SEMINAR IN MUSIC THEORY: ANALYSIS OF POPULAR MUSIC
MUSIC 7641X/4900
SYLLABUS

Instructor: Tom Johnson
Email: johnson.tom.g@gmail.com
Office: Roosevelt Extension, Room 401
Office Hours: M. 5:30-6:30p or by appointment.

I hereby agree that, in order to take this class, I must read this syllabus and must abide by the information herein. Any information provided on the syllabus is required knowledge for me, the student. I will check the syllabus and schedule before asking the instructor about any due dates, requirements, meeting times, or anything else that is on this syllabus.

Signature:

Description:
Overview of techniques for the analysis of popular music since 1950, including analysis of form, harmony, timbre, rhythm, style and genre. “Popular music” is defined broadly, covering Top 40, hip hop, R&B, soul, blues, rock, disco, indie, metal, and others. Reading and written work will be assigned weekly. The course will culminate in a final analysis project and a conference-style presentation.

Course Goals:
➢ To gain competency in traditional music theoretical skills for the analysis of popular music.
➢ To produce a major project on the analysis of a particular track, artist, or repertoire.
➢ To build skills necessary for public discourse on popular music.

Readings:
I will provide electronic copies of most readings on Blackboard. There will be a few occasions when you’ll need to track down an article or two on your own through JSTOR or on Music Theory Online.

Many of our readings will come from this text, which I suggest you purchase:

Materials:
➢ I highly recommend having access to Spotify, where I will create a course playlist folder.
➢ Audacity: http://www.audacityteam.org/download/
➢ Audio Timeliner: http://www.singanewsong.org/audiotimeliner/download.html
➢ Any kind of notation software. Finale Notepad is a decent free option: https://www.finalemusic.com/products/finalemusic/resources/
➢ Students will need access to a computer and their BC Portal for Blackboard.

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading responses and participation: 30%</th>
<th>Traditional Analysis: 10%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper: 25%</td>
<td>Revised/Expanded project: 15%</td>
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<td>Final Presentation: 10%</td>
<td>Annotated bibliography assignment: 10%</td>
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Grading Rubric:

Individual grades will be given for the annotated bibliography, the traditional and expanded analyses, and each part of your final project. The general rubric is as follows:

A – Excellent work.  
A- – Very good work, cogent arguments.  
B+ – Good work, with some gaps in reasoning.  
B – Completed work, questionable mastery.  
B- – Completed work but seriously flawed.  
C – Incomplete work with many errors.  
N/C – Unacceptable in completeness, scope, depth.

Attendance:

Attendance at all classes is expected. We only meet 14 times this semester, so your attendance at every session is of the utmost importance. It is also imperative that you are on time to class. Please notify me as soon as possible if you will not be in class.

Integrity:

All assignments, exams, etc., must be done entirely individually unless explicitly stated otherwise. Work submitted as one’s own should not be done in collaboration with any other person, nor should it use material borrowed from any other source unless the source is explicitly and properly cited. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, and unfair advantages, and each student is responsible for avoiding them. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found here:

http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Academic_Integrity_Policy.pdf

If a faculty member—such as myself—suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Disability:

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with me as soon as possible.

Course Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as warranted by the progress and needs of the class and the curriculum.
# Analysis of Popular Music

## Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music, Spring 2017

**MUSIC 7641X/4900 – ANALYSIS OF POPULAR MUSIC**

Instructor: Tom Johnson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>HW DUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Mon. 01/30</td>
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<td>Introduction: Why and how do music scholars study popular music?</td>
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<td>02. Mon. 02/06</td>
<td>Form</td>
<td>• Burns (2002), “Close readings”</td>
<td>Response 1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Biamonte (2011), “Intro”</td>
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<td>• Covach (2010), “Leiber and Stoller…”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Attas (2015), “Form as Process”</td>
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<td>• optional: Osborn (2013), “Subverting the Verse-Chorus…”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• optional: Covach (2005), “Form in Rock Music”</td>
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<td>Mon. 02/13</td>
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<td><strong>No Class</strong></td>
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<td>03. Wed. 02/15</td>
<td>Form/narrative</td>
<td>• Burns (2010), “Vocal Authority…”</td>
<td>Response 2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Neal (2007), “Narrative Paradigms…”</td>
<td>Transcription assignment due</td>
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<td>• optional: Spicer (2004), “(Ac)cumulative Form”</td>
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<td>Sun. 02/19</td>
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<td><strong>Last day to drop without a grade of W</strong></td>
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<td>Mon. 02/20</td>
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<td><strong>No Class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>04. Mon. 02/27</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>• Hanenberg (2016), “Rock Modulation and Narrative”</td>
<td>Bibliography assignment due</td>
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<td>Response 3</td>
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<td>05. Mon. 03/06</td>
<td>Harmony II</td>
<td>• Nobile (2016), “Harmonic Function…”</td>
<td>Traditional analysis choice</td>
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<td>06. Mon. 03/13</td>
<td>Rhythm</td>
<td>• Biamonte (2014), “Formal functions…”</td>
<td>Traditional analysis due</td>
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<td>• Adams (2009), “Metrical Techniques…”</td>
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<td>• Bulter (2006), “Unlocking the Groove”</td>
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<td>• Osborn (2014), “Kid Algebra”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Holm-Hudson (2001), “Sonic Historiography”</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Text</td>
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| 08. Mon. 03/27| Gender/Sexuality                | • Leydon (2010), “Recombinant Style Topics”  
• optional: Spicer (2009), “Strategic Intertextuality”  
• Johnson-Grau (2002), “Sweet Nothings”  
• Hubbs (2015), “Jolene”  
• Hubbs (2007), “I Will Survive”  
• (optional): McLeod (2002), “Rock and a Hard Place”  
Response 6 |
| 09. Mon. 04/03| Race                            | • Hagstrom-Miller (2007), “Segregating Sound” (Intro)  
• Rose (1995), “Never Trust…”  
• (optional): Hagstrom-Miller (2007), “Segregating Sound” (Ch 7)  
• Floyd (1997), “The Power of Black Music” (Conclusion)  
Final project selection |

**Mon. 04/10 & 17**  
No Class – Spring Break

**Wed. 04/19**  
Course withdrawal period ends. Last day to withdraw from a class with a grade of W

**10. Thu. 04/20**  
Audio/Visual  
Guest: Paula Harper  
• Cook (1998), “Analysing Musical Multimedia” (Ch 3.1, 4.1)  
• Kaplan (1987), “Rocking around the Clock” (Ch 1, 5)  
• Nyong’o (2010), “Lady Gaga’s Lesbian Phallus”  
Revised/Expanded Project Due

**11. Mon. 04/24**  
Genre/Style  
Guest: Brackett (2016), “Intro”

**12. Mon. 05/01**  
Timbre  
Guest: Megan Lavengood  
• Lavengood (2017), “A New Approach to Timbre” (Ch 5)  
Final project abstract

**13. Mon. 05/08**  
Tonality/Summary  
• Spicer (2017), “Fragile, Emergent, Absent Tonics”

**14. Mon. 05/15**  
Presentations!  
Final project presentations!

**Monday. 05/22**

**FINAL PROJECT DUE BY 3:00PM**

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This schedule is subject to change to better suit the needs of the class. I will likely modify it a number of times. Please check Blackboard for updated versions. I will announce most changes in class.
Weekly Bibliography

**Week 1 – Introduction:**


**Week 2 – Form:**


**Week 3 – Form/Narrative:**


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**Week 4/5 – Harmony:**


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**Week 6 – Rhythm:**


http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.09.15.5/mto.09.15.5.adams.html.


Week 7 – Intertextuality:

Week 8 – Gender and Sexuality:

Week 9 – Race
Analysis of Pop Mon.6:40-9:10p Roosevelt Extension: 400E

Week 10 – Audio/Visual (Guest: Paula Harper)

Week 11 – Genre

Week 12 – Timbre (Guest: Megan Lavengood)

Week 13 – Tonality and Summary

FULL CLASS BIBLIOGRAPHY


