

Disclaimer: This is an indicative syllabus only and may be subject to changes. The final and official syllabus will be distributed by the Instructor during the first day of class.

The American University of Rome
Communication and Digital Media Program

Department or degree program mission statement, student learning objectives, as appropriate

Course Title:	Popular Music and Mass Culture
Course Number:	COM 210
Credits & hours:	3 credits – 3 hours
Pre/Co-Requisites:	ENG 101

Course description

A general survey which explores and analyzes the history and meaning of popular recorded music within mass culture and society. It focuses on the historical, aesthetic, social, politico-economic and technological developments that have shaped the definition of popular and how pop music reflects the cultural and social issues of its time.

Required Textbook (subject to change)

- Reebee Garofalo, *Rockin' Out : Popular Music in the USA*; 3rd Edition (Prentice Hall, 2004)

Recommended Readings (subject to change)

- Legs McNeil – Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me : The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (Grove Press, 2006)
- Tony Wilson, *24 Hour Party People : What The Sleeve Notes Never Tell You* (Macmillan, 2012)

Additional readings for the course will be available on-line or on reserve at the library

Recommended Films and Documentaries (subject to change)

- *Almost Famous* (Film by Cameron Crowe, 2000)
- *24 Hour Party People* (Film by Michael Winterbottom, 2002)
- *Searching for Sugarman* (Documentary by Malik Bendjelloul, 2012)
- *Synth Britannia* (BBC documentary, 2012)
- *Northern Soul Living for the Weekend* (BBC documentary, 2014)

Course Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. develop an understanding of the general conceptual and critical framework of popular music within the wider territory of mass culture, and distinguish among the variety of theoretical schools, from the Frankfurt School investigation of the culture industry to British Cultural Studies' valorization of audience activity.
2. recognize and analyze specific aspects of popular music, such as the role of the press and of academic criticism, the impact of music videos, the workings of the industry, songs and genres, public performance and participation, fans and subcultures and the nature of the 'pop star'.

3. become familiar with the main characteristics principally of Western produced music –specifically that produced in the US and the UK given their institutionalizing forms internationally – but also of a variety of non-Western popular music forms.
4. approach popular recorded music through a highly nuanced and complex set of theoretical frameworks.
5. in the position of placing historically –both within the musical field and the wider cultural and social arena—the musical artifacts that they encounter as listeners.
6. gain a better understanding of the popular music’s effects on society culture, religion, and of its relationship with politics and other centers of power.

Course Learning Activities

- Lectures:
 - will provide a historical, political, and social overview of popular music and mass culture.
 - will help identify the main issues.
 - will offer the opportunity to work on popular music’s texts, and to examine their relationship with the political and social environment.
- Readings:
 - will provide supplemental information on specific issues
 - will supplement lectures on popular music theories and the history of mass culture.
- Class Discussions:
 - will create a context for analysis of media products film clip and their relationship to specific issues
- Midterm and final exam:
 - will analyze specific issues of cultural relevance.
 - will analyze how a definite popular music products deals with, identifies, clarifies, or interprets particular historical, social, or media questions
- Research project (Oral presentation + paper):
 - will demonstrate the students’ ability to analyze certain popular music products (recorded music or live events) in order to apply theoretical and historical notions learnt in class.
- Quizzes:
 - will demonstrate the comprehension and learning of popular music history and mass culture theories.

Assessment tools

Class participation	10%
Quizzes (2)	10%
Oral presentation	15%
Research Paper	25%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Reading
Week 1	Introduction to the course	Coursebook - Chapter 1 & 2 + material available on MyAur
Week 2	Music Publishing, Vocal groups, The Impresario, the birth of "Electricity" The perfect wedding: Radio and Music	Coursebook - Chapters 2 and 3 + material available on MyAur
Week 3	Juke Boxes, record sleeves and 45 RPM: here comes Rock and Roll. Music culture and Counterculture	Coursebook - Chapter 4 & 6 + material available on MyAur
Week 4	The rise of Pop and Soul Beatlemania and the British Invasion Case study: Phil Spector and "the men behind the mixing desk" QUIZ	Coursebook - Chapter 7 + material available on MyAur
Week 5	Jamaican music and industry Monterey, Woodstock, Altamont and after...the Summer of Love and beyond	Coursebook - Chapter 6 + material available on MyAur
Week 6	Synths, Sequencers and Men Machine: Kraut Rock, Electronic Music and Disco Case study: Rock and Counterculture in former Yugoslavia and USSR	Coursebook - Chapter 8 + material available on MyAur
Week 7	Review Session and Mid-Term Exam	Review Session Mid-Term Exam
Week 8	Glam Rock: image, fashion and the Persona Punk: the second Rock and Roll revolution	Coursebook - Chapter 8 + material available on MyAur
Week 9	1980s and 1990s: MTV, CDs, Hip Hop, Alternative, Rave, Riot Grrrls, and the boom of the record industry.	Coursebook - Chapter 9 + material available on MyAur
Week 10	Case study: Mix Tape culture and music as a social networking engine Identity, Race, Gender and Subcultures QUIZ	Material Available on MyAur
Week 11	From Napster to Spotify: converging media and music Case Study: Northern Soul & Revival (word of mouth VS music industry)	Coursebook - Chapter 12 + material available on MyAur
Week 12	Music and Cinema Computers, digital music and DIY	Material Available on MyAur
Week 13	Group presentations	
Week 14	FINAL EXAM	

