

Gender and Sexuality in Music

[syllabus for an undergraduate course for a mix of majors, ██████████

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do we talk about gender and sexuality in music and musical culture writ large? This course explores recent approaches to the study of gender and sexuality in music, introducing students to scholarship and media from various disciplines and publication platforms (academic writing from in and out of music studies, journalism, podcasts, documentary film, animation, poetry, and, of course, music). Taking an intersectional approach to gender and sexuality – not forgetting the work of race and other categories of social difference, the course largely draws on examples from popular music. Active class participation, short written responses to readings, a collaborative presentation, and a final paper make up the coursework.

The course does not require knowledge of music notation.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The broad aim of this course is to develop the critical thinking (and listening) skills of students, such that they become sensitive to the work of gender and sexuality in music. Students will encounter a language and a vocabulary for speaking about gender and sexuality, and study music fundamentals (elements of rhythm, melody, timbre, texture, harmony, etc.) to be able to substantiate arguments with some level of musical detail. Drawing on the diverse approaches of authors on the syllabus, I encourage students to identify topics of interest to them, develop coursework on those topics, and cultivate their own writing style. Writing

COURSE POLICIES

Abide by the ██████████ Academic Integrity Policy: ██████████
██████████

Deadlines: All assignments will be announced well ahead of time; therefore, deadlines are fairly strict. I give extensions in cases of extenuating circumstances (e.g. extended illness, family emergency).

GRADING

25% Class participation

- An “A” for class participation will be earned by a student who...
- ... always arrives on time having done the assigned listening and reading
- ... asks questions, debates other students, makes connections to material outside of the course

...acts respectfully towards other students and the instructor at all times.*

*The course requires discussion of gender, sexuality, race, class, etc. Hateful comments or verbal attacks will not be tolerated *and* will affect your grade.

If jumping into class discussion is difficult for you, show your commitment in other ways: you may volunteer to share your short response, engage with a peer's response, or email me about an article/resource for the class. Depending on the liveliness of discussion, I may or may not call on students. Unannounced in-class writing assignments will also count towards the Class Participation grade.

15% Reading Responses

Short responses to readings submitted online a day ahead of class.

30% Collaborative Presentation

On a musical site viewed through the prism of gender and sexuality studies.

30% Essay

On a recorded piece of music, a music video, or a film scene featuring a piece of music.

Academic Support Services: You are invited to address anything (reading comprehension, listening strategies, writing tips, workload) in Office Hours with me. Equally, I highly encourage *all* students to take advantage of the Writing Center.

Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments

1 Introduction to the Course

HW: Write a one-page musical autobiography

2 Fundamentals of Music

Timbre, melody, rhythm, texture, harmony.

3-4 Fundamentals of Gender and Culture

Musical autobiography due

Raymond Williams, "Culture," in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture* (1976)

Fred E. Maus, "Music, Gender, and Sexuality" (2011)

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gendered Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1990)

5 Music as Technology of Self

Tia DeNora, "Music as a Technology of Self," in *Music in Everyday Life* (2000)

Suzanne Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight" (1994)

LISTEN: Young M.A., *Herstory* EP (2017)

6 Voice and Gender

Clifford Naas and Scott Brave, *Wired For Speech: Activating the Human-Computer Relationship*, short excerpt on how we classify vocal gender

Susan McClary, "This is Not a Story My People Tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson," in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, Sexuality* (1991)

Chris Cutler, "Plunderphonia" (2004)

LISTEN: Laurie Anderson, selected music; Dolly Parton, "The Great Pretender"; John Oswald, "Pretender"

7 Black Women's Voices

Farah Jasmine Griffin, "When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Women's Vocality" (2004)

WATCH: Beyonce's Superbowl halftime performance (2017),

8 Gaga Feminism

Jack Halberstam, "Preface" and "Gaga Feminism for Beginners," in *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of the Normal* (2012)

Jack Halberstam, "No Church in the Wild: Queer Anarchy and Gaga Feminism" (2013) 75 min lecture video.

