

Syllabus
Music 126/Ethnic Studies 178
The Blues: An Oral Culture
Fall 2008
University of California, San Diego
Tuesday and Thursday 9:30-10:50a
Warren 2005

Professor: David Borgo (dborgo@ucsd.edu)
Office: Mandeville B142, 858-822-4957
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 11-11:50a (or by appointment)

Teaching Assistants:	TA Office Hours/Location
Greg Burke	Wed 2p
Philip Skaller	

Course Objectives

This course investigates the development of the blues from its beginnings to the present day. Students will learn to understand the history of the blues in terms of changes in musical techniques *and* social values and to recognize music as a site of celebration and struggle over relationships and ideals. Students will increase their ability to hear differences among performances and styles and to interpret the meanings of such differences. They will gain greater knowledge of U.S. History as it affects and is affected by musical activities and learn to appreciate the stakes and motives behind the controversies and debates that have always surrounded the blues and related forms of American popular music.

Course Summary

The blues made audible the struggles and resilience of African Americans and the music's sonic history is inseparable from broader historical and social forces such as the legacies of the slave trade, the dehumanizing conditions of the Jim Crow South, and the urbanization of a largely rural black population. The blues took on additional meanings as it "re-emerged" in the 1930s and 40s as part of a "leftist" trend in liberal politics, in the 1950s as the foundation for rock-and-roll, and again during the socially conscious counterculture of the 1960s. Since that time the blues has continued to infuse American and global popular music styles. We will use a wide variety of readings, sound recordings, and videos to help us trace the development of the blues from its African antecedents and its roots in African American spirituals, work songs and hollers, through its initial flowering in the Mississippi Delta and to its eventual emergence as a form of mass culture. Along the way we will explore how the blues has influenced many forms of American music including jazz, country, rhythm and blues, rock, and rap. But perhaps most importantly, this course will attempt to situate the blues within a broader investigation of the politics of race, class, and gender, and of the institutional arrangements that have shaped and continue to shape contemporary music making.

Course Reading and Listening

- All required reading and listening for the course is available online at:
 - <http://reserves.ucsd.edu> [search under my last name]
- For the music files follow the link labeled "DAR (Digital Audio Reserves)"
 - The course password is "theblues" [all lowercase, no spaces]
 - If you have difficulties accessing the listening *please read the DAR FAQs & Tips*
 - Libraries Home -> Library Locations -> Arts Library -> Music -> Services -> DAR FAQs & Tips
- Please note: *Access to the Reserves and DAR websites is restricted to UCSD IP addresses.*
 - To access the reserves materials off campus you must use UCSD's "proxy server."
 - <http://www-no.ucsd.edu/documentation/squid/> for more info

Course Requirements

The course is divided into two non-cumulative units of equal weighting. For each unit, students will be assigned a take-home project and will take an in-class exam. Additionally, students are required to attend one blues or blues-related concert outside of class during each unit of the course. Lastly, unannounced pop quizzes will be given during lecture times.

- UNIT I = 50% [exam 25%, project 15%, concert report 5%, pop quizzes 5%]
- UNIT II = 50% [exam 25%, project 15%, concert report 5%, pop quizzes 5%]

Exams are multiple choice (scantron) and present a variety of questions (including a significant listening portion) covering lecture materials and reading and listening assignments. *There are no make-ups for missed exams* except under the most unusual circumstances. To request a make-up, a legitimate excuse must be submitted before the exam, or no later than one class period after the exam and *must be accompanied by written evidence (e.g. a doctor's note)*. Personal conflicts or scheduling difficulties will not be considered as legitimate excuses. **Projects** will generally involve short essay questions (totaling about 4-5 pages of writing) intended to provoke a critical engagement with one or more topics presented during each unit. Students are required to reference the assigned readings and listening and to follow certain style guidelines (to be discussed in class). The project assignment will be given to the class at least one week prior to its due date and may also include creative options for students to work as individuals or in groups. **Concert Reports** must be no more than one typewritten page and should involve both description of and critical reflection on the event attended. *Proof of attendance* (a ticket stub, concert flyer signed by the artist or venue, sign in sheet at a UCSD event, etc.) must accompany to the written report. Concerts of interest, both on and off campus, will be mentioned from time to time in class [<http://blusd.org> is a particularly useful resource]. Please feel free to share with the class any information you may have on events that are relevant to the course.

Attendance and Classroom Policy

Students are expected to be at every class session. Video, audio, lecture, and discussion materials vital to one's success in this course will only be presented during class times. In the case of an unavoidable absence, students are encouraged to visit with a TA (or with the professor) during an office hour in order to discuss what they missed and to obtain important lecture notes. Beyond this, lecture notes will not be made available. **Unannounced pop quizzes** will be given during lecture times and will count toward the student's final grade.

Grading Scale

98-100 A+	88-89 B+	78-79 C+	68-69 D+	59-below F
92-97 A	82-87 B	72-77 C	62-67 D	
90-91 A-	80-81 B-	70-71 C-	60-61 D-	

Academic Integrity

Please be aware that plagiarizing, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty can result in an "F" for the course and can lead to further disciplinary action by the University. (For more information see the section entitled "UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship" in the UCSD General Catalogue.)

Class Schedule

All reading and listening assignments should be completed prior to the scheduled class meeting time.

