

**Expressive Culture: Sounds**  
V55.0730.001

Fall 2008  
Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00 - 3:15

Prof. Maureen Mahon  
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Office Hours: Mondays 3:30 - 5:00 and by appointment

Preceptors: Clara Latham, Chris Tabron, and Alex Waterman

Course description: Music is a powerful and multi-faceted cultural form. Contemporary popular music is a money-making businesses and a site of consumer entertainment, but it is also a highly visible arena in which definitions of identity and relations of power are articulated and contested, reproduced and reconfigured. Music gives aesthetic pleasure, provides inspiration, stirs aggravation, and sustains life--for musicians and their audiences--in economic, entertainment, and spiritual terms. Music is a significant expressive form precisely because it is a tangible product of human activity through which individuals and groups tell themselves and others who they are and what they value. In many cases, it is the site and subject of sociopolitical struggle, debate, and activism.

This semester we will examine some of the theoretical and methodological approaches ethnomusicologists and anthropologists use to study music and music-making in contemporary societies. We will consider the ways that people use music for entertainment, artistic expression, financial gain, and cultural activism. Throughout we will examine the ways people use music to construct and express who they are. We will relate our discussion to issues of globalization, representation, authenticity, appropriation, political economy, and aesthetics. In addition to examining the roles music plays in the professional and personal lives of the individuals discussed in our readings, you will also have opportunities to analyze and write about your own relationship to music.

Course requirements: Students are expected to complete the readings, attend lecture and recitations regularly, and participate in class discussions. You will submit two short papers (3-5 pp.) in which you analyze assigned readings and a final paper reporting on your independent ethnographic research on music and identity. In addition, you will submit several short writing assignments during the semester; some will be connected to your ethnographic research, some will be related to course readings and lectures. Your papers should reflect your familiarity with the assigned readings, material discussed in lectures, guest lectures, and films and music presented in class and as listening assignments. **Timely submission of work is mandatory.** We will not accept late papers or give incompletes for this course.

Your grade will be based on the following:

Attendance and Participation	15%
Writing Assignments	20%
Essay #1 due in class October 6	15%
Essay #2 due in class November 3	15%
Music and Identity Report due December 15	35%

There are **two** required texts for the course. They are available at NYU's Main Bookstore (18 Washington Place) and on two-hour reserve at Bobst Library.

David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation (2004)

Norman C. Stolzoff, Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica (2000)

Additional required readings and listening assignments will be available through Blackboard. To access the class Blackboard page go to <http://classes.nyu.edu/> and log in. Once you're in the page for our course (V55.0730.001), you can find articles organized by dates of class meetings by clicking the Course Documents tab.

**Integrity of Scholarship:** When writing your papers, please take care to identify the sources of the ideas you are using and the material you are quoting. We will discuss the proper way(s) to cite the work of others in lecture. Each student should download and print out the statement on academic integrity from the MAP website, read it, and return a copy with your name and signature to your preceptor by September 12. Representing the work of others as your own can lead to an "F" in the course and severe disciplinary action by the University. You can find the statement at <http://www.nyu.edu/cas/map/pda/academicintegrity.html>

**Classroom Etiquette:** Lecture and recitation are scheduled for one hour and fifteen minutes. Please come to class prepared to stay in class for that length of time. Getting up and leaving the room (to get water or take a bathroom break, for example) during class is disruptive to your colleagues, preceptors, and professor. Especially your professor. Please refrain from talking during lecture and when sound and video examples are played. We encourage you to participate actively in discussion, both in lecture and recitation. If you have questions or comments—if a point isn't clear or if something said spurs an idea—please raise your hand and share your thoughts and queries. Finally, please suspend all electronic and digital communication and activity while you are in class and be sure to turn off your cell phones.

September 3—Overview of Course

September 8—Music & Identity and Ethnomusicology & Anthropology

John Chernoff, "Ideas of Culture and the Challenge of Music" (2002)

Steven Feld, "Communication, Music, and Speech About Music" (1994)

Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation" (1992)

Christopher Small, "Prelude: Music and Musicking" (1998)

