

**MUS 611-01: Fall 2013**  
**Seminar in Music Analysis: Rock Music**  
**Dr. Guy Capuzzo, Associate Professor**

**In this class**, students will tackle questions that attend to “close readings” of rock songs. Topics include analytic approaches, form, timbre and instrumentation, rhythm and meter, riffs, harmony, rock song cycles, feminist approaches, and humor in rock music. We will study a very wide range of rock music; an open mind is essential. A solid background in common-practice tonal harmony is also necessary.

***Leitmotiv/Idee Fixe For The Semester:***

Which components of “a theory of rock music” already exist?

Which ones have yet to be devised?

What lies at the heart of this theory? Pitch? Rhythm? Instrumentation? Timbre? Production?

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Office hours: M, W 11:00-11:30; T, Th, 10:00-10:30. Appointments also available.

**Weighting of Final Grade:**

» 2 skills tests, 25% each = 50%

» 2 papers, 25% each = 50%

Leading discussions (2 per student) on assigned readings is required but not graded.

**Grading scale (the letters and +/- follow the Graduate Bulletin):**

A = 95-100

A- = 90-94

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C+ = 75-79

C = 70-74

F = 0-69

**Academic Honor Code:**

All work to be handed in must include the signed Honor Code Statement to verify that you completed the work on your own. I take the UNCG Honor Code seriously. Academic Honor Code: The UNCG Academic Honor Code will apply to all work done for this course. Any student caught cheating in this class will be dropped from the class and reported to the University. See [academicintegrity.uncg.edu](http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu) for more information.

**From the Graduate Bulletin:**

For certificate students, no more than three semester hours of credit evaluated as C+ (2.3) and/or C (2.0) may be applied toward the minimum hours required for the certificate. For master's and specialist students, no more than six semester hours of credit evaluated as C+ (2.3) and/or C (2.0) may be applied toward the minimum hours required for the degree. For doctoral students, grades in all courses applied toward the degree must be B (3.0) or better, and additional hours must be taken for any hours earned with a grade of B- (2.7) or less.

**Attendance Policy:**

You are permitted two (2) unexcused absences. Each additional absence will result in a one-point deduction from your final grade. An excused absence is a UNCG event that I've approved in advance, a family emergency, or an illness documented by a doctor's note.

Required text: none.

**Disclaimer:**

Some of the music studied in this class contains subject matter, language, and lyrical content that some students may find offensive. If you do not wish to be exposed to this material, please consider dropping the class. By maintaining your enrollment in the class, you are accepting that you will be exposed to this material.

**General information about the class:**

1. If you have a medical condition that affects your in-class performance, you must present a doctor's documentation of the condition no later than one week from the first class meeting.
2. Many materials are on Blackboard.
3. There is no exam during the exam period.
4. I do not grant incompletes for this course.
5. You may study and do practice exercises with your classmates, but any assignments to turn in must be solely your work. Please read the UNCG Academic Integrity Policy: [academicintegrity.uncg.edu](http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu)
6. On reserve in the music library, under MUS 611: Tori Amos, *Strange Little Girls* (CD); Pink Floyd, *The Wall* and *Dark Side of the Moon* (CDs); The Beatles, *Abbey Road* (CD) and *Wise Scores* (Musical score). More to follow: stay tuned.

**Course Schedule—Fall 2013**

BB = this reading is on our blackboard site

MTO = this reading is available on *Music Theory Online* (no login or registration required)

|    | Date  | Topic                           | 5:00-6:15   | 6:30-7:45   |
|----|-------|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 1  | 8/20  | <b>Introduction</b>             | I will do an introductory lecture   | Discuss/sign up for student presentations   |
| 2  | 8/27  | <b>Form</b>                     | Covach: Form in Rock Music (BB)   | Capuzzo: Sectional Tonality (BB)  |
| 3  | 9/3   | <b>Analytic Approaches</b>      | Kaminsky: Revenge (MTO)   | Neal: Popular Music Analysis: <a href="http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/524.aspx">http://www.gmth.de/zeitschrift/artikel/524.aspx</a> |
| 4  | 9/10  | <b>Timbre: Three Approaches</b> | Zak, <i>The Poetics of Rock</i> (BB)<br>Blake, "Timbre" (MTO)   | Berger and Fales, "Heaviness" (BB)  |
| 5  | 9/17  | <b>Riffs</b>                    | Capuzzo: A Pedagogical Approach (BB)  | Fast: Led Zep (BB)  |
| 6  | 9/24  | <b>Rhythm and Meter</b>         | I will do an introductory lecture   | Traut: Hooks (BB)   |
| 7  | 10/1  | <b>Rhythm and Meter</b>         | Butler: Turning the Beat Around (MTO)   | Brackett: Led Zep (BB)  |
| 8  | 10/8  | <b>Harmony</b>                  | Capuzzo: Pitch in Rock Primer (BB)  | —————→  |
| 9  | 10/22 | <b>Harmony</b>                  | Harrison: Atalanta (BB)   | Temperley: Divorce (BB)   |
| 10 | 10/29 | <b>The Rock Song Cycle</b>      | Gauldin: Abbey Road (BB)  | Kaminsky: Paul Simon (BB)   |
| 11 | 11/5  | <b>The Rock Song Cycle</b>      | O'Donnell: Pink Floyd (BB)  | Burns/Lafranc: P.J. Harvey (BB)   |
| 12 | 11/12 | <b>Feminist Approaches</b>      | McClary: Madonna (BB)   | Burns: Sarah McLachlan (BB)   |
| 13 | 11/19 | <b>Humor</b>                    | Covach: Spinal Tap: <a href="http://www.spinaltapfan.com/articles/covach.html">http://www.spinaltapfan.com/articles/covach.html</a> | Smith: Zappa (BB)   |
| 14 | 11/26 | <b>Conclusion</b>               | All loose ends will be tied up  | —————→  |

