



UNIVERSITY of  
DENVER

ARTS, HUMANITIES  
& SOCIAL SCIENCES

Lamont School of Music

**FSEM Proposal: Academic Year 2016-2017**

**Arthur C. Jones, Teaching Professor**

**African American Pioneers in Music:  
Hard Knocks, Biography and Innovation**

**Draft Syllabus, Reading List and Assignments<sup>1</sup>**

### **Course Description**

#### *Historical, Cultural and Psychological Context*

Musical expression and musical performance were salient cultural elements in the diverse West African ethnic communities from which European and American slave traders captured women and men to serve involuntarily in the crucible of North American chattel slavery. As a result, music making was destined to become highly significant in the lives of enslaved Africans in America who would struggle to obtain their freedom, and in the lives of successive generations of African *Americans* who would engage the perennial forces of cultural and institutional racism after the end of legalized slavery. Along the way, scores of musical pioneers would emerge, contributing substantially to the creation and evolution of a rich and uniquely American musical culture.

In their personal lives, all of these innovating musical pioneers would be faced with the necessity of confronting the harsh realities of American racial oppression. At the same time, they would be widely diverse in the ways in which they would employ their music to engage those realities. The choices they would make would be as varied as their personal biographies would suggest. For example, some of these innovators, like the enslaved architects of the dance ritual known as the ring shout, and the pioneering creators of the freedom songs of the Southern Civil Rights Movement a century and a half later, would view their music as clear and potent freedom fighting tools. Others, like the classically trained composers and performing artists of the Harlem Renaissance, would view themselves primarily as cultural role models leading the way in the collective betterment and uplift of their community. The creative work of others would reflect a variety of different choices.

#### *The Course*

This course will invite students into an examination of the life stories of a diverse sample of African American musical pioneers, drawn from different historical periods in American history. Students will be asked to reflect on both the role of racism and oppression in the life experiences of these artistic innovators and the unique and often serendipitous personal experiences that resulted in their

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<sup>1</sup> Although based on some content I have taught before, this is the first time I'm offering a biography-oriented seminar like this. Final course preparation is planned for the summer months.

musical creations. Through this in-depth, rigorous examination of specific life stories, students will grapple with the rich and deep meanings of diversity, oppression, power and privilege. Students will be invited into a deep understanding of how a specific cultural narrative – in this case the multi-layered story of African American music making innovation – can help illuminate the universal human capacity to confront and transcend personal experiences of victimization and oppression. Additionally, students will examine the varied ways in which musical creation and expression can be engaged as instruments of social change.

### **Course Objectives:**

Students will:

1. Demonstrate their ability to engage in an intellectual community by meeting rigorous academic expectations through critical reading and screening of video clips, discussion, research, and writing.
2. Practice newly acquired skills in an active learning environment where their demonstrated skills enhance both the solidarity of the course community and their own sense of belonging in that community.

### **Required Readings:**

Most of the required readings for the course will be accessed electronically through the online class Canvas portal.

### **Required Videos:**

Required videos and video clips will be made available for viewing through DU Course Media (<http://coursemedia.du.edu>) and through links on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

### **Diversity, Inclusiveness, Respect**

In this seminar we will develop together to develop a learning community that is inclusive and respectful. Our diversity may be reflected by differences in race, culture, age, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and myriad other social identities and life experiences. The goal of inclusiveness, in a diverse community, encourages and appreciates expressions of different ideas, opinions, and beliefs, so that conversations and interactions that could potentially be divisive turn instead into opportunities for intellectual and personal enrichment.

A dedication to inclusiveness requires respecting what others say, their right to say it, and the thoughtful consideration of others' communication. Both speaking up AND listening are valuable tools for furthering thoughtful, enlightening dialogue. Respecting one another's individual differences is critical in transforming a collection of diverse individuals into an inclusive, collaborative and excellent learning community. Our core commitment shapes our core expectation for behavior inside and outside of the classroom.