- September 10— Music & Identity and Ethnomusicology & Anthropology  
 John Chernoff, “Ideas of Culture and the Challenge of Music” (2002)  
 Steven Feld, “Communication, Music, and Speech About Music” (1994)  
 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation” (1992)  
 Christopher Small, “Prelude: Music and Musicking” (1998)
- September 15—Nation, Class, and Culture  
 Norman C. Stolzoff, Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica  
 Preface, Chapters 1, 4, 5
- September 17—Nation, Class, and Culture  
 Norman C. Stolzoff, Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica  
 Preface, Chapters 1, 4, 5
- September 22—Nation, Class, and Culture  
 Norman C. Stolzoff, Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica  
 Chapters 6, 7, 8
- September 24-- Nation, Class, and Culture  
 Norman C. Stolzoff, Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica  
 Chapters 6, 7, 8
- September 29—Nation, Class, and Culture  
 Kalefa Sanneh, “Dancehall’s Vicious Side: Antigay Attitudes” (2004)  
 Carolyn Cooper, “Lady Saw Cuts Loose: Female Fertility Rituals in Jamaican Dancehall Culture” (2001) on-line at <http://www.jouvay.com/interviews/carolyncooper.htm>
- October 1—Nation, Class, and Culture  
 \*\*\*In-Class screening—The Darker Side of Black directed by Isaac Julien (1994)\*\*\*
- October 6—Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity  
 M. Annette Jaimes, “American Racism: The Impact on American Indian Identity and Survival” (1994)  
 David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
 Prologue, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 3  
 \*\*\* Essay #1 due at end of class\*\*\*
- October 8—Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity  
 M. Annette Jaimes, “American Racism: The Impact on American Indian Identity and Survival” (1994)  
 David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
 Prologue, Introduction, Chapter 1 & 3
- October 13—Columbus Day Holiday

October 15--Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity

David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
Prologue, Introduction, Chapter 1 & 3

\*\*\*Guest Lecture: singer and songwriter Martha Redbone\*\*\*

website: <http://www.martharedbone.com/>

myspace:

<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendID=61685419>

October 20—Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity

David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
Chapters 4 & 5

October 22—Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity

David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
Chapters 4 & 5

October 27—Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity

David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
Chapters 7 & 8

October 29--Ambiguity, Contradiction, and Identity

David W. Samuels, Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity  
Chapters 7 & 8

November 3—Race, Generation, and Genre

W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (1903)

\*\*\*Essay #2 due at end of class\*\*\*

November 5— Race, Generation, and Genre

\*\*\*In-Class screening—Afro-Punk directed by James Spooner (2004)\*\*\*

November 10— Race, Generation, and Genre

Greg Tate, "Cult-Nats Meet Freaky Deke" (1986)

Maureen Mahon, "Black Like This: Race, Generation, and Rock in the Post-Civil Rights Era" (2000)

Maureen Mahon, selection from Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race (2004)

November 12— Race, Generation, and Genre

Greg Tate, "Cult-Nats Meet Freaky Deke" (1986)

Maureen Mahon, "Black Like This: Race, Generation, and Rock in the Post-Civil Rights Era" (2000)

Maureen Mahon, selection from Right to Rock: The Black Rock Coalition and the Cultural Politics of Race (2004)

November 17— Race, Generation, and Genre

Maureen Mahon, “African Americans and Rock ‘n’ Roll” (2008)

Darrell McNeil, “Rock, Racism, and Retailing 101: A Blueprint for Cultural Theft” (2004)

\*\*\*Guest Lecture: singer and songwriter Tamar-Kali\*\*\*

<http://www.flamingyoni.com/>

<http://www.myspace.com/tamarkali>

November 19— Race, Generation, and Genre

Maureen Mahon, “African Americans and Rock ‘n’ Roll” (2008)

Darrell McNeil, “Rock, Racism, and Retailing 101: A Blueprint for Cultural Theft” (2004)

November 24—Global Rap: Globalization and “Localization”

Ian Condry, “A History of Japanese Hip-Hop: Street Dance, Club Scene, Pop Market” (2001)

Andre J. M. Prevos, “Postcolonial Popular Music in France: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the 1980s and 1990s” (2001)

Jacqueline Urla, “‘We Are All Malcolm X!’: Negu Gorriak, Hip-Hop, and the Basque Political Imaginary” (2001)

November 26—Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1— Global Rap: Globalization and “Localization”

Ian Condry, “A History of Japanese Hip-Hop: Street Dance, Club Scene, Pop Market” (2001)

Andre J. M. Prevos, “Postcolonial Popular Music in France: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the 1980s and 1990s” (2001)

Jacqueline Urla, “‘We Are All Malcolm X!’: Negu Gorriak, Hip-Hop, and the Basque Political Imaginary” (2001)

December 3—Global Rap: Globalization and “Localization”

David Hesmondhalgh & Caspar Melville, “Urban Breakbeat Culture: Repercussions of Hip-Hop in the United Kingdom” (2001)

Nitasha Tamar Sharma, “Musical Manifestos: Desi Hip Hop Artists Sound Off on Capitalism and Sexism” (2008)

December 8—Global Rap: Globalization and “Localization”

David Hesmondhalgh & Caspar Melville, “Urban Breakbeat Culture: Repercussions of Hip-Hop in the United Kingdom” (2001)

Nitasha Tamar Sharma, “Musical Manifestos: Desi Hip Hop Artists Sound Off on Capitalism and Sexism” (2008)

December 10--Conclusions

**Some questions to consider after reading:**

- What are the most significant points learned from the reading?
- How does the reading relate to prior assignments?
- What questions does the reading raise for you?
- In what ways is the argument persuasive?
- What flaws or contradictions do you see in the argument?
- How would you make the argument differently?