

## SOC 3041-001 Sociology of Rock and Roll

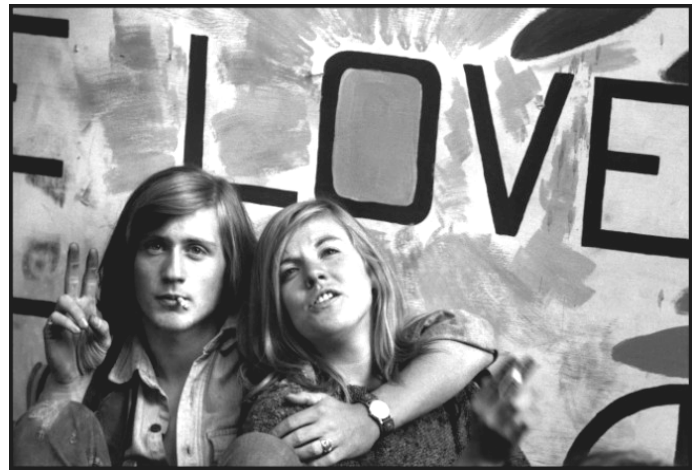
SPRING SEMESTER 2014 – T/TH 9:10-10:30am BEHS  
AUD

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### Course Description

Rock and roll is the simple name given to the musical/cultural/attitude movement that shook the minds and the pants off thousands of youngsters all around the world. It all started during the early 50's and it all began with the influence of blues, country and r'n'b music; probably the coolest type of music in the world.

From the *Urban Dictionary*

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/class/gender based particularly—is the central focus of this course. It seems fitting, then, to begin with a definition and a reference from the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame* describing one of the most important musical genres of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students will be invited to explore the socio-cultural aspects reflected in and affected by this popular music including race, class, and gender relationships as well as some of the ways that institutions help to reinforce and shape musical genres.

### Course Objectives

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 socio-historical environment of each era of rock music and how the times influenced the music; 3) an understanding of the socio-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 artists, groups, and related individuals in rock and roll music; 6) and a basis for critical thinking about the place of rock and roll music in American history and culture.

### Canvas

This course requires use of **Canvas**. You will be expected to retrieve and upload assignments and readings through Canvas throughout the course of the semester. It would be wise to sign into Canvas through the Campus Information System (CIS) as soon as you can so that you can see all required assignments and readings for the class.

## Class Work

The major tasks of the class include assignments, at least one exam, and a paper. In addition, **attendance and class participation** are also considered significant to your grade. Taking **notes** is important in this class and will be considered part of participation. Due dates and exam dates will be **written in stone** unless you have been informed otherwise by me. If I don't hear from you **before** these dates you will be out of luck. In the interest of clarity, let us further break down the components of class work.

### Audiofile Assignments (Upload to Canvas on Due Dates—Jan 16 through Apr 10)

You are required to read an **article** and listen to several **audiofiles**, all of which are accessible as **PDF files** or **links** through Canvas. Almost all audiofiles are less than 11 minutes in length—an easy length of time to hear a portion of rock and roll sociohistory. You are required to **complete assignments on all audiofiles on due dates listed in Canvas**. For example, your first audiofile assignment is about Muddy Waters—legendary R&B artist—and is due on January 16<sup>th</sup> by 9:00am. **All assignments are due on their due dates at 9:00am.**

### Favorite Assignment (1 page, Upload to Canvas, Single-spaced Word doc, Jan 21st 9:00am)

There will be no class on Tuesday, January 21st. Instead, you will write a short essay to be uploaded into Canvas. For this assignment, you will write a short essay to be uploaded into Canvas as a Word doc. The short essay will entail choosing one of your favorite music artists (solo artists, duos, or groups). Then describe why they are so meaningful or important to you. Be specific, be honest. Make the essay no more than 1 page, single-spaced, and upload into Canvas by Tuesday, January 21st at 9:00am.

### Exam #1 (2 page Essay, Upload to Canvas, Single-spaced Word doc, Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 9:00am)

The first exam will be an **essay exam** made available on Canvas on a specified date to be **uploaded into Canvas by the due date once completed as a single-spaced Word document**. No other formats will be accepted to make sure to save it as a Word doc. This exam will entail 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 material from lectures, audiofiles, and theory, and you will only have **2** single-spaced pages in which to accomplish this. Upload to Canvas by Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am.

