

BELLEVUE COLLEGE

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DEPARTMENT OF ETHNIC & CULTURAL STUDIES/  
SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION

**ETHN 210: Ethnic Experiences in Art & Music**

**Hip-Hop Theory and Culture**

**Syllabus**

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

-Nas

**Instructor:** Dr. Daudi Abe

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**Quarter:** Fall 2009

**Day/Time:** Mon-Fri 9:30-10:20 am

**Office:** D-110

**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 endeavors 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 diverse groups of young people. 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, class and oppression 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 a 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 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 their 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 their own place as a potential difference maker and positive contributor in the world.

In addition, please respect the course, other students, and yourself by **silencing your cell phones** during class.

### **Textbook/Supplementary Readings and Audio Media:**

1. Toop, D. (2000). Rap Attack #3. Serpent's Tail.
2. Simmons, R. (2001). Life & Def. Crown.
3. Additional selected readings/articles
4. 5 Volume CD Set featuring various rap music selections.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES**

▪ Class Discussion and Participation	100 points
▪ Music Journal	300 points
▪ Reflection/Response Papers	200 points
▪ Midterm Essay	200 points
▪ Final Exam	200 points

**1. Class Discussion and Participation:** All students are expected to attend class regularly. Although it is understood that perfect attendance is not realistic for every student, chronic tardiness and absence will have an adverse affect on a student's ability to remain informed and connected to the inner workings of the course. During class sessions, it is the student's responsibility to keep a critical eye and ear tuned to the materials presented and topics discussed. As not every student is comfortable offering comments and opinions in a large group setting, there will be sufficient opportunity for students to engage in dialogue and discussion in small and mini-group situations.

Students also are expected to remain current with course reading and listening assignments. Assigned readings should be completed in advance of the time they appear on the course calendar. Reading preparedness on the part of students contributes to richer understanding of lectures and deeper class discussions. Student interactions with assigned materials should help to develop a sense of the major themes and concepts contained within.

**2. Music Journal:** Students will be assigned a series of 5 Compact Discs containing selected rap artists and songs available for check out from the Media Lab in the library. 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. The discography will be chronologically arranged to cover hip-hop's beginnings and continue to the present. Each disc will feature tracks that require the student to listen, reflect, and complete brief journal entries for each song. Each journal entry should be 1-3 paragraphs and must include a mixture of summary, critical analysis, and opinion and reaction. **Make sure you use quotes from each song to help make your point** (one resource for lyrics is [www.ohhla.com](http://www.ohhla.com)).

NOTE: For this assignment, every student is required to write a review for every song on every disc.

**3. Reflection/Response Papers:** Throughout the quarter guest speakers, video presentations and special readings will be presented to the class. Various members of the hip-hop community will serve as guest speakers discussing current and future issues surrounding rap music and hip-hop culture, as well as related issues. Videos will include documentaries and movies that capture and express the spirit of the culture. Students will prepare critical responses to these portions of the curriculum that will generally range anywhere from 2-4 pages. **In writing these assignments, you are expected reference course readings to support your point whenever possible.**

**4. Midterm Essay:** The mid-term will consist of a 5-8 page typed double spaced paper that presents a critical examination and discussion of a hip-hop related movie. **All films 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 movie is worthy of this assignment.

### SECTION 2

- Inclusion and discussion of quotes from at least 4 (four) outside sources covering what was said and/or written about this movie (APA or MLA citation style acceptable).

### SECTION 3:

- Critical analysis of the storyline and relevant pieces involved with the overall project such as actors, director, producer(s), executive producer(s), the soundtrack, or any awards that this film 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 exam is included at the end of the syllabus.**

**5. Final Exam:** The final exam will be an essay question that will require a blue book. Course readings will be available for use as a resource in answering the question. The scheduled date and time for the final in this course will be announced.

**\*\*All assignments must be typed, double spaced (music journals can be single spaced), spell checked, stapled, and submitted in a timely manner. Late assignments will receive 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 within this course that some people could find objectionable. Be that as it may, the issues discussed within these materials are important enough to the culture of the course to warrant this exercise of my discretion.

**Plagiarism:** Use of another person's words or ideas as your own without proper citation is plagiarism. It is a serious offense in any educational setting and can result in expulsion. Suspected cases of plagiarism are reviewed by the Conduct and Standards Committee, which deals with academic/student misconduct.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you need course adaptations or accommodation because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with your instructor, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with your instructor as soon as possible.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE:

### WEEK 1:

**Reading:** Supplemental readings: “The Sociology & History of African-Americans” by Dr. Al Black & “Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America”

