Instructor: Charles Stratford - Email: chs@brandeis.edu
Office: TBA
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-1:30pm, also by appointment.

Course Description

This course examines the stylistic evolution, cultural significance, and technological dimensions of electronic dance music from the late 1970s to the present day. Some questions will be posed: what are the origins of electronic dance music and how does this genre affect other types of popular music? What role has techno/dance culture played in society during the past thirty-five years? How does one’s cultural sensibility affect the way that one creates and experiences music? How have advancements in hardware, software, audio digitalization, and the Internet shaped the development of this music?

We shall address how electronic dance music (“EDM”) is an outgrowth of experimental electronic music, groove-oriented dance music such as funk and disco, and 1970s German “Krautrock” bands like Kraftwerk. As the popularity of this genre increased, electronic dance music permeated sectors of global subculture—spanning the emergence of techno in 1980s Detroit, the subsequent advent of underground raves in the UK, US, Germany, and Ibiza, to the “neo-hippy” spiritual movements in 1990s California. As seen today, EDM is a mainstream movement that dominates massive gatherings throughout Asia, South America, North Africa, and the Middle East. Particular attention will be devoted to how the cultural dynamics of race, class, and identity influence the creation and reception of this music.

The inextricable link between technology and EDM’s stylistic development intertwine with the genre’s historical narrative. Since EDM is a fundamentally electronic (and these days, even digital) musical medium, we shall investigate the role that technology plays in how people conceive, perform, and consume this type of music. In this way, we can assess how electronic dance music involves a fluid relationship between concept and practice. In order to understand better how the practicalities of EDM affected artists’ creative sensibilities, each student has the option to craft a short original composition using simple free software. Also, we shall have a professional EDM DJ visit our class and give a presentation on the realities of recording and performing this music in today’s music scene.

While drawing on key texts as well as selections of video, this course will be reading and listening-intensive but taught without musical scores: you do not need musical training to enjoy this class. This course aims to equip you with the skills to think and write intelligently about music and culture. I intend to help you develop basic critical listening skills and equip you with the ability to incorporate your listening experiences into weekly essay assignments. These abilities will aid you throughout your undergraduate studies.
Required Materials


Music Access: The majority of the listening examples will be distributed as youtube.com links. I will post the appropriate links on LATTE for your access throughout the semester. It is essential that you have consistent Internet access in order to stay on track with the required listening that you will be tested on. If you have any Internet limitations, please see me at the beginning of the semester.

About your Instructor

I am currently a fourth-year PhD candidate in musicology here at Brandeis. Trained as a classical bassoonist, I worked as a freelance musician in my hometown Los Angeles for over a decade, performing in Hollywood recording studios, local orchestras, as well as the experimental psych-rock band John Webster Johns. My research centers on music of the European avant-garde (both before and after World War II) with an emphasis on the vocal music of Luciano Berio as well as the neoclassical works of Arnold Schoenberg. My secondary interests lie in the history of electronic dance music, as well as the history of rock and roll. My wife is a speech-language pathologist, and our 2 year-old son loves to dance at home!

Grading

Weekly "Distilled Thought" Writing Assignments (4): 25%
Listening Quizzes (2) 20%
Attendance/Participation 10%
Techno Track Original Composition 10%
Presentation on Favorite EDM track 10%
Final Exam 25%

Grading Scale

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
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Weekly "Distilled Thought" Assignment

The weekly writing assignment forms an essential part of this course. The "distilled thought" format of this assignment intends to inspire connection with the music in a succinct and thoughtful manner. Every week you will be given a writing prompt that includes 3–4 questions that draw upon material covered in lecture, reading, video, and required listening. From this list you will select two questions to respond to in a paper totaling no more than 600 words (approximately 2.5 pages, double spaced, 1 inch margins overall). You will be graded on the strength of your connection with the music, the thoughtfulness of your response, as well as spelling, grammar, syntax, etc. I will provide you with detailed commentary on your distilled thought, with the intent to help you improve as the term moves forward. You are encouraged to meet with me during office hours to receive guidance on your writing and progress. I grade strongly on effort and improvement; I will track the improvement of your writing over the course of the semester and factor that into your final grade.