### Rock and Roll Research Paper (5-7 pages, Upload to Canvas, Double-spaced Word doc, Mar 27<sup>th</sup> 9:00am)

The rock and roll research paper consists of an empirical exploration of some aspect of rock and roll music through a critical media literacy lens. There are **three elements within critical media literacy** and **one or more** can be used in your analysis including: **political economy, textual analysis, and audience reception**. For example, you could focus on the **political economy** surrounding a rock era such as the rise of punk rock or the emergence of hip hop. Or you could conduct a **content or semiotic analysis** of the lyrics of some representative bands of a given genre—the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and Big Brother and the Holding Company, as part of the psychedelic sounds era. Or you might want to take on an **audience reception** analysis contrasting dominant readings versus oppositional readings of the work of British invasion artists including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Who. Or you might just shoot the moon and take on all three—for example, discuss the political economy surrounding the emergence of grunge, conduct a semiotic analysis of some Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Mudhoney lyrics, and discuss a dominant reading of grunge music. The choice is ultimately yours and the possibilities and permutations are pretty wide-ranging, practically infinite. **Watch out for regurgitation of class material and lack of depth in analysis.** Oh yes, you can use the word “I”. The paper should entail:

1. a **thesis** [one or two paragraphs]—introducing me to the thesis or main point of the paper. What **element of critical media literacy** will you be using and **what aspect of rock and roll music**? Will you be exploring the political economy of the roots of rock and roll or some other era within rock and roll history such as the British invasion, or a textual analysis of representative bands within a musical genre such as punk or rap, or an audience reception analysis of representatives of some rock genre, or will you taking on all three elements to analyze some aspect of rock music like women in rock? **Whatever you choose, make sure you introduce it here.** This section can be as dramatic as you'd like and include personal insight. Pick a topic that is connected in some way with your core self—make it **from the heart** and it will come across much stronger.

2. a **body** [five-six pages]—this entails your logical and thoughtful exploration of your thesis. This section will likely look something like this:

During the time that Madonna rose to stardom, America was living through the Reagan era. It was a time of cultural shifts in values and thinking from politics to boardrooms to MTV. Let me elaborate.... OR

The writing of punk rockers easily lends itself to multiple forms of analysis. This semiotic analysis will focus on themes emerging in the lyrics of a representative sample of punk rock bands to highlight comparisons and contrasts in the work of punk rockers. These themes include... OR

A dominant reading of punk rock largely turns the world on its ear, since punk rock was meant to clash, no pun intended, with mainstream thinking and values; while an oppositional reading of punk rock would question the value of this rock music genre and its meaning for generations. Let me begin with a dominant reading of punk rock through a look at the work of some representative bands... OR

Hip hop emerged within the disenfranchised inner-city neighborhoods of the South Bronx, New York. This political economy backdrop will foreground a content analysis of lyrics by Tupac Shakur, Mos Def, and the Roots whose work I will argue from a dominant reading of their texts. So to begin...

3. a **critique or evaluation section** [one paragraph] 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.

4. a **bibliography** for the citations used. **All papers will require some degree of research with citations.** Make sure you use **3 citations beyond Wikipedia or websites.** Use books and journal articles as well. **Watch out for plagiarism!!**

PROOFREAD your paper!! Also watch font and margin space. Keep font to no more than 12pt (except for Courier New) and margins to 1 inch on each side. Then upload to Canvas as a double-spaced Word doc by March 27<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am.

### **Final Exam (2 page Essay, Upload to Canvas, Single-spaced Word doc, TBA)**

The final exam will be an **essay exam** just like the first exam only with questions that emerge from the last part of the semester. **The final is not cumulative and may or may not be optional** and will depend on class performance during the semester including the student's attendance and grade standing. For example, even a student with an "A" grade going into the final might have no option if their attendance is poor and the final is optional. **If an optional final is offered, and there is no guarantee that it will be, it will be announced at the end of the semester.** If it is offered, a student can opt to keep the grade they are getting so far in the class or choose to take the final. Taking the final will count toward the final grade—it can help or hurt the grade. All students should prepare to take a final exam, in any case.