**Assignment:** Reflection Paper #1: Music Autobiography

### WEEK 2:

**Reading:** Toop Chapters 1-5

**Assignment:** Reflection Paper #2: The Socio-Political Roots of Hip-Hop

### WEEK 3:

**Reading:** Toop Chapters 6-10

**Assignment:** Disc #1 Music Journal

### WEEK 4:

**Reading:** Toop Chapters 11-13 / Supplemental readings: Graffiti articles

**Assignment:** Reflection Paper #3: Destroy All Lines

### WEEK 5:

**Reading:** Toop Chapters 14-15

**Assignment:** Disc #2 Music Journal

### WEEK 6:

**Assignment:** Mid-Term Essay & Discussion

### WEEK 7:

**Reading:** Simmons Chapters 1-5

**Assignment:** Disc #3 Music Journal

### WEEK 8:

**Reading:** Supplemental reading: “Bad Sistas” by Dr. Tricia Rose & “The Venus Hip-Hop and the Pink Ghetto” by Imani Perry

**Assignment:** Reflection Paper #4: Women, Sexuality & Hip-Hop

### WEEK 9:

**Reading:** Simmons Chapters 6-10

**Assignment:** Disc #4 Music Journal

### WEEK 10:

**Reading:** Supplemental reading: “Thug Radio”

**Assignment:** Reflection Paper #5: Beef & The Economics of Hip-Hop

### WEEK 11:

**Reading:** Simmons Chapters 11-16

**Assignment:** Disc #5 Music Journal

**ETHN 210 MID TERM**  
**Criteria used for evaluating Mid-Term Essay in**  
**Hip-Hop Theory & Culture**

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

Rating	1	2	3	4
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2. The extent to which your paper incorporates outside research, theory, and/or established opinions of others.

Rating	1	2	3	4
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3. The extent to which you critically discuss and review your selected topic.

Rating	1	2	3	4
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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	1	2	3	4
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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	1	2	3	4
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TOTAL POINTS: \_\_\_\_\_ out of 200

# ETHN 210: Ethnic Experiences in Art & Music

## Grade Sheet

Name:\_\_\_\_\_ Qtr/Year\_\_\_\_\_

1. Attendance & Participation \_\_\_\_\_ 100 points

2. Music Journal \_\_\_\_\_ 300 points

3. Reflection/Response Papers \_\_\_\_\_ 200 points

4. Midterm Essay \_\_\_\_\_ 200 points

5. Final Exam \_\_\_\_\_ 200 points

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_1000 points

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_



**PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION**  
**Revised Summer 2007**

Cheating, Stealing and Plagiarizing\*

Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue Community College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Dean of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue Community College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Dean of Student Services.

Incomplete

If a student fails to complete all the required work for a course, an instructor may assign the grade of Incomplete ("I"). The student must complete the coursework by the end of the next quarter, or receive the assigned letter grade (usually an "F").

F Grade

Students who fail a course will receive a letter grade of "F."

Final Examination Schedule

The Social Science Division will adhere to the final examination schedule as stated in the BCC Schedule. Final examinations will be held at the end of each quarter at fixed times. Instructors will not give examinations in advance of the regular schedule. A student who is absent from any examination held at any time during the quarter may forfeit the right to make up the examination. If, for illness or some other circumstance beyond the student's control, the student is unable to be present at any scheduled examination and has contacted the instructor on a timely basis, the student may be permitted to take such examination at a time designated by the instructor.

Withdrawal From Class

College policy states that students must formally withdraw from a class by the end of the seventh week of the quarter (Registration Office, B125). If a student has not withdrawn by that date, an appropriate letter grade will be assigned for the course.

Hardship Withdrawal

Instructors may assign the grade of "HW" (hardship withdrawal) at their discretion in the event that a student cannot complete the coursework due to extreme and exceptional circumstances. Students may also contact the Enrollment Services office BEFORE grades are assigned in cases of hardship.

Students Who Require Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who have accommodation needs are encouraged to meet with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office located in B132 (telephone 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110), to establish their eligibility for accommodation. The DSS office will provide each eligible student with an accommodation letter. Students who require accommodation in class should review the DSS accommodation letter with each instructor during the first week of the quarter.

Students with mobility challenges who may need assistance in case of an emergency situation or evacuation should register with Disability Support Services, and review those needs with the instructor as well.

Distribution of Grades

Grades will not be posted in the Social Science Division or in faculty offices, and secretaries will not give out grades. Students should access their grades through the BCC Web site.

#### Return of Papers and Tests

Paper and/or Scantron score sheet returns will be arranged in the following ways ONLY: by mail, if student supplies the instructor with stamped, self-addressed envelope (with appropriate postage); or by the instructor designating a time and place whereby the student may retrieve his/her papers. Unclaimed papers and/or Scantron score sheets must be kept by the instructor for a minimum of sixty (60) instructional days following the end of the quarter.

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*\*If you are accused of cheating, stealing exams and/or plagiarism, there is a Bellevue Community College Student Discipline and Appeals Procedure (the right to due process) which you may pursue. Contact the office of Division Chair (A251), the Dean of Student Services (B231A) or the Associated Student Body (C212) for information regarding the appeals process.*