Listening Quizzes

There are two quizzes that draw upon the listening included for each class meeting. These quizzes consist of five complete musical selections (not just introductions). The listening quizzes will test you on historical information of each selection, the stylistic features of the song, as well relevant content from lecture and reading. The listening quizzes are given in multiple-choice format.

Attendance

Due to the fast-paced nature of this summer session course, attendance is vital and constitutes 10% of your final grade. You are allowed one unexcused absence; I will deduct 1/3rd of a letter grade for each absence beyond that. Any more than three absences will result in a 10% reduction of your final grade.

Participation

You are expected to participate actively in our discussion of the music and its history. You must listen to all of the musical examples before class at least twice, and have something constructive to say about each track. Also, on the class meetings that incorporate selections of video (which will enrich our understanding of Reynolds’ text), you must watch the video before class and be ready to contribute. Evidence of your daily class preparation will influence your participation grade.

Techno Track Composition

An important element of this course involves learning how EDM artists create their music. Your
assignment draws upon simple free software called Drumstation (http://www.d-lusion.com/ProductsDrumstation.html). Modeled after the TR-808 and TR-909 drum machines manufactured by Roland in the early 1980s, this software gives you a hands-on understanding of the means available to early techno artists. We will have a lab day where you bring in your laptops for an in-class tutorial for your composition assignment. If you do not have access to a laptop, please email me for guidance.

**Presentation on Favorite EDM track**

You are all asked to give a 10-minute presentation on your favorite EDM track that has been released within the last five years. The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize your peers (and instructor) with recent music. You are expected to play selections of audio as well as use a Power Point presentation. Please consult with me in office hours if you are having any difficulties picking a track.

**Final Exam**

The final exam will involve all of the material covered in the course, with particular emphasis on what I cover in lecture. The listening component of the final exam will only involve Unit 4 (“Approaching the Millennium, The 21st Century”). The format will be a mixture of multiple choice and short answer. A study guide for the final will be posted on LATTE towards the end of the term. **No make-up exams will be scheduled without a doctor's note.**

**Policy on missed or late exams/assignments**

If you miss a quiz or exam due to illness, a doctor's note detailing the nature of the illness is required to schedule a makeup. Without a doctor's note or documented family emergency, **no makeup quizzes or tests will be administered**, resulting in the grade of 0 for the quiz or exam. If you anticipate missing something and have a legitimate excuse, **please contact me in advance.** Assignments turned in late will have 10% deducted for every day late.

**Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (see http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

**Time Commitment**
For this class it is expected that you spend, on average, 28 hours of outside work per week for assigned readings and videos, homework, daily listening, written assignments, exam and quiz preparation, as well as any additional engagement with the course material.

**Course Outline** (NB: content may change as the course develops)

**UNIT 1: Origins of EDM: the 1970s and 1980s**

**Monday, June 6**

*Course Overview; How to Listen to EDM; Origins: Experimental Electronic Music, Minimalism, Funk, Disco*

- **Listening:** Karlheinz Stockhausen, “Kontakte”
  - Tangerine Dream, “Zeit”
  - Terry Riley, “In C”
  - Parliament, “Flashlight”
  - Donna Summer, “I Feel Love”
  - Chic, “Good Times”
  - Daft Punk, “Around the World”

- **Reading:** Reynolds, Intro, pp. xx-xxvi; “Everything Starts with an E: Ecstasy and Rave Music,” pp. xxvii-xxxvii

**Tuesday, June 7**

*More Origins: Kraftwerk and Georgio Moroder*

*The Beginnings of Techno in Detroit, Chicago and New York*

- **Listening:** Kraftwerk, “The Robots”, “Trans Europe Express”
  - Georgio Moroder, “Chase”
  - Juan Atkins, “Future”
  - Derrick May, “Let’s Go”; “Strings of Life”
  - Kevin Saunderson, “Triangle of Love”
  - Jesse Saunders and Vince Lawrence, “On and On”
  - Farley Jackmaster Funk, “Love Can’t Turn Around”
  - Ralphi Rosario, “You Used to Hold Me”
  - Phuture, “Acid Tracks”; “Your Only Friend”

