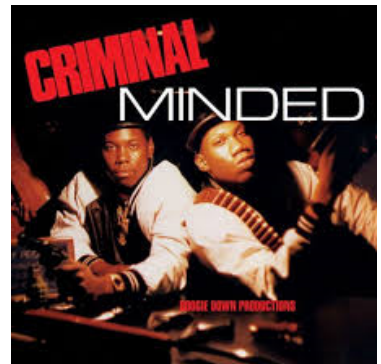
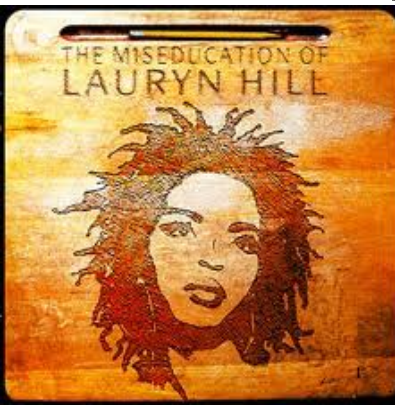


THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF HIP HOP

AAS 254

Fall 2018



“So, When did *You* Fall in Love With Hip Hop?”

Professor

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

“So, when did you fall in love with Hip Hop?” This question, posed by an unseen interviewer to a series of Hip Hop luminaries, drives the opening scene of the film *Brown Sugar*. A range of prominent figures in Hip Hop respond to the query in a series of cameos during which they recount their earliest encounters with Hip Hop, list the artists and songs that sparked their his passion for it, and proclaim the transformative power it has had in their lives. The montage ends with one artist explaining, simply, that when Hip Hop entered into his life “it was freedom.” Released in 2002, the *Brown Sugar* is something of a coming of age story, both for Hip Hop culture itself and for the generation of young African Americans who grew up with it and came to adulthood during its remarkable rise in the final quarter of the twentieth century. This scene sets the stage for the film’s plot, which revolves around two lifelong friends, one a journalist and the other a record executive, who as adults make their living as experts on Hip Hop, the culture that they came to love as adolescents. Their shared affection for Hip Hop formed the bond that made them childhood friends, but as adults they find themselves pondering changes within Hip Hop culture while also facing changes in their relationship to each other. As the story unfolds they confront difficult choices involving artistic and personal integrity, racial and cultural authenticity, and the growing commercial appeal of black cultural production. Ultimately, the film poses the question “when did you fall in love with Hip Hop?” to urge these Hip Hop enthusiasts—the two main characters of the movie and the generation they represent—to stop and reflect on Hip Hop’s past as they grapple with its ever changing relationship to the larger society.

This course does the same thing by turning the question around to ask the nation as a whole: when did *you* fall in love with Hip Hop? We will seek to understand how and why Hip Hop grew from a small subculture practiced by black youth in economically and socially marginalized sections of New York City, to its current place of cultural prominence, commercial and artistic influence, and broad acceptance in American culture. Of course, Hip Hop has had its critics and detractors—mainly from forces outside the culture, but also from some voices of dissidence and critique within it—and it has generated considerable debate and controversy. This too is an important part of the story of Hip Hop’s unlikely rise. Accordingly, we will identify and interrogate the main controversies and debates in and about Hip Hop over the last three decades, among them issues of violence, misogyny and sexism, use of the “b-word” and the “n-word,” and glorification of so-called “ghetto culture.” As we explore this history, we will also examine the ways that Hip Hop has evolved over its four decades—aesthetically, artistically, commercially, and as a culture. A central theme throughout the semester will be how artists, fans, and other participants in the culture have understood this evolution—and how they envision or try to shape its future.

ACCESSIBILITY

It is my intention that all aspects of this course are fully accessible to all students in the class, and I am committed to ensuring that each student has the opportunity to fully participate in, contribute to, and benefit from all aspects of the class. This commitment includes students with disabilities. If you think you might need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class and out-of-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://ssd.umich.edu>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

EXPECTATIONS

It is essential that each student in the course maintain a commitment to engage the material and a willingness to share ideas in a spirit of mutual respect and collaborative learning. Accordingly, each student in the course is expected to arrive each day (lecture and discussion) fully prepared to participate in class. This means that you have completed the assigned reading (and viewing) and you are ready to listen to and share with your classmates.

In addition to your intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm, you should bring these things with you to class everyday: 1) hard copies of what we read for the day; 2) a notebook of some sort

containing your notes, questions, and other thoughts that you have about the course material; and
3) pen and paper to take notes and complete the In-class Response.

There are also some things you should not bring or use in class, unless you clear it with the professor before hand. These things are: cell phone, a tablet, laptop, or similar electronic devices. If you need to use one of these devices to fully participate in class, let me know. If not, leave them at home (or turned off and in your pocket, backpack, etc.).

TEXTS

All of the assigned readings for this course are listed in the course schedule and are to be found on the course Canvas site. You are not required to purchase any books for the course.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

In conjunction with the course readings, and building upon your presence and participation in class (lecture and discussion section), you are to complete three types of writing assignments over the course of the semester, as listed below. You will be given specific details and guidelines for these assignments in class and on Canvas.

- 1) Weekly Liner Notes
- 2) *The Source* Magazine Assignment
- 3) Hip Hop History Workshop Assignment

Your grade for the course will be based your grades in your discussion section (which includes the Liner Notes), on the Source assignment, and on the Workshop assignment. The three are equally weighted components of your final grade.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS

(Readings are to be completed by the class session on the day listed)

Week 1 “When did *you* fall in love with Hip Hop?”

