Course Description:

Rock and roll: A genre of popular music originating in the 1950s; a blend of Black rhythm-and-blues with White country-and-western. From [wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn](http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn)

Music gives us a microphone to speak to the world. And music has the power to bring generations, nationalities and people together. Now more than ever, it’s critical to study and understand how music is changing our world as well as reflecting it. From the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame website

It has been about 60 years since the popular musical genre called rock and roll or rock ‘n’ roll made its appearance. While Alan Freed, a Cleveland disk jockey, is famed with first using the phrase “rock and roll” back in the early 1950s, there were already songs which coined the term in the 1940s and references to “rocking and rolling” in music much earlier than that in the early 1900s. Whatever its roots and early beginnings, from its inception, rock and roll music has been a distinctly American blend with elements of blues, rhythm and blues, country, folk, and gospel music. This wedding of musical styles in U.S. history with concomitant implications for social relations—race- and classed-based at the outset—is the central focus of this course. It seems fitting, then, to begin this course with a definition and a reference from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame describing one of the most important musical genres of the 20th and 21st centuries in U.S. society.

Fundamentally, this course is an historical, theoretical, and ultimately, sociological exploration of rock and roll music. The course will examine rock music from its roots, to its appearance in the late 1940s and early 1950s, to its evolution throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. Students will be invited to explore the socio-cultural aspects reflected in and affected by this popular music including race and class relationships as well as some of the ways that institutions help to reinforce and shape musical genres.

I would like you to leave this course with 1) an understanding of sociological theory as it pertains to media texts such as rock and roll music; 2) an understanding of the social environment of each era of rock music and how the times influenced the music; 3) an understanding of the cultural issues treated in rock and roll music; 4) an understanding of the effect of rock and roll music on American culture; 5) knowledge of the representative, pivotal rock artists, groups, and related individuals in the industry; 6) a basis for critical thinking about the place of rock and roll music in American history and culture.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on one research paper, at least one exam, and any quizzes or assignments that are given in class. The due dates for the paper and the exams will be "written in stone" unless you have been informed otherwise by me. Late papers will not be accepted nor can exams be rescheduled unless you inform me before the dates in question. If I don't hear from you before the due date of the paper or before the dates of the exams you will be out of luck.

Exam Format

Any exams given in class will consist of a choice of one essay question out of three or four. This may sound fairly easy on its face. However, you will need to incorporate in this one essay quite a bit of material from lectures, readings, theory, and media examples, and you will only have one blank sheet front and back to do this. You absolutely need to write legibly, so make sure that others can read your writing—print if necessary. The final exam is NOT cumulative. There will be no review for either exam; your exam grades will stand or fall based on your notes, your reading, and in class media discussions. This means you had better take thorough notes on class lectures and discussions. If you cannot attend class, get to know one of the other students. TAs do not give out notes except in emergencies or for students with special
circumstances. The final exam will be an optional exam, but only for students whose grade standing and attendance merit the option. If a student is given the option, this means they can opt to keep the grade they are getting so far in the class or choose to take the final to better their grade. If a student takes the final exam, it will count toward their final grade. If a student decides to opt out of the final exam, they must still attend a discussion on the day of the final exam.

Rock and Roll Research Paper (5-7 pages, TYPED Double-spaced)

The research paper consists of an empirical exploration of some aspect of rock and roll in American history through a critical media literacy lens. You can explore roots/influences, an era within the history of rock and roll and its social significance, or a particular musical genre that has influenced the history of rock and roll. The paper should entail:

1. a thesis [no more than a page and a half]—introducing me to thesis or main point of the paper. Will you be exploring some aspect of the roots of rock and roll, an era within rock and roll history (such as the British invasion), or a musical genre (such as punk or rap)? What critical media lens will you use to discuss this rock and roll era? Whatever you choose, make sure you introduce it here. This section can be as dramatic as you’d like or include personal insight.

2. a body [three to five pages]—this entails your logical and thoughtful exploration of your thesis through a critical media literacy lens. If you have chosen the British invasion, then explore this and let the reader know what the social significance of the British invasion was on rock and roll and American history through one of the lenses we will discuss in class. This will require some research with citations (at least 5 from sources other than websites and wikipedia).

