

Spring 2020

## **HIST 341-002: The American Experience (Revised for Remote Learning)**

Kyle Riismandel

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## **HISTORY 341.002 – THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: SPACE AND PLACE IN AMERICAN MUSIC**

Changes due to COVID-19 are highlighted in yellow.

Professor: Dr. Kyle Riismandel

Contact: [kriis@njit.edu/x3379](mailto:kriis@njit.edu/x3379)

Time: Tuesday, 230-520PM

Classroom: KUPF 205

Office: Cullimore 326

Student Office Hours:

- Monday 230-4PM
- Tuesday 1-2PM
- Thursday 1-3PM
- By appointment

### **Course Description:**

In this class, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of space, place, and culture in late 20<sup>th</sup> century urban America. In particular, we will be focusing on the co-constitutive relationship of musical forms and scenes with their home cities. Though we will be looking at individual scenes and distinct places, we will also consider the broader implications of these cultural productions particularly with regard to race, class, gender, and capitalism as well as formal and informal regulation of people and other relationships of power within space.

The course will be divided into five units:

- Hip-hop in the South Bronx, 1976-1984
- Hardcore punk in suburban Los Angeles, 1976-1984
- Gangsta rap in Los Angeles, 1988-1994
- Grunge in Seattle, 1988-1994
- Putting It All Together/Making Connections

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THE COURSE. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC F. LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL INCUR A PENALTY OF UP TO 1/3 OF A LETTER GRADE PER DAY LATE.**

#### Listening Quizzes

These quizzes will test your knowledge of the important songs and artists studied throughout the semester. There will be one quiz for Units 1-4.

#### Papers

You will complete two paper assignments based on prompts distributed during the semester. These papers will ask you to think critically about the productions of space and power in the communities we are studying as well as making connections to broader historical changes in postwar America.

### Listening Questions

Listening questions will be distributed for each section. They are designed to prepare you for discussion by thinking and writing about the issues at hand in each unit. You must upload your responses to the proper turnitin link for credit.

### Reading Quizzes

Four times during the semester, you will complete a multiple-choice reading quiz designed to test reading comprehension of that day's assignment.

### Class Participation:

Students are expected to participate actively in all class discussions and activities, to be respectful to the instructor and their fellow classmates, to arrive to class on time, and to stay focused on what is happening in our classroom not on chatting or using digital devices.

Participation will be assessed on the quality of contributions to class discussions. Quality participation demonstrates the following:

- Understanding of the historical context as gleaned from lectures and readings
- Completion of that week's assignments such as readings, listening to playlists, watching videos, and worksheets
- A willingness to engage in critical assessment of course texts and lectures

Students are expected to attend class and to be punctual. Excessive absences or late arrivals will result in a greatly diminished class participation grade. Further, there will be only one screening of each film so please do your best to not miss class.

If you have questions about this grade or ways to participate more effectively, do not hesitate to contact me or come to office hours. Further, do not wait to contact me if you are falling behind or having trouble understanding course content. I am here to help so please let me how I can do so.

### Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

|                                |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Listening quizzes              | $4\% \times 4 = 16\%$  |
| Production of Space Assignment | 5%                     |
| Papers                         | $20\% \times 2 = 40\%$ |
| Listening Questions            | $3\% \times 4 = 12\%$  |
| Participation                  | 15%                    |
| Reading Quizzes                | $4 \times 3\% = 12\%$  |

### **NEW DEADLINE SUBMISSION POLICY**

**Due to COVID-19, all assignments deadlines are suggestions to help keep your work on track. You will have until the end of the semester May 14<sup>th</sup> to submit all work and take any of the online quizzes without penalty.**

### Course Policies

#### Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all course meetings on time unless receiving prior authorization. Missing class will not only adversely affect your class participation grade, but there will be screenings in class that will only be offered during that class period so do your best to attend. If you miss class to attend an NJIT sponsored event, to observe a religious holiday, or due to a documented illness, those absences will be excused. For these absences to count as excused, you must receive permission from the instructor in advance or provide a doctor's note in the case of sickness.

#### Classroom Conduct:

In this course, we welcome intellectual inquiry and thoughtful discussion of difficult questions, but hate speech and disrespectful comments will not be tolerated. We must come to class with an open mind, a willingness to learn, and fundamental respect for the humanity of each person in the room and the historical actors we discuss.

#### Office hours/student appointments:

My office hours will be every Monday 12-1PM and Tuesday and Thursday 1-3PM. I am also available to meet by appointment if students are unable to make it to my office during these times. Feel free to send me an email to set up a meeting if you'd like to talk or have any questions about course topics, assignments, or grades.

#### Academic dishonesty:

Students are expected to obey the NJIT honor code, and I will enforce this code to its fullest extent. The goal of this course is to evaluate your understanding of course materials and ability to express that understanding. Cheating, plagiarizing or otherwise violating the code of academic integrity not only breaks the trust between professor and student but keeps you from learning course content and improving writing and critical thinking skills. I am here to help so if you are having trouble, do not cheat, ask me for help.

For the tenets of the code or for clarification of what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please consult: <http://www.njit.edu/academics/honorcode.php>.

Generally speaking, it is a violation of the academic integrity code to:

- Use someone else's words or ideas without attribution
- Copy content from someone else's paper, quiz, or exam
- Pay for course assignments to be complete by someone else

#### Cell phones:

Students must turn off and stow their cell phones before class begins. Under no circumstances may students answer their phones, make calls, send text messages, or use their cell phone in any manner during class hours unless approved by me before class begins. If I see a student using a cell phone in class, I will at minimum mark that student absent for the class and reserve the right to ask the student to leave for the remainder of the class. I do not want to interrupt class to ask you to stop texting. It interrupts the flow of discussion, distracts other students, and will inevitably embarrass the texter. I understand that cell phones have become central to many of our lives, but their use in class is a distraction for not just the user but others in class.

