

**Ethnic Studies 199
Hip-Hop Poetics and Politics
Fall 2009**

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Office Hours: 1-2 p.m Mondays, 12-1 Wednesdays, or by appointment

Course Description

Explores the dynamics of hip-hop culture, surveying its historical development, political significance, and social influence. Examines how hip-hop exemplifies cross-cultural hybridization within not only Black communities nationally and internationally, but also among Indigenous, Latino/a, and Asian peoples in the U.S. and beyond.

Course Requirements

Weekly Quizzes 20%

Each week's section will conclude with an exam that assesses students' understanding of course materials. Quizzes will be held on Mondays.

Midterm/Final: Critique of Song Lyrics 30% each

Students will choose a song to analyze to treat as a primary document. In a 3-5 page paper, you should answer a number of questions including: 1) When was the song created and produced? 2) Who is the performer and what is their genre? (include background information); 3) Who was the author's primary audience; 4) Why was the song written, that is, what was the author's motivation? 5) What is the song's historical significance, why is it important? 6) What does the document suggest about the historical period in which it was written. This 3-5 page paper should reflect course materials *and* information gathered from outside sources.

Performance Analysis 20%

Attend at least one "hip hop" performance this quarter, in Eugene or elsewhere. Considering at least two of the weekly topics addressed in this course, write a 3-5 page analysis of the performance. When assessing/analyzing the performance, take into consideration the context, content and audience.

Your analysis should directly refer to course materials (lectures, readings, film, music). The performance analysis is due a week after the performance.

Shows at WOW Hall include: 10/12-Brother Ali, Evidence, Toki Wright and BK One, \$13 in advance; 10/17-Swollen Members, Souls of Mischievous and Common Market, \$15 in advance; 10/23-Ghostface Killah of Wu Tang Clan, \$22 in advance; 10/24-MC Chris, \$13 in advance; 10/31-Andre Nickatina, \$25 in advance; 11/22-CunninLynguists, \$13 in advance.

Plagiarism will result in an automatic failing grade in the course.

Texts

Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* [TJ] Readings available on Blackboard under "course reserves" [BB] or at the library's reserve desk [LIB]. Listening assignments are at the library's reserve desk.

Course schedule:

Welcome/Introduction

Week One

Roots/Routes: The Historical Origins of Hip-Hop Culture

Week Two

Readings: John F. Szwed, "The Real Old School" [BB]
Jeff Chang, "Necropolis: The Bronx and the Politics of Abandonment" [BB]
S.H. Fernando, Jr., "Back in the Day: 1975-1979" [BB]

Listening: Sugar Hill Gang, "Rappers Delight" [1979]
Kurtis Blow, "The Breaks" [1979]
Afrika Bambaataa, "Planet Rock" [1982]
Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "The Message" [1982]
Herbie Hancock, "Rockit" [1983]

The Four Elements: Breakdancing, Graffiti Art, DJing, Rap Music

Week Three DJ/Turntablism & Breakdancing

Readings: Sally Banes, "Breaking" [TJ]
Michael Holman, "Breaking: The History" [TJ]

Films: "Scratch", "The Freshest Kids"

Listening: Grandmaster Flash, "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" [1981]
LL Cool J, "Rock the Bells" [1985]

Week Four Graffiti Art & Rap Music

Readings: Imani Perry, "Stinging Like Tabasco: Structure and Format in Hip Hop Compositions" [BB]

Film: "Freestyle", "Style Wars"

Listening:
MC Shan, "The Bridge" [1987]
Boogie Down Productions, "The Bridge is Over" [1987]
UTFO, "Roxanne, Roxanne" [1984]

Roxanne Shante, "Roxanne's Revenge" [1984]
Kool Moe Dee, "How Ya Like Me Now" [1987]
LL Cool J, "Jack the Ripper" [1987]

Bring the Noise: Rap Music's (Cultural) Politics

Week Five

Readings: Clarence Lusane, "Rap, Race and Politics" [TJ]
Angela Ards, "Organizing the Hip-Hop Generation" [TJ]
Todd Boyd, "Check Yo Self Before You Wreck Yo Self: The Death of Politics in Rap Music and Popular Culture" [TJ]

