultural meaning and significance of non-classical music that originated in the U.S., such as Blues, Rock, and R & B as well as Gospel. For this purpose, not only do we deal with history and the attributes of each genre in lectures, but we also focus on the relationships between music and contemporary social issues, centering on various key words: racism, representation of race by media, cultural hegemony, authenticity, sexuality, gender, counterculture, politics, and economy. To deepen our understanding we employ various audio and visual materials.

The rest of the course is dedicated to Gospel choir rehearsals. I encourage each student to feel the spirit of this uplifting music and to enjoy sharing beats and melodies with friends creating a sense of community. A concert accompanied by a band will highlight this rare experience at the end of the semester.

To facilitate our comprehension in classes we also spend time on learning entry-level music theory and forms. Employing popular songs, we learn about structure of a song, instrumentation, rhythms, scales, and chords.

**OBJECTIVES:** Music shapes our life in various ways. It provides joy, comfort, and catharsis. Music also is ubiquitous and because of its intimacy we seldom distance ourselves from it and rarely reflect on its meanings and functions. Through this course I expect my students to cultivate their critical, analytical minds to understand that music serves as an influential role in identifying with our culture, era, and society, especially from the point of view of New Historicism (gender, race, and social values). Also, by combining academic discourses with performance, students are encouraged to digest and understand music as a whole including its all social ambiances.

**STUDY MATERIALS:**

<Textbooks> None

<Reference books>

\* Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans: A History (Third Edition)*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997.

\* Campbell, Michael and James Brody. *Rock and Roll: An Introduction*. New York: Schirmer, 1999.

\* Smith, Suzanne E. *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

\* Harris, Michael W. *The Rise of Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

\* Walser, Robert. *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993.

\* Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*. New York: Orbis Books, 1972.

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

\* Wimsatt, William Upski. *Bomb the Suburbs*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 1994.

\* Werner, Craig. *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, and the Rise and Fall of American Soul*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2004.

\* Fuchs, Cynthia, ed. *Spike Lee Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002.

\* Reagon, Bernice Johnson, ed. *We'll Understand It Better By and By: Pioneering African American Gospel Composers*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

**COURSE FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES:** Class sessions will alternate between lecture/discussion days (2 days a week) and choir rehearsals (1 day a week). Students are expected to watch an assigned feature/documentary film or a music video every week on their own, which is related to the following week's lecture topic. After watching the film students are required to send a short critical response to the film by E-mail to the instructor by the next lecture day. Since no long readings will be assigned to students it is important that they watch the film and come to the lecture with certain knowledge of the material.

Choir rehearsals are also open to all freshmen and the students who already completed this course before, which allows the students to be a part of the gospel choir every year. The repertoire comprises spirituals, traditional gospel songs, and contemporary gospel/inspirational songs. Students will learn ten new pieces at least and sing them at the concert. A weekly sectional rehearsal for 30 minutes is conducted by part.

We will organize **Home-Base groups** of 3 students who work together throughout the semester. The group members help each other to deepen their understanding of the course

materials and complete weekly worksheet to review previous week's materials as a group during the group discussion time.

**ASSESSMENT:** Student achievement will be measured in terms of student performance in the following five areas:

(1) Weekly Worksheet by Home-Base Group (30%) (In-class activity)

During the group discussion time, each group will be asked to complete a worksheet to review previous week's materials. This worksheet is composed of several short essay questions asking important concepts of both music and films covered in class. Group members complete one worksheet together and the grade will be given to a group. Essay questions should be answered in full sentences with good spelling and grammar and within a set time (approx.20 min)

(2) Critical Responses to Films by Email (10%)

After viewing an assigned film, students are asked to send a short critical response to each film by email. This short essay should include a) one or two analytical comments on music, b) one or two analytical comments on cultural or social aspects, and c) one or two questions concerning music and culture.

(3) Pop Quiz (10%) (In-class activity)

An occasional pop quiz will be thrown in during class, whenever time allows. The purpose of this quiz is to check your preparation for the current week's materials (assigned film and readings, if any), and thus all questions are simple and basic in either Fill-in-the Blank style of Multiple-Choice format.

(4) Analysis paper (25%),

Each student chooses a song(s) relevant to the course materials and analyzes why this particular song(s) appeals to the listeners. How do the melody, rhythm, instrumentation, texture, and lyrics contribute to each other and create a certain musical effect or atmosphere? Students may approach this assignment through the analysis on how the music is employed to narrate a story or theme of the song. Or they may compare two songs by the same artist or two different versions of a song and discuss similarities and differences. In either case, students are expected to propose an arguable statement based on their close analysis of texts and original interpretations.

(5) Attendance at choir rehearsals and the concert (25%).

There is no midterm exam. No final exam.

**ACADEMIC PREPARATION: No prerequisite.** All students are welcome to take the class. NO need to be able to read music or to have any music theory knowledge.

**POLICIES:** All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course. Acts of plagiarism or other forms academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism> for more information.

**SCHEDULE:**

<Week 1>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) History of Blues / African influence and tradition  
2) Musical Forms of Blues and popular songs

Assigned film: *Stormy Weather* (1943) by Andrew L. Stone

Assigned readings: None

<Week 2>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) History of Minstrelsy / Harlem Renaissance (1920s)  
2) Rhythms 1 (duple and triple meter)

Assigned film: *Bamboozled* (2000) by Spike Lee

Assigned Reading: Gary Crowdus and Dan Georgakas, "Thinking about the Power of Images: An Interview with Spike Lee," from *Spike Lee Interviews*, pp. 202-17.

<Week 3>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) History of Spirituals and Gospel (1930s-)  
2) Rhythms 2 (shuffle and polyrhythm)

Assigned film: *Say Amen Somebody* (1983) by George T. Nierenberg

Assigned reading: James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues*, pp. 1-7.

<Week 4>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) Evolution of Rock: Rock n Roll (1950s) to Rock (1960s)  
2) Instrumentation

Assigned film: *Woodstock* (1970) by Michael Wadleigh

Assigned reading: None

<Week 5>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) History of Motown (1) (1960s)  
2) Note values

Assigned film: *Motown 25: Yesterday, Today, Forever* (1983) by Don Mischer

Assigned reading: TBA

<Week 6>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) History of Motown (2) (late 1960s-70s)  
2) Scale

Assigned film: *The Temptations* by Allan Arkush

Assigned reading: TBA

<Week 7>

Choir Rehearsal: TBA

Lecture/Discussion: 1) History of Soul (1960s-70s) / Hip Hop Culture  
2) Chords

Assigned film: *Soul to Soul* (2004) by Danis Sanders

Assigned reading: William Upski Wimsatt, *Bomb the Suburbs*, pp. 22-41

<Week 8>

Choir: Dress Rehearsal and Semester Ending Concert