## Preparing Papers for Class

In preparing your papers for class, I encourage you to take advantage of the DU Writing Center's services; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Students may also come to the Writing Center with questions about grammar, revising, using sources, and editing. For more information on using the rich resources provided by the Writing Center, see <http://www.du.edu/writing/writingcenter/>

## Laptop Use in the Classroom

In order to create and maintain an optimal learning environment in the classroom, students should use laptops appropriately as directed by the instructor for the purposes of the course. Work done on laptops that is not relevant to the class can hinder the process of communication and shared discussion of ideas that require full engagement by all participants. Such distractions can build barriers to that sense of physical and intellectual community so important in our FSEM.

## Academic Integrity

In this seminar we will follow the guidelines outlined in the University of Denver's Honor Code and the procedures put forth by the Office of Citizenship and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of data and research—is in violation of the code and will result in a failing grade for the assignment or for the course.

As student members of a community committed to academic integrity and honesty, it is your responsibility to become familiar with the DU Honor Code and its procedures ([www.du.edu/honorcode](http://www.du.edu/honorcode)).

## Observation of Religious Holidays

Students wishing to observe a religious holiday not celebrated on the academic calendar may do so provided advanced notice is given the instructor during the first two weeks of the quarter. With advance notice, the absence will be considered an excused absence. For additional information, contact DU's Center for Religious Services (<http://www.du.edu/crs/>).

### **Support for Students with Special Needs**

**As soon as possible, students who have learning disabilities or other learning challenges should make an appointment to see Prof. Jones.** Every effort will be made to accommodate individual student needs. This is especially important for students who require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Failure to notify the instructor immediately may hinder the university's ability to accommodate accordingly. Students with learning disabilities should also contact the University Disability Services Program at <http://www.du.edu/studentlife/disability/> <http://www.du.edu/disability>. University Disability Services houses the Learning Effectiveness Program (LEP) and the Disability Services Program (DSP).

<u>Course Requirements</u>	<u>Percent of Final Grade</u>
Class attendance and participation, full participation in community excursion	20
Four short essays (500-700 words)	40
Research paper (2000 words)	40

### **Grading Scale for All Class Assignments**

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>
95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0-59	F

### **Description of course requirements**

#### **Class attendance and participation**

In a seminar like this, where much of the learning occurs in the interpersonal learning environment, attendance and active participation are essential. Accordingly, 20 percent of each student's grade will be based on the quality of course participation. Attendance will be monitored and all students are expected to contribute actively and positively to the class community.

Attendance is mandatory in all class sessions as well as in the community excursion event that we will plan together as a class. If an emergency arises, it is the student's responsibility to contact Prof. Jones.

There are always considerable individual differences in comfort with course participation. If you are an outgoing person who speaks easily in groups, make an effort to speak a little less. Conversely, if you are a shy person who is usually reticent about participating, push yourself to participate more. Everyone should keep in mind that quality rather than quantity is most important. Those students who are consistently up on the readings and video viewings and able to offer informed comments will be rewarded with a generous grade for class participation.

**The grade for the class participation component of the course will be determined as follows:**

- 65 percent of the grade will be based on attendance. Any unexcused absences will result in a loss of points.
- 35 percent of the grade will be based on the quality of course participation. Again, it is the *quality* of participation that is important. For example, domination of class discussions *and* no participation in class discussions at all are equally problematic. What we're aiming for is an experience of each person's presence in the class community as essential to our collective learning as a class. Different students, with different temperaments, can all make equally significant contributions to the community.

### **Readings, Video Screening, and Short Essays (500 words each)**

During the quarter, each student will write eight reflection essays summarizing her or his thoughts about the readings and video clips assigned during different portions of the course. The class will be divided in half, and students will write for alternate class sessions. Questions provided ahead of time will guide students in preparing their short essays. **(Five points will be deducted for each calendar day on late submissions)**. Students will receive feedback on their first essay and will have a chance to revise it based on the feedback.