Listening: Public Enemy, "Bring the Noise" [1988]
Public Enemy, "Fight the Power" [1989]
Boogie Down Productions, "Why is That?" [1989]
Ice Cube, "Endangered Species (Tales from the Darkside)" [1990]
Tribe Called Quest, "Sucka Nigga" [1993]
Mos Def, "Mr. Nigga" [1999]
dead prez, "I'm a African" [2000]

Midterm: Due November 2 (beginning of class).

Out of New York and Straight Outta Compton: The Invention of Gangsta Rap

Week Six

Readings: S. Craig Watkins, "Black Youth and the Ironies of Capitalism" [TJ]

Listening: Boogie Down Productions, "Criminal Minded" [1987]
Ice T, "'6 N the Morning" [1987]
Eazy E, "Boyz N Tha Hood" [1988]
NWA, "Straight Outta Compton," "Fuck tha Police" [1989]
Ice Cube, "The Nigga Ya Love To Hate" [1990]
Dr. Dre, "Deep Cover" [1992]
Notorious B.I.G., "Ten Crack Commandments" [1997]

Hip-Hop as Meta-Minstrelsy: Rap Music's Authentic Black Experience

Week Seven

Readings: Tricia Rose, "Contracting Rap: An Interview with Carmen Ashurst-Watson" [TJ]

Imani Perry, "Bling Bling...And Going Pop: Consumerism and Co-optation in Hip Hop" [LIB]

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Keepin' It Unreal: Selling the Myth of Black Male Violence, Long Past its Expiration Date" [on-line]

Film: "Whiteboyz"

Ladies First? Rap Music's Sexual Politics

Week Eight

Readings: Imani Perry, "The Venus Hip-Hop and the Pink Ghetto" [BB]

Dream Hampton, "Confessions of a Hip-Hop Critic" [BB]

Elizabeth Mendez Berry, "Love Hurts: Rap's 'Black Eye'" [BB]

Farai Chideya, "Homophobia: Hip-Hop's Black Eye" [BB]

Listening: Salt 'N' Pepa, "Tramp" [1987]
MC Lyte, "Paper Thin" [1988]
Queen Latifah, "Ladies First" [1989]
2pac, "Keep Ya Head Up" & "I Get Around" [1993]
Brand Nubian, "Punks Jump Up to Get Beat Down" [1993]
Lil' Kim, "Dreams" [1996]
Lauren Hill, "Doo Wop (That Thing)" [1998]

Beyond Black & White: (Re)defining the Roots/Routes of Hip-Hop

Week Nine

Readings: Raegan Kelly, "Hip Hop Chicano: A Separate but Parallel Story" [TJ]

Juan Flores, "Puerto Rocks: Rap, Roots and Amnesia" [TJ]

Brian Su-Jen Chung, "Hip Hop Asia America: Hybridity or a Racialized Performance?" [BB]

Listening: Kid Frost, "La Raza" [1990]
Cypress Hill, "How I Could Just Kill A Man" [1991]
DJ Qbert, "Scroll of the Wrist Beam" [2001]
Mixmaster Mike, "Bangzilla" [2004]
Big Pun, "Nigga Shit" [2000]
Jin, "Learn Chinese" [2004]

Last day to turn in Performance Analysis November 21

Futures and Fissures: The Political Cultures of Global Hip-Hop

Week Ten

Readings: Ian Condry, "A History of Japanese Hip-Hop: Street Dance, Club Scene, Pop Market" [BB]

Tony Mitchell, "Kia Kaha! (Be strong!): Maori and Pacific Islander Hip-Hop in Aotearoa-New Zealand" [BB]

Sarah Morelli, "'Who is a dancing hero?': Rap, Hip-Hop, and Dance in Korean Popular Culture" [BB]

Final: Due Wednesday, December 9 by 3 p.m.