3. a critique or evaluation section [no more than a page]—this section can be as dramatic as you choose to make it and must entail a personal opinion of the task—it is not meant to be a summary of what you have already written. Please DO NOT use plastic folders, cover pages, or bibliography pages unless you are citing sources other than your book(s) and lectures. PROOFREAD!! Poor grammar, spelling, etc... will suffer grade reduction. Also watch font and margin space. Keep font to no more than 12pt (as long as it is not Courier New) and margins to no more than 1 inch on each side. Your grade will be reduced for large font and margins.

Other Quizzes, Assignments, and Miscellaneous Information...

I reserve the right to give quizzes or assignments as needed. For example, students who don’t complete readings may be asked to turn in an essay assignment. Since there are no other texts in the class but the readings, they become even that much more important in terms of your work. If quizzes or assignments are given, they will count toward your final grade. Attendance will be taken regularly and class participation is also considered significant to your grade.

Required Reading:

Reserve readings can be found using the Marriott Library website which is http://www.lib.utah.edu/. When you get to this site, look to the right hand side on the bottom and you will find the My.Utah.edu Student Portal. Login using your uNID and your password. Once you are logged in, on the left hand menu, click on the Academics option that has a little symbol of a graduation cap. Then, in the middle column under My Courses, you should see all the courses for which you have registered for the current semester. You should find Sociology 3041-001. Underneath that you should find Course Reserves. You can click on Course Reserves and it will bring up all the readings for the course.

Information about the Center for Disability Services:

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. All printed information for this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
Dates You Should Know:
16 Feb: Exam #1
30 Mar: Rock and Roll Research Paper due
4 May: Final Exam

Course Outline and Reading List:

JAN 12 Introduction to the Sociology of Rock and Roll
14-19 Developing a Critical Media Literacy: Rock and Roll, Race/Class/Gender, and Learning to Read Against the Grain
   Reserve Reading: Ellen Seiter, Peggy McIntosh, Patricia Hill Collins
18 Martin Luther King Holiday
21-26 The Roots of Rock and Roll: Up From Slavery
   Reserve Reading: Robert Gordon
28 The Classic Rockers: Music to the Tune of Integration
   Reserve Reading: Tom Wheeler

FEB 2 The Classic Rockers: Music to the Tune of Integration
4-11 The Early 1960s, The British Invasion, The Sound of Protest, Folk Rock
   Reserve Reading: Jane Tompkins, Robert Shelton
15 Presidents Day Holiday
16 Exam #1
23-25 Motown and Integration, Soul and Disillusion
   Reserve Reading: Craig Hansen Werner

MAR 2-9 Psychedelic Sound, Militant Blues on Campus, 70s Excess
11-18 Punk Revolution, MTV Generation
   Reserve Reading: Andy Bennett
22-27 Spring Break
30 80s Promise, Gen-X Blues, Metal, and Grunge
   Reserve Reading: Gareth Palmer, Michael Azerrad
30 Rock and Roll Research Paper Due

APR 1-6 80s Promise, Gen-X Blues, Metal, and Grunge
   Reserve Reading: Gareth Palmer, Sarah Ferguson
8-13 The Emergence of Hip Hop and Rap

*Reserve Reading: Tricia Rose*

15-20 The Women of Rock and Roll

*Reserve Reading: Keith Negus, Lois Ruskai Melina*

22-27 Rock in the 21st Century: No Boundaries

*Reserve Reading: Barry Gewen*

**MAY 4** Final Exam – Tuesday, 8:00-10:00am
RESERVE READING LIST

Developing a Critical Media Literacy/Rock and Roll Lenses and Elements of Privilege

The Roots of Rock and Roll: Up from Slavery

The Classic Rockers: Music to the Tune of Integration

The Early 1960s, The British Invasion, The Sound of Protest

Motown and Integration/Soul and Disillusion

Punk Revolution, MTV Generation

80s Promise, Gen-X Blues, Metal, and Grunge

The Emergence of Hip-Hop and Rap

The Women of Rock and Roll

Rock in the 21st Century: No Boundaries