Course Description: this class introduces different theoretical and analytical approaches to the study of popular music. We will examine form, phrase structure, pitch syntax, rhythm and meter, texture, timbre, recording techniques, and other parameters, in order to understand how these elements are organized in popular music and how they combine to create expressivity and meaning.

Prerequisites: this course is open to graduate and advanced undergraduate students. Students should have completed Theory & Analysis 4 (chromatic harmony) and Musicianship 4 or the equivalent.

Coursework: consists of weekly readings, participation in class discussions, brief reading-response papers and analysis assignments, a complete transcription of at least 30 seconds of a song, and a final 10-12 pg. paper and 15-20 min. presentation based on this paper. The final project may be analytical, either an in-depth study of a song or a comparison of two versions of a song, or theoretical, demonstrating a paradigm or idea with multiple examples.

Course Materials: readings, recordings, scores and handouts will be on the MyCourses website.

Evaluation: course grades will be determined according to the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading discussions</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription project</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written coursework</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance: I expect you to attend every class and to be on time. Unexcused absences or excessive lateness demonstrate that you have not made a commitment to this class, and will adversely affect your final grade. Acceptable excuses include documented illness, personal or family emergency, religious observances, or university-sanctioned activities. Late work will be accepted up to one week after the due date, without penalty if following an excused absence.

Language: in accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic misconduct, which disturbs the mutual respect between instructors and students, and poisons the atmosphere of a classroom. Those who commit academic fraud are robbed of the educational experiences that are the primary purpose of college study. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. See www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/ for more information.

Class Philosophy (adapted from David Brackett’s syllabus): I do not have all the answers, I do not agree with the arguments made in all of the readings, I do not find all approaches to the subject equally valid, and nor should you. I have selected the readings for the issues that they raise, the ways that they intersect with other class readings, and to expose you to a range of approaches. Your critical reactions to the week’s readings should form a major component of each class session, and no reading should be immune from your scrutiny!
COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

**week 1: introduction and overview**
Allan F. Moore, introduction to *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. Moore

**week 2: transcription**
Peter Winkler, “Writing Ghost Notes: the Politics and Poetics of Transcription” in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, and Culture*, ed. Schwartz, Siegal, and Kassabian
Anne Danielsen and Fernando Benadon, Conversation 3 in “Forum on Transcription,” *twentieth-century music* 11/1 (2014)

**week 3: form and phrase structure**
John Covach, “Form in Rock Music: A Primer” in *Engaging Music*, ed. Stein
Trevor de Clercq, “Sections and Successions in Successful Rock Songs” (PhD diss., Eastman), end-of-chapter summaries
analysis: diagram the forms of The Beatles, “Can’t Buy Me Love” and Aerosmith, “Dream On”
  - diagram the phrase structures of Dolly Parton, “Jolene” and Outkast, “Hey Ya”

**week 4: pitch structures**
analysis: harmonic analyses of Prince, “Little Red Corvette”; Rush, “Freewill”; and
  - Soundgarden, “Black Hole Sun”

**transcription projects due**

**week 5: meter and rhythm**
analysis: rhythmic and metric analyses of The Beatles, “Good Morning, Good Morning”;
  - Led Zeppelin, “Kashmir”; and Radiohead, “Pyramid Song”
week 6: dance and embodiment
analysis: music/dance relationships in videos for Michael Jackson, “Thriller” and Feist, “1234”

week 7: semiotic analysis
Allan F. Moore, Song Means, ch. 8
Eric Clarke, ch. 2 on Jimi Hendrix’s ‘Star Spangled Banner’ in Ways of Listening
analysis: semiotic readings of The Beatles, “A Day in the Life” and Queen, “Bohemian Rhapsody”

topic proposals due

week 8: texture and timbre
Allan F. Moore, Song Means, ch. 2
Ciro Scotto, “The Structural Role of Distortion in Hard Rock and Heavy Metal,” Music Theory Spectrum 38/1 (forthcoming 2016)
analysis: diagram textural and timbral changes in The Beach Boys, “Good Vibrations” and Nirvana, “Smells Like Teen Spirit”

week 9: recording techniques
Nicholas Cook, “Methods for Analysing Recordings” in Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music
Albin Zak, “Getting Sounds: The Art of Sound Engineering” in Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music
analysis: recorded space in Jimi Hendrix, “All Along the Watchtower” and Pink Floyd, “Money”

week 10: covers, versions, and mashups
Lori Burns, “Joanie’ Get Angry: k. d. lang’s Feminist Revision” in Understanding Rock, ed. Covach and Boone
analysis: stylistic comparison and interpretation of various versions of “Stairway to Heaven”

week 11: student presentations

week 12: student presentations

week 13: student presentations

last day of class: FINAL PAPERS DUE