Course Description

This undergraduate survey course examines the historical context, stylistic development, and cultural significance of rock and roll from the early twentieth century to the present. Some questions shall be posed: what are the origins of this art form, and how did the styles, technology, and business strategies of early rock and roll artists like Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, and others pave the way for more contemporary forms of popular music such as indie rock and electronic dance music? This course also addresses how instruments, technology, mainstream media, and popular culture affect how rock music is created, marketed, and celebrated worldwide. Designed as listening intensive, this course aims at developing listening skills and the ability to reflect on the music through weekly writing assignments, with the goal of being able to discuss and think about rock intelligently. While some musical knowledge is beneficial, this course is intended for non music-majors with any level of experience in playing or studying music.

Required Materials


Musical Subscription: You will need to subscribe to an online listening service for the length of the course. You may select Rhapsody or Spotify, or any other listening service that allows you to hear the assigned music for the course (full songs, not just examples).

About your Instructor

I am currently a third-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 16 month-old son loves to rock out at home!

Grading

Weekly "Distilled Thought" Writing Assignments (4): 30%
Listening Quizzes (2) 20%
Attendance 10%
Concert Report (1) 10%
Final Exam 30%
Grading Scale

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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, and required listening. From this list you will select 2 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.

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 factual 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 1 unexcused absence; any absences beyond that will affect your attendance grade. Any more than three absences will result in a 10% reduction of your final grade.

Concert Report

You are asked to attend one concert over the course of the term and report on it in a paper of no more
than 300 words. Your choice of concert must be from a genre that falls within the scope of the course. Classical or jazz concerts are not approved, while any live performance by a band, DJ, or a combination is permitted. If you have a question about whether or not a concert is allowed, please feel free to contact me. Details of the assignment will be posted on LATTE.

**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 Units 4 and 5 (1980s-1990s-2000s-present). 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](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.

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

**UNIT 1**: Pre-Rock through the 1950s

Monday, July 6. How to Listen to Rock Music; The World Before Rock and Roll;

- **Listening:** Judy Garland with Victor Young and His Orchestra, "Over the Rainbow"
  - Howlin' Wolf, "Evil is Goin' On"
  - Hank Williams, "Hey Good Lookin"
  - Big Joe Turner, "Shake, Rattle, and Roll"

- **Reading:** Chapter 1, pp. 38-66
Tuesday, July 7. **1950s I:** The Birth and First Flourishing of Rock and Roll

**Listening:**
- Fats Domino, "Blueberry Hill"
- Chuck Berry, "Johnny B. Goode"
- Little Richard, "Tutti Frutti"
- Elvis Presley, "That's All Right (Mama)"

**Reading:** Chapter 2, pp. 78-111

Thursday, July 9. **1950s II:** The Demise of Rock and the Promise of Soul

**Listening:**
- The Ronettes, "Be My Baby"
- The Drifters, "There Goes My Baby"
- Roy Orbison, "Only the Lonely (Know How I Feel)"
- The Beach Boys, "Surfin' U.S.A."

**Reading:** Chapter 3, pp. 112-153

**UNIT 2:** The 1960s

Monday, July 13. **1960s I:** The Beatles and the British Invasion

**DistilledThought 1 Due**

**Listening:**
- The Beatles, "I Want to Hold Your Hand"
- The Beatles, "Tomorrow Never Knows"
- The Animals, "House of the Rising Sun"
- The Rolling Stones, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"
- The Kinks, "You Really Got Me"

**Reading:** Chapter 4, pp. 154-191

Tuesday, July 14. **1960s II:** American Responses

**Listening:**
- Bob Dylan, "Positively 4th Street"
- The Byrds, "Mr. Tambourine Man"
- The Beach Boys, "California Girls"
- The Monkees, "Last Train to Clarksville"

**Reading:** Chapter 5, pp. 192-221

Thursday, July 16. **1960s III:** Motown Pop and Southern Soul

**Listening Quiz #1**

**Listening:**
- The Supremes, "Baby Love"
- The Temptations, "The Way You Do the Things You Do"
- Aretha Franklin, "Respect"
- James Brown, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag Pt. 1"

**Reading:** Chapter 6, pp. 222-253
Monday, July 20. 1960s IV: Psychedelia

**Distilled Thought 2 Due**

Listening: The Beach Boys, "Good Vibrations"
The Beatles, "A Day in the Life"
Jefferson Airplane, "White Rabbit"
The Jimi Hendrix Experience, "Purple Haze"

Reading: Chapter 7, pp. 254-295

UNIT 3: The 1970s


Listening: Led Zeppelin, "Whole Lotta Love"
The Allman Brothers Band, "Whipping Post"
Santana, "Evil Ways"
Yes, "Roundabout"
The Eagles, "Take It Easy"

Reading: Chapter 8, pp. 296-342


Listening: Sly and the Family Stone, "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again)"
The Temptations, "Papa Was a Rolling Stone"
Stevie Wonder, "Living for the City"
Parliament, "Tear the Roof Off the Sucker (Give Up the Funk)"
Bob Marley and the Wailers, "Get Up, Stand Up"
Donna Summer, "Bad Girls"

Reading: Chapter 9, pp. 343-373


**Distilled Thought 3 Due**

Listening: Peter Frampton, "Show Me the Way" (Live)
Boston, "More Than a Feeling"
The Sex Pistols, "Anarchy in the U.K."
The Ramones, "Blitzkrieg Bop"
The Cars, "My Best Friend's Girl"
Kraftwerk, "The Robots"

Reading: Chapter 10, pp. 375-409
UNIT 4: The 1980s

Tuesday, July 28. **1980s I**: I Want My MTV, UK Indie, Detroit Techno

Listening:
- Michael Jackson, "Billie Jean"
- Madonna, "Like a Virgin"
- The Police, "Don't Stand So Close to Me"
- U2, "Pride (In the Name of Love)"
- Peter Gabriel, "Sledgehammer"
- The Smiths, "What Difference Does it Make?"
- Juan Atkins, "Clear"

Reading: Chapter 11, pp. 410-451

Thursday, July 30. **1980s II**: Heavy Metal, Rap, and the Rise of Alternative Rock

Listening Quiz #2

Listening:
- Mötley Crüe, "Shout at the Devil"
- Metallica, "One"
- Run-D.M.C., "Rock Box"
- Public Enemy, "Don't Believe the Hype"
- R.E.M., "The One I Love"
- Nirvana, "Smells Like Teen Spirit"

Reading: Chapter 12, pp. 452-487

UNIT 5: 1990s, 2000s-present

Monday, August 3. **1990s**: 90s Electronic Dance Music, Alternative, and the Rise of Indie Rock

Distilled Thought 4 Due

Listening:
- Paul Oakenfold, "This is Trance"
- The Orb, "Little Fluffy Clouds"
- Daft Punk, "Around the World"
- Tori Amos, "Crucify"
- Pavement, "Shady Lane"

Reading: Chapter 13, pp. 488-537

Tuesday, August 4. **2000s**: Indie (or Not So Indie), Rebirth of Folk Rock, The Future of Electronica?

Last Day of Class: Concert Report Due

Listening:
- Modest Mouse, "Float On"
- Darker My Love, "Together as you Are"
- The Arcade Fire, "Funeral"
- Pantha Du Prince, "This Bliss"
- Future Islands, "Seasons (Waiting On You)"

Reading: Chapter 14 pp. 538-575

Friday, August 7. **FINAL EXAM** (time and place TBA)