- **Video:** *Universal Techno* - [https://youtu.be/SZaUCYLoEks](https://youtu.be/SZaUCYLoEks)

- **Reading:** Reynolds, Ch. 1, pp. 1-33: “A Tale of Three Cities: Detroit Techno, Chicago House, and New York Garage”

**Thursday, June 9**

*Origins of Psychedelia - The Advent of Raves in Late 80s UK*
In-Class Tutorial on Drumstation Software

Listening:  
D Mob, “We Call it Acieed!”  
Jolly Roger, “Acid Man”  
Kevin Saunderson, “Big Fun”; “Good Life”  
Frankie Bones, “Flowmasters”  
Lil Louis’, “French Kiss”  
Black Box, “Ride on Time”  
Night Writer’s “Let the Music Use You”

Video:  

Reading:  
Reynolds, Ch. 2, pp. 34-68: “Living a Dream: Acid House and UK Rave, 1988-1989”

UNIT 2: The 1990s, Part I

Monday, June 13th  
Manchester, England

Distilled Thought 1 Due

Listening:  
The Stone Roses, “I Wanna Be Adored”  
Happy Mondays, “Step On”  
New Order, “World in Motion”  
808 State, “Pacific State”; “Sunrise”; “Nephatiti”  
A Guy Called Gerald, “Voodoo Ray”; “FX”  
The KLF, “What Time is Love”; “3 AM Eternal”; “The Last Train to Trance-Central”  
The Shamen, “Move Any Mountain”; “Re-Evolution”  
Primal Scream, “Loaded”; “Higher Than The Sun”

Video:  
24 hour Party People - https://youtu.be/gU9R9D_3HI0

Reading:  
Reynolds, Ch. 3, pp. 69-94: “Twenty-four-hour Party People: Madchester, Positivity, and the Rave ‘n’ Roll Crossover”

Tuesday, June 14th  
Rave Culture in the Early 1990s UK

Listening:  
Unique 3, “The Theme”  
The Bradford Boys, “Weight For the Bass”  
Sweet Exorcist, “Testone”  
Nightmares on Wax, “Aftermath”  
Ability II, “Pressure”  
Joey Beltram, “Energy Flash”; “Mentasm”  
The Scientist, “The Exorcist”
The Prodigy, “Experience”

**Video:** *Generations of Sound* - https://youtu.be/8aIbiZDAPx8

**Reading:** Reynolds, Ch. 4, pp. 95-133: “‘Ardcore, You Know the Score: The Second Wave of Rave, 1990-92”

**Thursday, June 16th**

**Intelligent Dance Music**

**Listening Quiz #1**

**Listening:** Brian Eno, “Music for Airports”; “On Land”
Autechre, “The Egg”
Aphex Twin, “Selected Ambient Works 85-92”; “Selected Ambient Works II”; The Orb, “A Huge Ever Growing Pulsating Brain That Rules From the Centre of the Ultraworld”
The KLF, “Chillout”
FSOL, “Lifeforms”
Paul Van Dyck, “Visions of Shiva”
Jam and Spoon, “Stella”

**Video:** *Aphex Twin Interview* - https://youtu.be/rndV_5q8Tkc

**Reading:** Reynolds, Ch. 6, pp. 155-186: “Feed Your Head: Intelligent Techno, Ambient, and Trance”

**Monday, June 20th**

**The Dark Side of Rave, Detroit Renaissance**

**Distilled Thought 2 Due**

**Listening:** Subnation, “Scottie”
4 Hero, “Where’s the Boy”
Goldie, “Terminator”
Green Velvet, “I Want to Leave My Body”
Underground Resistance, “Predator”
Jeff Mills, “Late Night”
Robert Hood, “Internal Empire”
Carl Craig, “Sandstorms”