Unit I	Unit II
<p>September 25 – Introductions/Course Overview 30 – Defining the Blues</p> <p>October 2 – Africa and the Roots of the Blues 7 – The Ritual (and Cycle) of Minstrelsy 9 – Rural Blues in the South 14 – Charlie Patton 16 – Women and the Blues 21 – White Country Blues and Bluegrass 23 – Robert Johnson 28 – Leadbelly and the 1940s Blues Revival 30 – Catch up / Review; UNIT I PROJECT DUE November 4 – UNIT I EXAM; UNIT I CONCERT REPORT DUE</p>	<p>November 6 – Urban Blues 11 – Blues Rocks On 13 – British Blues 18 – Psychedelic Blues: Jimi and Janis 20 – The 1960s Blues Revival 25 – Rap Music and the Blues Impulse 27 – THANKSGIVING</p> <p>December 2 – The State of the Blues Today 4 – Catch up / Review; UNIT II PROJECT DUE December 11 (Thursday) 8-11am UNIT II EXAM; UNIT II CONCERT REPORT DUE</p>

READINGS UNIT I

Defining the Blues

1. Dixon, Willie, and Don Snowden. "Introduction" from *I Am the Blues: The Willie Dixon Story*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1989, pp.1-5.
2. Murray, Albert. "The Blues as Such." *Stomping the Blues*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
3. Jones, LeRoi (Amiri Baraka). Selections from *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. New York: William Morrow, 1963.
 - "The Negro as Non-American: Some Background" and "The Negro as Property"
 - "Slave and Post Slave"

Africa and the Roots of the Blues

4. Palmer, Robert. "Beginnings" [Excerpt]. *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta*. New York: Penguin, 1981, pp.25-43
5. Maultsby, Portia. "Africanisms in African-American Music" [Excerpt]. In *Africanisms in American Culture*, edited by Joseph Holloway. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, pp.185-195

The Ritual (and Cycle) of Minstrelsy

6. Lott, Eric. "Blackface and Blackness: The Minstrel Show in American Culture." In *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, edited by Annemarie Bean, James Hatch, and Brook McNamara. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996, pp.3-34.
7. Lhamon Jr., W.T. "Ebery Time I Wheel About I Jump Jim Crow: Cycles of Minstrel Transgression from Cool White to Vanilla Ice." *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, edited by Annemarie Bean, James Hatch, and Brook McNamara. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996, pp. 275-284.

Rural Blues in the South

8. Palmer, Robert. "Heart Like Railroad Steel." *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta*. New York: Penguin, 1981.
9. Govenar, Alan. "That Black Snake Moan: The Music and Mystery of Blind Lemon Jefferson." In *Bluesland: Portraits of Twelve Major American Blues Artists*, edited by Pete Welding and Toby Byron. New York: Dutton Books, 1991, pp.16-37.
10. Wald, Elijah. "The Bluesman Who Behaved Too Well." *The New York Times* (July 18, 2004).

Women and the Blues

11. Davis, Angela. "Blame it on the Blues: Bessie Smith, Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, and the Politics of Blues Protest." *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, New York: Pantheon, 1998.

White Country Blues and Bluegrass

12. Wolfe, Charles. "A Lighter Shade of Blue: White Country Blues." *Nothing But the Blues*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1993.

Robert Johnson

13. Lipsitz, George. "White Desire: Remembering Robert Johnson." *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998. 118-138.

Leadbelly and the 1940s Blues Revival

14. Davis, Francis. "Leadbelly." *The History of the Blues*. New York: Hyperion, 1995.
15. Filene, Benjamin. "'Our Singing Country': John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly and the Construction of an American Past." *American Quarterly*. 43.4 (December 1991).

READINGS UNIT II

Chicago Blues

16. Palmer, Robert. "Chicago Pep." *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta*. New York: Penguin, 1981.

Blues Rocks On

17. George, Nelson. "The New Negro (1950-65)" [Excerpt]. *The Death of Rhythm & Blues*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988, pp.59-70.
18. Walker, Alice. "1955." *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*. New York: Harcourt Press, 1981.
19. Hellmann, John M. Jr. "'I'm a Monkey': The Influence of the Black American Blues Argot on the Rolling Stones." *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 86, No. 342 (Oct. - Dec., 1973), pp. 367-373

The 1960s Blues Revival

20. Titon, Jeff Todd. "Reconstructing the Blues: Reflections on the 1960s Blues Revival." *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined*. Ed. Neil V Rosenberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.
21. Narváez, Peter. "Living Blues Journal: The Paradoxical Aesthetics of the Blues Revival." *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined*. Ed. Neil V Rosenberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Psychedelic Blues: Jimi and Janis

22. Waksman, Steve. "Black Sound, Black Body: Jimi Hendrix, the Electric Guitar, and the Meanings of Blackness." *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
23. Whiteley, Sheila. "Try, Just a Little Bit Harder: Janis Joplin and the Search for Personal Identity." *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity, and Subjectivity*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Rap Music and the Blues Impulse

24. Rose, Tricia. "Soul Sonic Forces: Technology, Orality, and Black Cultural Practice in Rap Music." In *Sounding Off!: Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution*, ed. Ron Sakolsky and Fred Wei-Han Ho. New York: Autonomedia, 1995.

The State of the Blues Today

25. Davis, Francis. "The Blues is Dead; The Blues Will Never Die." *The History of the Blues*. New York: Hyperion, 1995.
26. Lieberfeld, Daniel. "Million-Dollar Juke-Joint: Commodifying Blues Culture." *African American Review*. 29.2 (Summer 1995).
27. Nicholson, Robert. "Cappuccino in Clarksdale: The Revitalization of the Delta." *Mississippi: The Blues Today!* New York: Da Capo Press, 1999.