## Assignments

|    | Date  |               |   |
|----|-------|---------------|---|
| 1  | 8/20  | -             | -   |
| 2  | 8/27  | -             | -   |
| 3  | 9/3   | Skills Test 1 | <p><b>1. On guitar or piano</b>, play all major scales, major pentatonic scales, minor pentatonic scales, blues scales, and altered blues scales, one octave per scale. Major = R, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Major pentatonic = R, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8. Minor pentatonic, R, 3, 4, 5, 7. Blues = minor pentatonic plus 5. Altered blues = blues plus 7.</p> <p><b>2. On guitar</b>, play two of the following opening riffs: “Smoke on the Water” (Deep Purple), “Heartbreaker” (Led Zep), “Pretty Woman” (Roy Orbison/Van Halen), or “Wipeout” (The Surfaris), along with the CD, from memory.</p>  |
| 4  | 9/10  | -             | -   |
| 5  | 9/17  | -             | -   |
| 6  | 9/24  | -             | -   |
| 7  | 10/1  | Paper 1       | Demonstrate your understanding of the Covach and Capuzzo form articles by writing a short paper (2-3 pages, 12 font, double-spaced) describing the form of “Pray” by King’s X (from the album <i>XV</i> ) and “Walken” by Wilco (from the album <i>Sky Blue Sky</i> ). You will rely mostly on the Covach, and less so on Capuzzo. Include a transcription of the opening bass riff to “Pray” and the single-note guitar break in “Walken” (at 3:09).   |
| 8  | 10/8  | -             | -   |
| 9  | 10/22 | -             | -   |
| 10 | 10/29 | Skills Test 2 | <p><b>1. On piano</b>, play “Thinking About You” by Norah Jones along with the CD, from memory. Use block chords. Hint: all chords are in root position, so follow the bass line as you listen. I have posted an mp3 of the song on blackboard, under assignments.</p> <p><b>2. On guitar</b>, play all of the following opening riffs: “Smoke on the Water” (Deep Purple), “Heartbreaker” (Led Zep), “Pretty Woman” (Roy Orbison/Van Halen), or “Wipeout” (The Surfaris), along with the CD, from memory.</p>  |
| 11 | 11/5  | -             | -   |
| 12 | 11/12 | -             | -   |
| 13 | 11/19 | -             | -   |
| 14 | 11/26 | Paper 2       | <p>Choose one of the following paper topics:</p> <p>1. Demonstrate your understanding of the Riffs readings by writing a short paper (2-3 pages, 12 font, double-spaced) on “Chameleon” by Herbie Hancock (from the album <i>Headhunters</i>). Include a transcription of the opening synth riff. How does this riff establish a tonic note? What factors contribute to its groove, both before and after the drums enter? What is the large-scale purpose of the opening riff/groove, over the span of the entire (long) song?</p> <p>2. Demonstrate your understanding of the Rock Song Cycle readings by writing a short paper (2-3 pages, 12 font, double-spaced) on one of the following albums: Pink Floyd, <i>The Wall</i>; PJ Harvey, <i>To Bring You My Love</i>; Lady Gaga, <i>The Fame Monster</i>; Janelle Monae, <i>The Archandroid</i>. Note that each album may be a concept album, a song cycle, a hybrid, or something else altogether. It is your task to choose the term that best describes your album, and to justify your choice with lyrical and musical evidence. I have provided lyrics for each album on blackboard, under assignments.</p> |

## **Nuts and Bolts**

**When you lead a discussion**, please do not deliver a monologue. You will find good tips for leading a discussion here: [http://www.indiana.edu/~tchsotl/part%201/part1%20materials/The\\_Dreaded\\_Discussion.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~tchsotl/part%201/part1%20materials/The_Dreaded_Discussion.pdf)

Examples from that paper include:

- Ask each student to state one concrete idea from the reading that stands out. The leader writes them on the board.
- Find a quotation that you think best illustrates the major thesis of the paper.
- Make three true statements about the reading.

**During the discussion**, please do not rely too heavily on technology—if something can go wrong with a computer in the classroom, it likely will. Have a no-tech backup plan ready.

**Papers** are due at the beginning of class. If you are absent on a day when a paper is due, you have 48 hours to turn in the paper, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. In graduate school, there are few things more important than the ability to write well, so I am going to hold you to a high standard. Read your papers out loud, and use the UNCG Writing Center: <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/default.php>

**Skills tests** will take place in my office, not during class time (signup for a time). Unless my schedule prevents it, each skills test must be completed during the week of the listed date. Speed is not important; accuracy and a steady beat are.

## **Tips on transcribing**

- 1] Use Windows Media Player to play your excerpt at half speed without altering the pitch.
- 2] Start by finding the opening pitch.
- 3] Then, learn how to play the entire riff *before* you notate it.
- 4] When eighth notes swing, think carefully about how you will notate: in 4/4? In 12/8?
- 5] Transcriptions don't have to be done with a notation program (e.g. Finale), as long as your handwriting is legible.
- 6] I am glad to help you out with your transcriptions.
- 7] Above all, transcription is a *subjective* art—there's usually more than one “correct” way to transcribe a passage. Good luck!