**UNIT 3: The 1990s, Part II**
Tuesday, June 21st

**Jungle, Drum & Bass**

**Listening:**
- Hyper-On Experience, “Thunder Grip”
- Shy Fx, “Original Nuttah”
- R.A.W., “The Haiti Connection”; “Stop This Dub”
- Family of Intelligence, “Champion of Champions”
- Roni Size Reprazent, “Brown Paper Bag”
- Dieselboy, “System Upgrade”
- Goldie, “Timeless”
- LTJ Bukem, “Atlantis”

**Reading:**

Thursday, June 23rd

**Trip Hop and Sampling**

**In-class Presentations on Your Favorite EDM Tracks: Sign up on LATTE**

**Listening:**
- Massive Attack, “Angel”; “Blue Lines”
- Portishead, “Dummy”
- DJ Shadow, “In/Flux”
- DJ Krush, “Meiso”
- DJ Cam, “Mad-Blunted Jazz”
- Tricky, “I Be the Prophet”
- Coldcut, “Dreamer”

**Video:**
- *Freeze: Documentary on DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist* - https://youtu.be/2HlOo0wwGQo

**Reading:**

Monday, June 27th

**Rave Culture in the United States**

**Distilled Thought 3 Due**

**Listening:**
- Frankie Bones, “From Brooklyn With Love”
- Genesis P. Orridge, “What’s History”
- City of Angels, “Now is the Time”
- Astral Projection, “Trust in Trance”
- Infected Mushroom, “BP Empire”
- DJ John Kelley, “Funky Desert Breaks”
- Dela Moontribe, “Free Your Mind”
Video: Better Living Through Circuitry - https://youtu.be/x4zN0v7C1mU

Reading: Reynolds, Ch. 12, pp. 274-312: “America The Rave: US Rave Culture, 1900-97”; Ch. 17, pp. 401-414: “In Our Angelhood: Rave Culture as Spiritual Revolution”

UNIT 4: Approaching the Millennium, The 21st Century

Tuesday, June 28th
DJ Culture; The “Retro” as “Neo”;
Guest DJ Artist Presentation

Listening: X-Dream, “Our Own Happiness”
Sasha and Digweed, “Northern Exposure”
Paul Van Dyck, “For an Angel”
Paul Oakenfold, “Tranceport”
Mars and Mystere, “Electric Blue”
Felix da Housecat with Miss Kitten, “Silver Screen (Shower Scene)”
Metro Area, “Miura”
Dopplereffekt, “Sterialization”
Fischerspooner, “Emerge”


Thursday, June 30th
EDM Throughout the World: Asia, South America, North Africa, and the Middle East

Listening Quiz #2

Listening: Dead J, “Down with the IDM”
Satoshi Tomiie, “Global Underground”
Arjun Vagale, “Black Strobe”
Talvin Singh, “Anokha”
Deorro, “Yee”
Amin Golestan, “Dagobert”
Aly and Fila, “We Control the Sunlight”
DJ Raed, “Give Me”

Monday, July 4th – No Class, National Holiday – Independence Day

**Techno Track Composition Due** (emailed to me as an .mp3 attachment before midnight)

Tuesday, July 5th

*The EDM of Today; Minimal and Dubstep; Where is EDM Headed?*

**Distilled Thought 4 Due**

**Listening:**
- John Tejada, “Feel It”
- Pantha du Prince, “This Bliss”
- Raiz, “Red Roses”
- Skrillex, “Scary Monsters and Nice Sprites”
- Benny Benassi feat. Gary Go, “Cinema (Skrillex remix)”
- R3hab & KSHMR. “Strong (Extended Mix)”
- Don Diablo & Khebto, “Got the Love (Extended Mix)”

**Reading:**
- Reynolds, Ch. 23, pp. 488-517: “Crisis and Consolidation: An Overview of Rave Culture’s Second Decade”

Friday, July 9th

**Final Exam: Administered in Class**