

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DIVISION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF ETHNIC & CULTURAL STUDIES

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

Quarter: Spring 2009

Contact: (425) 546-2341

Office: D-110

dabe@bellevuecollege.edu

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 racism, oppression, and poverty 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 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.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

- Class Discussion & Participation 200 points
- Music Journal 300 points
- Reflection Papers 200 points
- Midterm Exam 150 points
- Final Exam 150 points

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

1. Class Discussion and Participation: All students are expected to participate in the course (on-site and online) 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. **An active presence in online discussion forums on a weekly basis is required to earn full participation points.** Assigned readings should be completed in advance of the time they appear on the course calendar.

2. Music Journal: Students will complete 3 Music Journals from 5 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. The discography will be chronologically arranged to cover hip-hop's beginnings and continue to the present. 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 per song** and include a mixture of summary, critical analysis, and opinion and reaction, and quotes from the song to help make the point.

1. Music Journal 1= all 15 songs from Disc 1.

2. Music Journal 2=16 songs of your choosing from Discs 2 & 3 (8 songs from each disc).

3. Music Journal 3=16 songs of your choosing from Discs 4 & 5 (8 songs from each disc).

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

3. Reflection 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. **Reflection papers are expected to include quotes and/or references from the readings they are based on.**

4. Midterm Examination: 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 exam 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 in the form of an essay question given during finals week. Course readings will be allowed and available for use as a resource in answering the question. The use of quotes from these materials is expected. 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, 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.

Textbooks/ Supplementary Audio Media:

1. Toop, D. (2000). *Rap Attack 3: African Rap to Global Hip-Hop*. Serpent's Tail.
2. Simmons, R. (2001). *Life and Def*. Crown.
3. 5 Volume Audio Textbook CD/Folders featuring various rap music selections
4. Supplemental readings / articles (throughout the quarter)

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1:

Reading: Toop Chapters 1-6

Assignment: Reflection Paper #1: Musical Autobiography

WEEK 2:

Reading: Excerpt from "The Sociology & History of African-Americans" by Dr. Al Black / "Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America" by Richard Majors & Janet Mancini Billson

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

WEEK 3:

Reading: Toop Chapters 7-11

Assignment: Reflection Paper #3: Critical Analysis of "Rap Attack" Chapters 1-11

WEEK 4:

Reading: Toop Chapters 12-15

Assignment: Music Journal #1 (Disc 1)

WEEK 5:

Reading: "The Dark Alliance" series of articles

Assignment: Reflection Paper #4: The Crack Epidemic

WEEK 6:

MID TERM EXAM

WEEK 7:

Reading: Simmons Chapters 1-6

Assignment: Music Journal #2 (Discs 2 & 3)

WEEK 8:

Reading: Simmons Chapters 7-12 / Excerpt from "Black Noise" by Dr. Tricia Rose & "The Venus Hip-Hop and the Pink Ghetto" by Imani Perry

Assignment: Reflection Paper #5: Women, Sexuality & Hip-Hop

WEEK 9:

Reading: Simmons Chapters 13-16

Assignment: Reflection Paper #6: Critical Review of "Life & Def" by Russell Simmons

WEEK 10:

Reading: Article: "Beef & Bullets"

Assignment: Reflection Paper #7: Beef and the Economics of Hip-Hop

WEEK 11:

Assignment: Music Journal #3 (Discs 4 & 5)

ETHN 210: Hip-Hop Theory & Culture

Grade Sheet

Name: _____ Qtr/Year _____

1. Attendance & Participation _____ 200 points

2. Music Journal _____ 300 points

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------------|
| 3. Reflection/Response Papers | _____ | 200 points |
| 4. Midterm Examination | _____ | 150 points |
| 5. Final Exam | _____ | 150 points |
| TOTAL | _____ | 1000 points |
| GRADE | _____ | |

ETHN 210 MID TERM

Criteria used for evaluating Mid-Term Examination in Hip-Hop Theory & Culture

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

Rating 1 2 3

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

Rating 1 2 3

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

Rating 1 2 3

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

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

TOTAL POINTS: _____ out of 150

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.

*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.