

UC Center Program Courses - Fall 2014
PCC 34 **French Popular Music**
Instructor: Mindy LaTour O'Brien
contact: mindyobrien@g.ucla.edu

Office Hours
by appointment

Lecture
Wednesday 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm
Thursday 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a survey of French popular music production and consumption from the twentieth century to the present. Beginning with mid-century icons of “la chanson” such as Édith Piaf, Georges Brassens, and Charles Trenet, we will then consider a range of popular music trends---from 1960s girl groups to Afropop and the transnational explosion of French language rap and hip-hop. We will consider the American invasion of pop aesthetics as well as French strategies of resistance to this sonic globalization. Through this course, students will learn critical skills for analyzing popular music, from a basic technical understanding of sound production in the recording studio to fundamental elements of popular music aesthetics. The primary texts for this course will be recorded music, song lyrics, and music videos. By the end of the course, students will have constructed a critical apparatus for exploring the broader socio-cultural issues at stake in the production, performance, and consumption of popular music in France. No prior musical experience is required!

COURSE MATERIALS

Looseley, David, *Popular Music in Contemporary France: Authenticity, Politics, Debate*, 2003.
Course Reader ([**CR**] hereafter)

MAJOR COURSE THEMES

- Americanization of pop music and French strategies of resistance
- relationship between musical aesthetics and French national/local identity
- the authenticity debate. What is French music?
- immigrant and minority influences/racial politics/and transnational Francophone musical conversations
- representations of gender in French pop music
- the cultural politics of the recording studio in France

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop critical listening skills
- Construct a methodology for analyzing popular music, considering relationships between musical sound (timbre, vocal tone, production techniques, use of the sound box, etc.), text, and cultural meaning.
- Learn how to write about music and create an argument using musical evidence
- Gain an understanding of major issues in contemporary French history, politics, and culture as negotiated within and through the French pop music marketplace

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

- 10% - Essay #1: Close Reading of a selected song (1,000 words)
- 20% - Midterm Exam: (multiple choice, short answer, and essay)
- 10% - Presentation: in-class presentation of final paper topic
- 5% - Peer Review for Essay #2
- 20% - Essay #2: Final paper (1,800-2,400 words)
- 20% - Final Exam: (multiple choice, short answer, and essay)
- 15% - Class Participation

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance at lectures and site visits is mandatory. It is essential that you attend all classes and participate actively. As per the UC Paris Attendance Policy, excessive absences and tardies will result in a lowered final grade. Please refer to UC Paris Academic Handbook for the policy on absences and tardies.

Participation and reading assignments are critical. For the purposes of this class, participation means reading the materials in advance, coming to class on time, staying for the entire class period, and actively taking part in discussions and other in-class exercises and activities. **Reading quizzes are within the realm of possibility.** A large part of this portion of your grade is simply **paying attention**; in order to pay attention, you must be present! Any tardies or absences will have a strong negative effect on your participation grade.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious offense and could result in your dismissal from the program. All instances of suspected plagiarism will be reported to EAP for disciplinary action. If you borrow words or an idea from any source, whether it be a book, journal, magazine, the Internet, or a lecture, you need to indicate where the information came from. Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* identifies three different acts that are considered plagiarism: "(1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases [of other texts] into your own words" (Hacker 261). (By both citing the source of this definition of plagiarism and by "enclosing borrowed language in quotation marks," this syllabus has avoided charges of plagiarism.) If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please ask me.

A Note on Electronic Devices

As a courtesy to your instructor and fellow students, please do not use cell phones, laptops, tablets, e-readers, or other electronic devices during class, even to check the time. Make sure phones are turned off. Use of these devices will lower your participation grade. No recording (audio or visual) of class sessions will be permitted.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO POPULAR MUSIC ANALYSIS

Reading: [CR] Zak, *The Poetics of Rock*, Chapter 3.
[CR] Moor, *Rock: The Primary Text*, p. 120-126.

WEEK 2: 1930S-50S- LA CHANSON FRANÇAISE AND THE SINGER-POET

(Édith Piaf, Charles Trenet, Georges Brassens)
Reading: Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, Intro and Chapter 1.
[CR] Rearick, *The French in Love and War*, Intro and Chapter 8.

WEEK 3: 1960S: YÉ-YÉ AND THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

(Johnny Hallyday, Françoise Hardy, Les Gam)
Reading: Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, Chapters 2 and 6.
[CR] Briggs, "Sex and the Girl's Single: French Popular Music and the Long Sexual Revolution of the 1960s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2012.

WEEK 4: 1970S- LA MUSIQUE POP

(Serge Gainsbourg, Léo Ferré, Jacques Bertin)
***Essay #1 DUE - Thurs, Oct. 9, 1pm**
Reading: Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, p. 37-44 and Chapter 4.
[CR] Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution*, Chapter 2.

WEEK 5: 1980S- LE ROCK ALTERNATIVE

(Bérurier Noir, Les Garçons Bouchers, Starshooter, Stinky Toys, Trust, Téléphone)

Reading: Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, p. 44-50 and Chapter 7.

[CR] Lebrun, *Protest Music in France*, Chapter 1.

WEEK 6: 1990S AND BEYOND- LA CHANSON NÉO-RÉALISTE, FRENCH TOUCH

(Têtes Raides, Cassius, Air, Etienne de Crécy)

Reading: Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, Chapter 5, and p. 167-213.

[CR] Lebrun, *Protest Music in France*, Chapter 2.

WEEK 7: REVIEW AND MIDTERM EXAM (DATE AND TIME TBA)

FALL BREAK

WEEK 8: 1990S AND BEYOND- LE ROCK MÉTIS

(Khaled, Carte de Séjour, Natasha Atlas, Amina)

Reading: [CR] Lebrun, *Protest Music in France*, Chapter 3.

[CR] Lebrun, "Carte de Séjour: revisiting 'Arabness' and anti-racism in 1980s France," *Popular Music*, 2012.

WEEK 9: 1990S AND BEYOND- RAP AND HIP-HOP EN FRANÇAIS

(MC Solaar, NTM, Sexion d'Assaut, Assassin, Lady Laistee, Passi)

***Draft of Essay #2 DUE for PEER REVIEW - Thurs, Nov. 20, 1pm**

Reading: Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, Chapter 3 and p. 55-61.

[CR] Durand, ed. *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hop-hop Culture in the Francophone World*, Chapters 1 and 4.

WEEK 10: 1990S AND BEYOND- QUÉBÉCOIS AND AFRO/CARIBBEAN POP

(Coeur de Pirate, Tiken Jah Fakoly, Corneille, Wasis Diop)

Reading: [CR] Grenier, "The Aftermath of a Crisis: Quebec Music Industries in the 1980s," *Popular Music*, 1993.

[CR] Bourderionnet, "Displacement in French/Displacement of French: The Reggae and R'n'B of Tiken Jah Fakoly and Corneille," *Research in African Literatures*, 2008.

WEEK 11: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 12: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

***Final Draft of Essay #2 DUE - Thurs, Dec. 11, 1pm**

WEEK 13: REVIEW AND FINAL EXAM (DATE AND TIME TBA)