THE BLUES: ROOTS AND BRANCHES
(PART 2)

OLLI CENTRAL
CLASS SYLLABUS

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In Part II of *The Blues: Roots and Branches*, we will continue to explore the roots of the musical genre that has been labeled The Blues, as well as the evolution of the branches of this musical genre. We will also continue to examine the musical, historical, sociological and other factors and events that contributed to the origins and evolution of The Blues.

As we did in Part I of *The Blues: Roots and Branches*, in Part II we will continue to focus upon the music itself and there will be considerable time spent listening to music and watching video and documentaries. We will meet B.B. King, King of the Blues, one of the most important figures involved in the evolution of The Blues into an international phenomenon. We will examine and listen to the music of some of the more important musicians, producers and promoters of what became known as the Chitlin’ Circuit, created out of the need for African-American musicians to have venues to play their music (particularly in the South) and for their African-American audiences to have access to reasonably-priced entertainment. The class will meet Sam Phillips (who billed himself as “the father of Rock ‘n’ Roll), a singular and important figure in the evolution of The Blues and Rock ‘N’ Roll, whose ideas and whose Sun Records launched the career of a number of important musical icons. The importance of Elvis Presley, who had deep roots in The Blues (as well as gospel and country music), will be examined in terms of the evolution of The Blues and his role in the society-changing rise of the musical genre that became known as Rock ‘N’ Roll. We will meet and reacquaint ourselves with the music of Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash and Charlie Rich.

In terms of how we got “from here to there and back again,” Part II will examine how The Blues made its way to England and how England, in turn, exported The Blues back to the United States. In doing so, the class will explore the folk/blues/gospel revival of the 1950s and 1960s and its journey to England. We will meet and reacquaint ourselves with a number of important English Blues (and Rock ‘N’ Roll) musicians, including Lonnie Donegan, The Quarrymen (later, the Beatles), The Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Jimmie Page and Led Zeppelin.

In examining the re-emergence of the Blues in the 1960s, including the folk/blues revival of the late 1950s and 1960s, we will re-visit some of the early Blues musicians we encountered in Part I, artists like Son House, Reverend Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Etta Baker and Elizabeth Cotton. We will also meet and explore the importance of many musicians who were influenced by these earlier Blues artists, including Bob Dylan, Paul Butterfield, Mike Bloomfield, Charley Musselwhite, Steve Miller, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Albert King, Freddie King, Buddy Guy, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Bonnie Raitt. Taj Mahal and Keb Mo.
Part II will conclude by looking at the recent state of The Blues, demonstrating that, even today, The Blues is a viable and important musical genre, with a large number of offspring. We will meet (not in person), view or listen to the music of such current artists as Buddy Guy (still going strong at the age of 82), Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Beth Hart, Samantha Fish, the Tedeschi Trucks Band, Blind Boy Paxton, Gary Clark and Joe Bonamassa.

THE WEEKLY PRESENTATIONS (PART II):

**Week 1**: The Blues/Folk Revival of the 1950s and 1960s; *B.B. King - The Life of Riley*. Part 1.

**Week 2**: B.B. King - *The Life of Riley*, Part 2; What Was The Chitlin’ Circuit And Why Did It Matter?

**Week 3**: Memphis, Blues Mecca and Sam Phillip, His Progeny and Sun Records.

**Week 4**: Elvis Presley, The King of Rock ‘n’ Roll: His Improbable Ascendance and Why, With the Help of Chuck Berry, The World Was Never the Same.

**Week 5**: British Blues: Skiffle, The Stones, The Yardbirds, Clapton is God, and So Much More.

**Week 6**: The Blues on Both sides of The Pond: The Blues is Reborn in its Birthplace.

**Week 7**: The Blues in the Latter Portion of the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-First Century.

**Week 8**: Keeping the Blues Alive: The Blues is Alive and Doing Well, Although Not Quite Identical to Its Ancestor.