

BELLEVUE COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF ETHNIC & CULTURAL STUDIES
CES 210: Ethnic Experiences in Art & Music
HIP-HOP THEORY & CULTURE

Syllabus

“Beyond the walls of intelligence life is defined...”

--Nas

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Quarter: Fall 2013

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Course Description: Hip-hop culture, and rap music in particular, has emerged as the signature medium for transformative expression in the aftermath of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Today hip-hop culture is firmly entrenched within the larger global community. Music, entertainment, fashion, politics, and education are just some of the areas that have become increasingly influenced by hip-hop culture.

This course strives to identify and critically examine the theoretical foundations of hip-hop culture and rap music. Through a rigorous interrogation of the evolution within this genre, students will develop a clear understanding of the conceptual fundamentals of hip-hop philosophy and the community from which it originated. Further consideration will be given to the implications that the background, music, style, and influence of the hip-hop generation have upon a multicultural nation and world.

Course Objective: Since the 1970s, rap music has grown into a steady and undeniable voice of protest, change and celebration for young people worldwide. What gives this art form added significance, however, is that it was created, authored, and today is still dominated primarily by young African American males, who have perennially maintained a status as one of the most disenfranchised groups in the short history of the United States. Rap music and hip-hop culture have provided a platform of expression with mass appeal that has given a voice to a segment of society often left silent. This course will employ the transformative nature of hip-hop culture as a lens for teaching and learning about how important issues such as race, gender and class affect people's lives. The use of this particular lens in approaching these problems will attempt to promote further development of critical analysis and thinking skills within the student, which is the primary goal of this course.

Student Outcomes: The United States is highly unique in the incredible amount of racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity it possesses. Thus, it is imperative that its citizens possess the willingness and ability to relate to and understand individuals with different backgrounds. The inclusive nature and broad appeal of hip-hop culture and rap music make it an ideal conceptual tool to explore the dynamics of oppression within society at large. A successful student in this course will:

1. Increase his or her skill development in critical thinking, reading, and writing
2. Further her or his knowledge base of social issues and ideas within an increased frame of reference
3. Develop the ability to sort and decode messages of transformation and oppression
4. Become familiar with the role and contributions of hip-hop culture to humanity
5. Understand his or her own place as a potential difference maker and positive contributor in the world

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND POINT VALUES

- Class Discussion & Participation-----500 points
- Music Journals-----150 points
- Reflection/Response Papers-----350 points
- Midterm Exam-----100 points
- Final Research Paper-----100 points

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. Class Discussion and Participation: All students are expected to participate in the course regularly. Failure to do so can have an adverse affect on a student's ability to remain informed and connected to the inner workings of the course. During the class it is the student's responsibility to keep a critical eye and ear tuned to the materials presented and topics discussed. Assigned readings should be completed in advance of the time they appear on the course calendar.

In order to earn full participation credit for the week, each student must post initial discussion comments and questions on the week's material by Wednesday (with the exception of the first week of the quarter). In addition, each student must engage in class discussions by posting at least five (5) responses to classmate's postings by the end of the week (Sunday evening.) AND PLEASE NOTE, simply saying "Yes, I agree with you" and "I disagree with you" are not sufficient responses to a post. Back up your points, arguments and opinions by citing course readings and/or your personal experiences.

2. Music Journal: Students will complete 2 Music Journals from 2 audio textbooks containing selected rap artists and songs. The content of this discography comes with two purposes. One is to highlight songs and artists that made original and significant contributions to hip-hop music and culture. The second purpose is to use the music to gain insight into what the important issues of that particular period were, both for hip-hop culture as well as the greater world. Each disc/folder will feature songs that require the student to listen, reflect, and complete brief journal entries for each track. **Journal entries should be approximately 1-3 paragraphs for each song and must include a mixture of summary, critical analysis, and opinion and reaction, and quotes from the song to receive full credit.** Each journal should be turned in as a single document. Lyrics can be found using a variety of internet sources, including www.ohhla.com.