#### Laptops and miscellaneous technology rules:

Students may use laptops in this course for class-related activities only. If I learn that students are using laptops for any other purpose, I will issue a laptop ban for this class. Students are also prohibited from listening to ipods or using any other device in this class that has not received prior authorization. Essentially, you are in class approximately 3 hours a week. Please be present and prepared when you are here. If you would rather text or surf the internet, please do not come to class.

#### Students Requiring Accommodations:

Students who require accommodations should contact NJIT's Student Disability Services to help procure accommodations in completing coursework. The center can be found at <http://www.njit.edu/counseling/services/disabilities.php>.

#### Course Schedule

##### **WEEK 1**

January 21 – Introductions/Syllabus Review/What is Culture? What is History?

##### **WEEK 2**

January 28 – The Social Production of Space

Secondary Source – Please use the reading guide on Moodle to help you with this text

- Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, “Introduction”

[http://selforganizedseminar.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/lefebvre\\_production\\_space.pdf](http://selforganizedseminar.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/lefebvre_production_space.pdf)

Learning Objective: Understand space as a product of social relations in a particular historical context

**PRODUCTION OF SPACE ASSIGNMENT DUE JAN. 29 BY 10AM VIA CANVAS**

##### **WEEK 3**

February 4

Lecture – The South Bronx and Urban Crisis

Discussion

Primary Source

- Screen on your own - *80 Blocks from Tiffany's* (1979)

Secondary Source

- Evelyn Diaz Gomez, *The Bronx*, Ch. 7

##### **WEEK4**

February 11

Lecture: The Birth of Hip-Hop

Discussion

Primary Sources

- Spotify playlist “South Bronx and Early Hip-Hop”

Secondary Source

- Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Ch. 2

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the transformation of the Bronx from suburban enclave to a borough in crisis

- Understand how and why hip-hop emerged there

## **HIP HOP LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE READING QUIZ 1**

### **WEEK 5**

February 18

Discussion

Primary Source

- *Wild Style* (1982)

Secondary Source:

- Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City*, 75-107.

Learning Objective: Analyze hip-hop as a cultural production and how it shaped the space of the South Bronx

### **Reading Quiz #2 - Austin**

## **Unit II – Hardcore and the Suburbs of Los Angeles**

### **WEEK 6**

February 25

Lecture: Postwar Suburban Los Angeles

Discussion

Secondary Source

- Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Los Suburban Angeles*, Chapter 6 and Epilogue

Learning Objective: Understand the growth of California as a suburban state and the implications of this shift on race, class, and power.

### **Early Hip-Hop Listening Test**

### **WEEK 7**

March 3

Discussion

Primary Sources:

- Spotify playlist “Hardcore Punk”
- Screen on your own: *The Decline of Western Civilization* (1981)
- Punk Zines <https://archive.org/details/MaximumRocknrollNo.01982>

Primary Sources

Learning Objective: Understand the tenets and sounds of hardcore punk as part of the landscape and culture of suburban LA

## **HARDCORE LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE**

## **Unit III – Gangsta Rap and Los Angeles**

### **WEEK 8**

March 10

Paper workshop

Lecture: Deindustrial Los Angeles and Gangsta Rap

**PAPER ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE MARCH 13TH BY 5PM VIA CANVAS**

### **Hardcore Listening Test**

#### **WEEK 9 – SPRING BREAK**

March 17 – NO CLASS

#### **WEEK 10**

March 24

Discussion

Primary Sources

- Gangsta Rap Playlist

Secondary Source

- Eithne Quinn, *Nuthin' but a "G" Thang: The Culture and Commerce of Gangsta Rap*, Ch. 4 "Straight Outta Compton: Ghetto Discourses and the Geographies of Gangsta"
- Tricia Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop— And Why It Matters*, "Hip Hop Causes Violence"

Learning Objective: To analyze and understand the visual component of Gangsta Rap culture and how it produced the space of South Central LA

**GANGSTA RAP LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE**

**Reading Quiz #3 - QUINN**

### **UNIT IV – Seattle and Grunge**

#### **WEEK 11**

March 31

Lecture: From Logging to Logging On – An Industrial History of Seattle

Discussion

Secondary Source

James Lyons, *Selling Seattle: Representing Contemporary Urban America*, Ch. 4

**GANGSTA RAP LISTENING QUIZ**

#### **WEEK 12**

April 7

Discussion

Primary Sources

- Spotify playlist "Grunge"  
Screen on your own - *Hype!* (1996)
- Rick Marin, "Grunge: A Success Story," *New York Times*, November 15, 1992

Secondary Source

- Ryan Moore, *Smells Like Teen Spirit: Youth Culture and Social Crisis*, Ch. 4 "Young, Gifted, and Slack"

**SEATTLE GRUNGE LISTENING QUESTIONS DUE**

### **Unit V – Putting It All Together/Making Connections**

#### **WEEK 13**

April 14  
Discussion  
Big Takeaways  
**Grunge Listening Test**

**WEEK 14**

April 21 – Impacts and Implications  
Discussion  
The New Jim Crow  
Secondary Source

- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prison, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*

**READING QUIZ #4 – GILMORE**

**WEEK 15**

April 28 – Impacts and Implications  
Discussion  
Gentrification and Income Inequality  
Paper Workshop

**PAPER #2 DUE MAY 12<sup>TH</sup> BY 5PM VIA CANVAS**