WATCH: Lady Gaga, 2011 MTV VMAs performance as "Jo Calderone"

9 Performing Girlhood

Kyra Gaunt, "Introduction," in *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-dutch to Hip-hop* (2006)

WATCH in class: Irene Chagall, *Let's Get the Rhythm* documentary

10 Kawaii

Sarah Keith and Diane Hughes, "Embodied Kawaii: Girls' Voices in J-Pop" (2016)

Lindsay Zolads, "Hatsune Miku Is a Piece of Software. She May Also Be the Future of Music," *New York Magazine* (2014)

WATCH: Hatsune Miku "The World is Mine" music video

11 Sexual Politics

Paragraph on presentation topic due (work in pairs)

Tricia Rose, "Bad Sistas: Black Women Rappers and Sexual Politics in Rap Music," in *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994)

WATCH: Byron Hurt, *Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006) documentary

12 Sexual Politics 2

Jan Fairley, "Dancing back to front: regeton, sexuality, gender and transnationalism in Cuba" (2006)

Spencer Kornhaber interview with Petra R. Rivera-Rideau (author of *Reggaetón: The Cultural Politics of Race in Puerto Rico*), "'Despacito' and the Revenge of Reggaeton" (2017)

LISTEN: selection of Dominican and Cuban regeton; Luis Fonsi, "Despacito feat. Daddy Yankee"

13 Memorials

Bob Ostertag, "All the Rage, Spiral, and Pantychrist," in *Creative Life: Music, Politics, People, and Machines* (2009)

Paul Attinello, "Closeness and Distance: Songs about AIDS" (2006)

LISTEN: Bob Ostertag, *All the Rage* (1993); Klaus Nomi, *Death [Dido's Lament]* (1982); Janelle Monae, "Hell You Talmbout [Say Her Name]" (2015)

14 Queering Country

Martha Mockus, "Queer Thoughts on Country Music and k.d. lang" (1994)

Nadine Hubbs, "'Jolene,' Genre, and the Everyday Homoerotics of Country Music: Dolly Parton's Loving Address of the Other Woman" (2015)

LISTEN: k.d. lang, selected music; Dolly Parton, "Jolene"

15-16 Student Presentations

17 Afrofuturism and Subjectivity

Essay topics due

Neil Drumming, "We Are in the Future," episode of *This American Life* (2017)

August Brown, "'Hamilton' star Daveed Diggs bolts from the 'popular to the fringe' with experimental hip-hop act Clipping" (2016)

LISTEN: Clipping, "The Deep"

WATCH: DUST primer on Afrofuturism with Little Simz, Episodes 1, 3, 4, and 5 on Sun Ra, George Clinton, Jimmi Hendrix, and Missy Elliott on YouTube

18 Afrofuturism and Subjectivity 2

Octavia E. Butler, "The Monophobic Response," *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction From the African Diaspora*.

Daylanne K. English and Alvin Kim, "Now We Want Our Funk Cut: Janelle Monáe's Neo-Afrofuturism" (2013)

LISTEN: Janelle Monae, selected music

19 White Women and Black Expression

Wesley Morris and Jenna Worthman, "'Confederate,' 'Detroit' and Who Owns Stories about Blackness," *Still Processing* New York Times podcast

bell hooks, "Madonna: Plantation Mistress or Soul Sister?" (1992)

Brittney Cooper, "Iggy Azalea's post-racial mess: America's oldest race tale, remixed," *Salon* (2014)

LISTEN: Madonna, "Like a Prayer" video

20 Orientalism and Gender

Hisama, "Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellencamp, David Bowie, and John Zorn"

Ruth Tam, "How David Bowie's 'China Girl' Used Racism to Fight Racism," *Washington Post* (2016)

20 Orientalism and Gender (Cont'd.)

LISTEN: David Bowie, "China Girl"

21 Rock and Masculinity

Marion Leonard, "Rock and Masculinity," (2006)

Will Straw, "Sizing Up Record Collections: Gender and Connoisseurship in Rock Music Culture," (1997)

22 Gender Inequity in Jazz

AJ Johnson, "Trumpet Men: Performances of Jazz Masculinity" (2010)

Lara Pellegrinelli, "A DIY Guide to the History of Women in Jazz," *NPR.org* (2013)

WATCH in class: Göran Olsson, *The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* (2011)

22 Sexual Assault

Elizabeth Keenan, "Asking for It: Rape, Postfeminism, and Alternative Music in the 1990s" (2015)

Matt Alt, "Pharrell Williams's Lolicon Video," *The New Yorker* (2014)

LISTEN: music examples in Keenan's article; Pharrell Williams, "It Girl" video; Lady Gaga, "Til It Happens To You"

23 Review & Loose Ends

Essays Due