Before coming to class, all students are expected to have completed the assigned readings and video screenings and be prepared to participate in guided discussions. Those students who have prepared essays for the day will partner with the instructor in facilitating the discussions.

The short essays will be posted on the online course *Canvas* portal the night before the relevant class, so that peers will have an opportunity to read them before class.

### **Research Paper (2000 words)**

Each student will prepare a research paper focused on the life story of an African American musical pioneer not included among the nine in the course syllabus. Questions provided ahead of time will guide the preparation of the paper. The research papers will be due in the fifth week of the quarter. Beginning in the fifth week successive groups of students will share insights gleaned from their research.

### **Draft Outline of Assigned Readings<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Week One**

**Consensus Rules of Engagement for Class Discussions**

**Concepts of Oppression, Power and Privilege**

**West African Cultural Roots of African American Music Making**

*Readings:*

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<sup>2</sup> The specific reading and video screening assignments here are tentative. The assignments will be finalized during course preparation in the summer months.

Samuel Floyd, The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States, 1996, excerpts

Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," in Politics of Reality, 1983.

Winthrop Jordan, The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States, 1974, excerpts

John Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophies 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1990, excerpts

Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," 1988.s

*Video:*

The Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory, 2005

## **Week Two**

### **Biographical Examination: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (1886 – 1939)**

*Readings:*

Angela Y. Davis, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism, 1999, excerpts

Sandra R. Lieb, Mother of the Blues: A Story of Ma Rainey, 1983, excerpts

Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts

Derrick Steward-Baker, Ma Rainey and the Classic Blues Singers, 1970, excerpts

*Video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-mRHNAejXE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ljm3YGAwPUM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fizLgmUHMw>

## **Week Three**

### **Biographical Examination: William Grant Still (1895 – 1978)**

*Readings:*

Verna Arvey, In One Lifetime, 1984, excerpts

Catherine Persons Smith, William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions, 2000, excerpts

Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts

Judith Anne Still, "William Grant Still: A Voice High Sounding," Music Educators Journal, v70, 1984

Judith Anne Still, Celeste Anne Headlee & Lisa M. Headlee-Huffman (eds.), William Grant Still and the Fusion of Cultures in American Music, 1995, excerpts

William Grant Still, My Life, My Words: The Autobiography of William Grant Still, 2011, excerpts

*Video:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OXmKehGDmE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YIOc1TTTbQ&list=PLNLGBjcKNQkdngGWV6uyrPRMyTtbfTHeg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuMhrbWDo2Q>

## **Week Four**

### **Biographical Examination: Thomas A. Dorsey (1899 – 1993)**

#### *Readings:*

Michael W. Harris, The Rise of the Gospel Blues: The Music of Thomas Andrew Dorsey in the Urban Church, 1994, excerpts

Kathryn B. Kemp, Anointed to Sing Gospel: The Levitical Legacy of Thomas A. Dorsey, 2015, excerpts

Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts

Robert L. Taylor, Thomas A. Dorsey, Father of Gospel Music: An Interview, 2014

#### *Video:*

This Far By Faith: African American Spiritual Journeys, DVD, Dorsey segments

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHqg-tGisW8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEosw5GUCzQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HNZNvIhIN4>

## **Week Five**

### **Biographical Examination: Marian Anderson (1897 – 1993)**

#### *Readings:*

Marian Anderson, My Lord, What a Morning, 1956, excerpts

Russell Freedman, The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights, 2011, excerpts

Allan Keiler, Marian Anderson: A Singer's Journey, 2000, excerpts

Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts

#### *Video:*

Marian Anderson: A Portrait in Music, DVD, 2004

Marian Anderson: A Song of Dignity and Grace, DVD, 2010

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF9Quk0QhSE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAONYTMf2pk>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bytFrsL4\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bytFrsL4_4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2asMAfRKH0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42H3LmUDwfk>

## **Week Six**

### **Biographical Examination: Duke Ellington (1899 – 1974)**

#### *Readings:*

Harvey Cohen, Duke Ellington's America, 2010, excerpts

John Edward Hasse, Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington, 1995, excerpts