### **Other Assignments and Miscellaneous Information...**

I reserve the right to give assignments as needed. For example, students who aren't prepared to discuss audiofile may be asked to turn in an extra essay assignment. If assignments are given, they will count toward your final grade. One other thing... if laptops are becoming a nuisance in the class, I will ban them, so don't let them become a distraction.

### **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, 801-581-5020 (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

Jan 16-Apr 10:	Audiofile Assignments
Jan 21:	Favorite Assignment
Feb 13:	Exam #1
Mar 27:	Rock and Roll Research Paper
TBA:	Final Exam

## Course Outline

JAN	7	Introduction to the Sociology of Rock and Roll
	9	Developing a Critical Media Literacy: Rock and Roll, Race/Class/Gender, and Learning to Read Against the Grain Ellen Seiter “Different Children, Different Dreams: Racial Representation in Advertising” (PDF in Canvas)
	9-14	The Roots of Rock and Roll: Up From Slavery Listen: Muddy Waters Audiofile – “I’m Your Hoochie Coochie Man” by David Welna (Upload to Canvas Jan 16)
	16-23	1950s Rockers: Music to the Tune of Integration Listen: Chuck Berry Audiofile – “Chuck Berry: Father of Rock ‘n Roll” by Farai Chideya (Upload to Canvas Jan 23)
	20	Martin Luther King Holiday
	*21	First Assignment – Upload Single-spaced Word doc to Canvas
	28-30	The British Invasion, The Sound of Protest, Folk Rock Listen: Beatles Audiofile – “Behind the Myth: A New Beatles Biography” by Terry Gross (Print and turn in this assignment in class) Listen: Bob Dylan Audiofile – “Bob Dylan Takes His Latest Look at ‘Life’” by Ken Tucker (Upload to Canvas Feb 6)
FEB	4-6	The British Invasion, The Sound of Protest, Folk Rock continued
	6	Exam #1 Up on Canvas
	*13	Exam #1 Upload to Canvas Single-Spaced Word doc
	11-18	Motown and Integration, Soul and Disillusion Listen: Sam Cooke Audiofile – “Sam Cooke’s Swan Song of Protest” NPR Story (Print and turn in this assignment in class)
	17	Presidents Day Holiday

	20-27	<b>Psychedelic Sound, Militant Blues on Campus, 70s Excess</b> <b>Listen: Jimi Hendrix Audiofile</b> –“Jimi Hendrix: King of the Electric Guitar” by Argin Hutchins ( <b>Upload to Canvas Feb 25</b> )
<b>MAR</b>	4-6	<b>Punk Revolution, MTV Generation</b> <b>Listen: Patti Smith Audiofile</b> – “Intersections: Patti Smith, Poet Laureate of Punk” NPR Story ( <b>Upload to Canvas Mar 6</b> )
	9-16	Spring Break
	18-27	<b>80s Promise, Gen-X Blues, Metal, and Grunge</b> <b>Listen: Bruce Springsteen Audiofile</b> – “Ed Norton Interviews Bruce Springsteen On ‘Darkness’” NPR Interview ( <b>Print and turn in this assignment in class</b> )
	*27	<b>Rock and Roll Research Paper Due</b> <b>Upload to Canvas Double-Spaced Word doc</b>
<b>APR</b>	1-8	<b>The Emergence of Hip Hop and Rap</b> <b>Listen: Anthology of Rap Audiofile</b> – “‘The Anthology of Rap’: Lyrics as Poetry” NPR Story ( <b>Upload to Canvas Apr 3</b> )
	10-15	<b>The Women of Rock and Roll</b> <b>Listen: India.Arie Audiofile</b> –“India.Arie: ‘Love and Politics,’ Live in Studio” NPR Studio Session ( <b>Upload to Canvas Apr 10</b> )
	17-22	<b>Rock in the Last Decade/First Decade:</b> <b>Merging, Bending, Crossing Borders</b>
	<b>TBA</b>	<b>Final Exam – TBA</b>