Sept 4

Sept 6 Marcus Reeves, "Generation Remixed: Post-nationalism and the Black Culture Shuffle"

Week 2 Where Did Hip Hop Come From? Contexts and Antecedents

Sept 11 Jabari Asim, “Founding Fictions” (chapter 1 of *The N-Word*)

Jabari Asim, “Nigger vs. Nigga” (chapter 15 of *The N-Word*)

Graeme Thomson, "Hustler's Convention: Rap's Great Lost Album"

Sept 13 H. Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die!* (Introduction and Chapter 2)

Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (p. 1-13, 177-183, 220-225)

Week 3 The Four Elements, Born in the Bronx

Sept 18 Nelson George, “Post Soul” (from *Hip Hop America*)

Sept 19 Hip Hop" Jeff Chang, "Making a Name: How DJ Kool Herc Lost His Accent and Started Hip Hop"

“Rubble Kings” (film)

Sept 20 Jeff Chang, "Soul Salvation: The Mystery and Faith of Africa Bambatataa"

Jeff Chang, "Furious Styles: The Evolution of Style in the Seven-Mile World"

Week 4 “Here’s a little story that must be told”: From “Rapper’s Delight” to “Wild Style”

Sept 25 Christina Veran, "First Ladies: Fly Females Who Rocked the Mic in the '70s and 80s"

Jeff Chang, "The World is Ours: The Survival and Transformation of Bronx Style"

Sept 27 Marcus Reeves, "The New Afro-Urban Movement: Rap Redefines the Voice of America's Chocolate Cities"

Week 5 Two Turntables and a Microphone: The Emcee Takes Center Stage and Hip Hop Starts to Sell

Oct 2 Jeff Chang, "1982: Rapture in Regan's America (ch. 9 of Can't Stop, Won't Stop)

"Wild Style" (film)

Oct 4 Darryl McDaniels, "Ten Ways Not to Commit Suicide: A Memoir: (chapters 3 and 4)

Marcus Reeves, "Black Pop in a B-Boy Stance: Run-D.M.C." (ch. 3 of Somebody Scream!)

"Krush Groove" (film)

Week 6 The "Golden Age" of Hip Hop ...

Oct 9 "The Golden Age, 1985-1992"

"The Golden Age of Hip Hop"

Oct 11 Nelson George, "Black Owned?"

Nelson George, "The Permanent Business"

Week 7 ... and the Crack Era

Oct 16 ***Fall Study Break-No Class***

Oct 18 Terry Williams, "The Crack-Cocaine Context"

Barry Michael Cooper, "Crack, a Tiffany Drug at Woolworth Prices"

Craig Reinerman and Harry G. Levine, "The Crack Attack: Politics and Media in the Crack Scare"

"Planet Rock: The Story of Hip Hop and the Crack Generation" (video)

Week 8 Becoming a Hip Hop Nation: Commercialization, Controversy, and Consciousness in the 1990s

Oct 23 Kimberle' Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew"

Ben Westhoff, "Luke Campbell"

Oct 25 Nelson George, "Where My Eyes Can See"

Week 9 State of the Hip Hop Nation: Misogyny, Violence, and Artistic Expression in the 1990s (and beyond)

Oct 30 Marcus Reeves, "Stumbling Through Black Power Revisited: Public Enemy"

Shawan M. Worsley, "Loving Hip Hop When It Denies Your Humanity: Feminist Struggles and *The Source*"

Nov 1 Marcus Reeves, "Niggas Selling Attitude: NWA"

Week 10 "What you know about the Dirty South?" The Reshaping of Hip Hop

Nov 6 Tony Green, "The Dirty South"

Ben Westhoff, "Outkast, Goodie Mob, and Organized Noise"

Nov 8 Ben Westhoff, "Cash Money, No Limit, and Juvenile"

Ben Westhoff, "Timbaland and the Neptunes"

Week 11 The Life and Death of Hip Hop: What Tupac Shakur and Christopher Wallace Meant (and continue to mean) to Hip Hop

Nov 13 Marcus Reeves, "The Myth of Thug Power: Tupac Shakur"

Nov 15 Marcus Reeves, "Ghetto Fab Rising: The Notorious B. I. G. and Sean Puffy Combs"

Week 12 It's Official: Hip Hop's Evolution from Margin to Mainstream at the End of the 20th Century

- Nov 20 *Somebody Scream*, Chapter 10
Ben Westhoff, "Lil Wayne" (from *Dirty South*)
Joycelyn A. Wilson, "Tip Drills, Strip Clubs, and Representations in the Media: Cultural Reflections and Criticisms from the POV of an African American Female Southern Hip Hop Scholar"
- Nov 22 ***NO CLASS: Thanksgiving ***

Week 13 "Re: Definition": Producers, Mixtapes, and Moguls Shaping Hip Hop in the 21st Century

- Nov 27 Karen R. Good, "Ill Na Nas, Goddesses, and Drama Mamas"
Selwyn Seyfu Hinds, "The Rationalization of Lauryn Hill"
"My Mic Sounds Nice: The Truth About Women in Hip Hop (partial)" (video)
- Nov 29 Marcus Reeves, "The Ice Age: Jay Z"
Joe Coscarelli, "The Man Behind the Music for Jay-Z's '4;44'"
"How Jay-Z Avoided a Hard Knock Life" (video)
"Last Word on Jay-Z's 4:44"

Week 14 The Mixer, the Music Video, and the Internet: Technological Change and the Evolution of Hip Hop

- Dec 4 Noisey, "The Evolution of J Dilla"
Marcus Reeves, "Vanilla Nice: Eminem"
"Brown Sugar" (film)
- Dec 6 Ben Westhoff, "Lil Wayne: Gangster Weirdo"
"Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes"

Week 15 “If we talking love and Hip Hop, I’m thinking about Brown Sugar”:
Contemplating Hip Hop’s Past and Future

Dec 11