MUSICAL CULTURES OF BLACK AMERICANS
Music 2123
George Washington University--Fall 2012
(Version 9/29/12)

Professor: Kip Lornell
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Office Hours: By appointment on Tuesday and Thursday morning before or after class. I share
an office in the basement of Phillips (B-130), located diagonally across from the music
department office.

Student Learning Objectives

This course introduces you to the wealth of African American music found throughout the
United States. This semester we’ll be stopping in Washington DC—surveying a wide range of
20th century black American music from gospel to go go—as well as spending time in Detroit
and investigating gospel music through the lens of the sacred steel tradition. Through readings,
classroom presentations, documentary films, and musical examples (both live and on disc), you
will become aware not only of the historical development of the various genres of black
American music but their distinctive musical characteristics, performance practices, and aesthetic
values. By the end of the semester you will know much more about the history and development
of black music history since Reconstruction as well as being able to recognize and identify a
wide range of genres and styles.

Expected learning outcomes (assessment tool in parentheses):

1. Understand the historical development of the various genres of black American music,
including their distinctive musical characteristics, performance practices, aesthetic values, and
contributions of to the cultural life of Washington, DC & New Orleans, LA. and the United
States as a whole. (Book review/essay)

2. Relate the music of black Americans to specific events or movements, such as the Civil
Rights Movement, trends in our cultural, social, and economic history. (Book review/essay)

3. Aurally recognize, identify, and describe a wide range of Black American musical genres and
styles. (Listening )

4. Synthesize and apply knowledge gained on a chosen theme such as physical movement in
black music, authenticity, commodification , or black-white musical interchange. (Final Exam
Questions)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

For university policies on teaching, see http://www.gwu.edu/~academic/Teaching/main.htm

Course Outline

The Fall 2012 version of this course consists of four sections:

A) Black American Music: An Historical Review (six weeks)

B) Black American Music in Washington D.C. (two weeks)

C) Hip Hop (two weeks)

D) Sacred Music (two weeks)

The precise reading, listening, and viewing assignments will be regularly listed on Blackboard as an “Announcement,” which will also be sent to you as an email. These will include:

“The Performed Word,” Style Wars," & "District Music" (via Folkstreams.net)

Grades

Your final grade will be determined by the successful completion of five requirements, which will be discussed more fully in class. I have examples of previous good works (e.g. review essays) on file and available for your reading pleasure.

1) A review-essay that discusses three documentary films that you choose to watch from the Folkstreams.net in light of our readings, the list of "Essential Elements," and our varied discussions about the history and development of black musical culture in the United States since Reconstruction. This should be 6-8 pages [30%]. Due no later than 10/23/12


2) Attend a (live) event related to black American music in Washington, DC. (20%) Due no later than 10/20/12

Some Examples:

A) Black Family Reunion Picnic on the Mall---typically the second weekend in September--features all kinds of events, including music.

B) "Howard University Homecoming" Yardfest (October 19th) and Step Show (October 20th)

C) The Kennedy Center Millennium Stage, which is free. One instance occurs on August 30th when "Zongo Junction" performs. http://www.kennedy-center.org/explorer/artists/?entity_id=87149&source_type=B Their website is http://zongojunction.net/

D) For up-to-date local go-go events, check out http://papalace.com/.

E) For up-to-date local jazz events, consult http://www.dejazz.com/jazzscene/index.cfm


Concert/Event Report

You must attend one "live" performances during the semester and write a concert report for this performance. A concert report is a concise writing assignment of between two & three double-spaced type written pages (approximately 600-900 words) that allows you to discuss any
interesting or noteworthy aspect of the performance. Your personal perspective is important, as are any technical or analytical observations. Please be sure to connect your report with "things" that we have learned/discussed/viewed/read about in this class.

Grading: [A] will be assigned to a particularly well-written, imaginative, or otherwise exceptional reports. [B] will be assigned to all reports turned in on time, meeting the above criteria, and clearly written. [C] will be assigned to reports that are unfocused, sloppily presented, poorly-written, or otherwise deficient, but acceptable. [D] will be assigned to a paper with even more “issues.” [F] will be assigned to a paper never received or with profound problems.

3) Review Essay #2 will discuss questions related to authenticity, secular/sacred musical interchange, and the role of the mass media in disseminating black music. This assignment focuses on Together Let Us Sweetly Live: The Singing and Praying Bands and The Real Hiphop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground. Your answer should address the breadth of what we have talked and read about regarding African American music and culture. The length is similar to the first review/essay: 6-8 pages. [30%] Due No Later than early December.

5) A final examination consisting of answering one of several “take home” essay questions. [15%]. The take home exam is due no later than the exam date for this class.

6) In-Class Engagement and Contributions. [5%]

Late Paper Policy: Unless you have a documented medical excuse or extreme family emergency, your paper should be in my hands or sent to me via email no later than the close of the class on the prescribed day. I will deduct one-half a grade for every 24-hour period that the paper is late. Please contact me if you have any specific questions related to this policy.

For your reading pleasure, please follow this link for examples of "well-written papers" submitted by previous students who have taken this class: http://widstudents.wordpress.com/disipline-specific-resources/examples-of-music-papers/

Additional Information

Because I do not rehash the required reading in class, class attendance is critically important! My lectures & visual and oral presentations complement the reading and will contain information, concepts, and facts that you will not find elsewhere. Furthermore, the class structure is such that you cordially invited to participate in class by asking questions, presenting your observations, and cogently stated disagreements. I also often post information as an "Announcement" on Blackboard and by way of broadcast e-mails. This syllabus will be updated during the semester, as need be.
Required Books