ATTENDANCE POLICY

In keeping with AUR's mission to prepare students to live and work across cultures, the University places a high value on classroom experience. As a result attendance is expected in all classes and attendance records are maintained. The University's attendance policy is as follows:

1.0. Minimum Attendance Requirement: Students must attend a minimum of 70% of a course in order to be eligible to be considered for a passing grade.

1.1. Automatically Accepted Absences

Students will not be penalized for one absence from classes meeting once a week;
Students will not be penalized for three absences from classes meeting twice a week;
Students will not be penalized for four absences from classes meeting more than twice a week, as in the case of some intensive courses.

1.2. If further absences are recorded, grade penalties will be applied according to the Instructor's specific attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus, and following the institutional parameters given in the Note* below.

1.2.1. If the Instructor does not specify an attendance policy, there will be no grade penalty other than that attached to the minimum attendance requirement, and any penalized absences recorded above the basic 70% attendance requirement for the course will be invalidated.

1.3. During Summer sessions where courses are taught more intensively over a shorter period the following applies:

- Students will not be penalized for two absences from class.

2.0. Tolerated Absences

Certain categories of absence will not be penalized but they will be counted as an absence (for a 3-credit course meeting twice a week). These absences are:

- The Model United Nations (MUN);
- Permit to Stay,
- SG's "Ambassador Program" (Student Government initiative)
- Religious Holidays

The American University of Rome makes all reasonable efforts to accommodate students who must be absent from classes to observe religious holidays. (Please refer to the Provost's Office list of accepted absences for religious holidays)

Not attending a class due to the observance of a religious holiday will normally not be counted as an absence.

Students who will need to miss class in order to observe religious holidays must notify their Instructors by the end of the Add/Drop period (first week of classes), and must make prior arrangements with their Instructors to make up any work missed.

2.1. The list does NOT include academic field trips because these (including arrangements for travel) must not overlap with other classes.

3.0. Cases of prolonged absences caused by an emergency or a medical condition may require students to withdraw from some or all of their courses. Under such circumstances students should first consult their academic advisors.

*Note: No Instructor may penalize a student more than half a letter grade for each absence beyond the tolerated limit (e.g. from A- to B+).

Grade Point Average

A student's grade point average (GPA) is computed by multiplying the quality points achieved by the number of credits for each course. The result is then divided by the total number of credit hours taken. The Cumulative or Career Total Grade Point Average (CGPA) is the grade point average for all credit hours taken at the University and at approved study abroad programs. The GPA and CGPA are calculated by truncating after the second digit after the decimal point. Transfer credits have no effect on the CGPA at The American University of Rome.

Grades

Grades are posted on a secure area of the University's official website and are mailed to AUR degree students only upon written request. Grades are mailed to the various study abroad programs. Grades computed in the (GPA) reflect the following grade equivalents:

GRADE		GPA	
A	Excellent	4.00	94 – 100 points
A-		3.70	90 – 93.99 pts
B+	Very Good	3.30	87 – 89.99
B	Good	3.00	83 – 86.99
B-		2.70	80 – 82.99
C+		2.30	77 – 79.99
C	Satisfactory	2.00	73 – 76.99
C-	Less than Satisfactory	1.70	70 – 72.99
D	Poor	1.00	60 – 69.99
F	Failing	0.00	59.99 – 0
WU	Unofficial withdrawal counts as an F	0.00	
P	Applicable to development courses	0.00	
<i>Grades not computed into the grade point average are:</i>			
W	Withdrawal		
AUDIT (AU)	Only possible when the student registers for a course at the beginning of the semester as an audit student		
I	Incomplete work must be completed within the ensuing semester. Failure to do so results in automatically converting the I grade to the default grade, which is then computed into the grade point average		
P	Pass grade is applicable to courses as indicated in the catalog.		
WIP	Work in progress		