NOTE: Be aware that your connection speed may impact your ability to listen to songs and view video online.

3. Reflection/Response Papers: Throughout the quarter students will interact with various materials focusing on past, current, and future issues involving hip-hop culture, as well as related points. Students will prepare assigned responses to these portions of the curriculum that will generally range between 2-4 pages. Not simply a summary, these assignments are exercises in critical evaluation and discussion on the part of the student.

NOTE: Inclusion of references and/or quotes from assigned course readings is required in order to earn full credit on these assignments.

4. Mid-Term Exam: Details TBA (To Be Announced)

5. Final Research Paper: Instead of a final exam there will be a final research project which will consist of a 5-8 page typed double spaced paper that presents a critical examination and discussion of a hip-hop album. **All albums used for this essay must be cleared through the instructor.** The essay must include four (4) sections:

SECTION 1

- A statement of relevance as to why this album is worthy of this assignment

SECTION 2

- Inclusion and discussion of quotes from at least 3 (three) outside sources covering what was said and/or written about this album (APA or MLA citation style acceptable)

SECTION 3

- Critical analysis of the music (you do not have to review every song if you choose not to) and any relevant pieces involved with the overall project such as guest artists, producer(s), executive producer(s) or any awards that this album may have won or been nominated for

SECTION 4

- Full citation of all sources included in the paper (APA or MLA reference style acceptable)

Be sure to label each section, include a cover page, spell check, correct grammar, etc. The grading rubric that will be used to score the paper is included at the end of the syllabus.

All assignments must be typed, double spaced (music journals can be single spaced), spell checked, and submitted in a timely manner. Late assignments will receive only half credit unless prior arrangements are made.

All headings on written assignments must include the following:

Student's Full Name

Course Title and Number

Date Submitted

A short, concise, and meaningful title

NOTE: There may be language in some course materials that some people might find objectionable. Be that as it may, I wish to state that I feel the issues discussed within these materials are important enough to the culture of the course to warrant this exercise of my discretion.

- All reading, viewing and listening materials will be available on the course website.**

COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK 1:

Reading: Week 1 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #1: Music Autobiography

WEEK 2:

Reading: Week 2 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #2: The Beginnings of Hip-Hop

WEEK 3:

Reading: Week 3 Course Readings

Assignment: Music Journal #1

WEEK 4:

Reading: Week 4 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #3: Destroy All Lines

WEEK 5:

Reading: Week 5 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #4: The Crack Epidemic

WEEK 6:

Mid-Term Exam

WEEK 7:

Reading: Week 7 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #5: The West Coast

WEEK 8:

Reading: Week 8 Course Readings

Assignment: Music Journal #2

WEEK 9:

Reading: Week 9 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #6: Gender & Hip-Hop

WEEK 10:

Reading: Week 10 Course Readings

Assignment: Reflection Paper #7: Seattle Hip-Hop

WEEK 11:

Final Paper Discussion

**Criteria used for evaluating Final Essay in
CES 210 Ethnic Experiences in Art & Music**

1. The extent to which your paper is organized into sections according to the outline provided in the course syllabus.

Rating 0 1 2

2. The extent to which your paper incorporates outside research, theory, and/or established opinions of others.

Rating 0 1 2

3. The extent to which you critically discuss and review your selected topic.

Rating 0 1 2

4. The extent to which you properly cite and give credit for the ideas of the authors and researchers that are incorporated into your paper.

Rating 0 1 2

5. The extent to which your paper is properly presented (including a cover page, use of 12-point font, double spacing, use of correct grammar, proofing, and spelling).

Rating 0 1 2

TOTAL POINTS: _____ out of 100

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Grade Sheet

Name: _____ Qtr/Year Fall 2013

- 1. Attendance & Participation _____ 500 points
- 2. Music Journals _____ 150 points
- 3. Reflection/Response Papers _____ 350 points
- 4. Mid-Term Exam _____ 100 points
- 5. Final Research Paper _____ 100 points

points **TOTAL** _____ 1200

GRADE _____