Maurice Press, Dvorak to Duke Ellington: A Conductor Explores America's Music and Its

African American Roots, 2008, excerpts  
Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts  
Terry Teachout, Duke Ellington: A Life, 2014, excerpts  
Mark Tucker (ed.), Duke Ellington Reader, 1995, excerpts

*Video:*

Jazz Icons: Duke Ellington Live in '58, DVD, 2007  
Duke Ellington: A Concert of Sacred Music/Love You Madly, DVD, 2005  
Ken Burns, Jazz, DVD, 2001, Ellington excerpt  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDQpZT3GhDg>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cb2w2m1JmCY>

## **Week Seven**

### **Biographical Examination: Miles Davis (1926 – 1991)**

*Readings:*

Miles Davis, Miles: The Autobiography, 1990, excerpts  
Stephen Davis, Miles Davis/1973: "My Ego Only Needs a Good Rhythm Section", 2014, excerpts  
Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts  
John Szwed, So What: The Life of Miles Davis, 2002, excerpts

*Video:*

Ken Burns, Jazz, 2001, Miles Davis excerpt  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqNTltOGh5c>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoPL7BEsSQU>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbxtYqA6ypM&ebc=ANyPxKr\\_G117xyLiaVNZi0o-31-2Jh\\_4LYMEaw47nQKNWkFHSbfDkEis7OeZPJN0BIM3OFYjsjP9EdSfwsImQ84JYMzEWzIKZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbxtYqA6ypM&ebc=ANyPxKr_G117xyLiaVNZi0o-31-2Jh_4LYMEaw47nQKNWkFHSbfDkEis7OeZPJN0BIM3OFYjsjP9EdSfwsImQ84JYMzEWzIKZA)

## **Week Eight**

### **Biographical Examination: Aretha Franklin (1942 – )**

*Readings:*

Aretha Franklin and David Ritz, Aretha: From These Roots, 1999, excerpts  
David Ritz, Respect: The Life of Aretha Franklin, 2015, excerpts  
Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1997, excerpts  
Craig Werner, Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, and the Rise and Fall of American Soul, 2004, excerpts

*Video:*

Impact: Songs That Changed the World: Aretha Franklin – Respect, DVD, 2003  
The Story of Gospel Music, DVD, 2005, Aretha Franklin segments

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVMXOGLptLc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diwF1-xJwZM>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STKkWj2WpWM>

## **Week Nine**

### **Biographical Examination: Bernice Johnson Reagon (1942 – )**

#### *Readings:*

Eileen M. Hayes, “Women-Identified Music,” in Mellonee Burnim & Portia Maultsby (eds.), African American Music: An Introduction, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2006

Bernice Johnson Reagon, If You Don’t Go, Don’t Hinder Me, 2001

#### *Video:*

With Bill Moyers, The Songs Are Free, DVD, 1990

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GccfFkbzjrc>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6Uus--gFrc&list=PL-DleoyXNW8qZ3LsiOvw1-Vh7TXzFyh9>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8NV07oqNdM>

## **Week Ten**

### **Biographical Examination: Clive Campbell (“DJ Kool Herc”) (1955 – )**

#### *Readings:*

Jeff Chang, Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation, 2005, Kool Herc segments

Dawn N. Norfleet, “Hip-Hop and Rap,” in Mellonee Burnim & Portia Maultsby (eds.), African American Music: An Introduction, 2nd edition, 2015

Tricia Rose, Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America, 1994, excerpts

#### Children’s Books:

De Forest Cornish, Herc, Herc! : How DJ Kool Herc Used Hip-Hop for Peace, 2009

Laban Karrick Hill, When the Beat Was Born: DJ Kool Herc and the Creation of Rap, 2013.

#### *Video/Audio:*

NPR “Fresh Air” Interview, “DJ Kool Herc: A Founding Father of Hip-Hop, 2005:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4567450>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pUowAap3I>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KF-irK1UQY>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qwml-F7zKQ>