

Evolution of Rock

Instructor: Mr. Abrams
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ACTION REQUIRED: see last page

Course Description:

This semester-long course will uncover the hidden ancestry of today's popular music (rock, pop, hip-hop etc...) focusing on the influential artists and styles that helped shape our modern musical landscape. Students will read about, listen to and conduct research on musical artists from the 1950's up through today's musical trends with the intention of uncovering how different people and groups have influenced how popular music has evolved over the last six decades.

Attendance Policy:

Students are allowed five non-exempt absences per term. No credit for the course will be given upon the student's sixth non-exempt absence. Please refer to the student handbook, page 15, for a list of what qualifies as an exempt absence.

If you are anywhere from 0:01 to 9:59 late to class without a note, you will be marked tardy. Each tardy is work 1/3 of an unexcused absence. So, if you're late three days, it's as if you skipped class altogether for one of them. If you're 10:00 (or more) late to class, you will be marked absent regardless.

What to bring to class:

Students should show up to class on time with the following materials:

- 1 three-ring binder (1-1.5 inch is fine.) with lined paper
- Pencil or Pen

I will be giving out lots of different handouts and readings. Each student is responsible for keeping anything I distribute in his or her binder. If a reading is assigned for homework, you'll need to bring it with you to class not only on the following day, but each subsequent class meeting as we will turn to past readings from time to time and you need to be ready for that.

Edmodo: I use edmodo as the primary means of communication with you outside of class. I'll give the code on the first day of class and you are responsible for joining the group immediately. Sometimes there will be assignments posted there, other times there will be music posted that you need to know etc...be sure to do this on the first day so you don't forget.

Meaningful Participation:

It is expected that students come to class having done any assigned homework, ready to participate in a lively discussion about Rock music. The discussion will take different forms over the course of the semester. Many times, informal class discussions will organically arise based on the subject matter. Other times, class discussions will be assigned as formal seminars with topics assigned and each student's participation will be graded.

We will spend a certain amount of class time listening critically to audio examples of the subject matter. While listening to music is a soothing activity and can sometimes cause our minds to wander, it is important that students stay mentally present during in-class listening

sessions. Usually I will give a question or two to consider while you listen to the excerpt, so it's not really 'idle' listening, it's the opposite: *active* listening.

Finally, it is expected that students stay current with the material. The problem with this class (which you will quickly discover) is that there is far more material in the subject of Rock music than can be discussed in one semester. Therefore, this class will move fairly quickly. Students are encouraged to take diligent notes.

Grading/Assessment:

Students will be graded each term based on the following criteria:

20% Quizzes

There will be several quizzes over the course of the semester. The quizzes will take only a few minutes. Sometimes they will be announced and other times they won't be. The point of the quizzes will always be to have a quick way for me to know who is staying current with the material and who is falling behind. Therefore, the quizzes will not be cumulative in nature; they will always be on the current subject matter.

25% Tests and Music ID

In addition to the quizzes, there will also be three tests, not including the final exam. The tests will be designed to take up the class period, and will cover any material covered in class since the previous test. Students will be responsible for being able to identify a particular set of songs and their composers/artists. The tests will be announced well in advance and we will always have an in-class review session some day during the week of the test.

15% Project

There will be a project due between the midterm and the final exam. A specific due date will be announced later, along with a set of very specific questions which you will answer. The project will be on a subject (artist/band) of your choosing, with my approval. The point of the project will be for you to connect what we will have learned about the evolution of rock with your favorite artists.

30% Student Led Discussions/Class Participation

Much of our time together in class will be spent exploring not only the music of the genre, but also the cultural significance. Therefore, many of our classes together will be spent having open discussions. Much of the time, these discussions will arise organically, though other times I will provide a central topic, which will be used for a formal in-class discussion. If I do, the question will come from readings or other current class material and participation is mandatory. There is a delicate balance between saying absolutely nothing in a discussion and completely dominating the conversation. Both of these extremes are to be avoided. We will talk further about seminars and my expectations in class.

10% Final Exam

The Final Exam will be held the last week of classes before grades close and will be cumulative. There will be a few different sections of the exam including an in-class essay. There will be a thorough review held in class a few days before the exam. I will say much more about this when the time comes.

A Word About Extra Help:

I am always available for help when a student asks for it, assuming the student is trying to succeed. If there’s something you don’t understand, or a few artists you are getting mixed up with each other or otherwise confused, and if this is a result of staying current with the material (which there is a *lot* of), I am more than happy to help clarify the subject matter for you in any way which will help you succeed.

Extra help is *not* when a student is careless about staying current with the material and therefore experiences stress before a quiz or a test. When a student is nervous about an assessment because he or she hasn’t exhibited the appropriate amount of effort and then asks the teacher for help, they are really saying “listen, I haven’t done what I know I’m supposed to have done by this point and I need for you to re-teach the material to me in order for me to be confident that I will do well on the assessment.” I will know if this is the case and if it is, the answer will be: no.

Short story: help yourself, I help you as much as you need. Do nothing and I can’t help you at all.

A Word About Mature Subject Matter:

This class will be a fun way to learn about something that touches us all: the music that we love. It’s important that we realize that we will be talking about rock musicians, not a bunch of boy scouts. The people we will be studying are geniuses at their craft, but some of them have also made questionable choices over the courses of their lives without realizing that students might be studying them at some point. We will learn about the evolution of rock music, warts and all. This will include discussions about drug use and how it affects the evolution of rock (spoiler alert, rock music and everything else suffers around drug use). It’s important to talk about, though, because without it, rock music would have evolved in a different way. I think I can best explain this by paraphrasing the disclaimer on the back of the Woodstock album cover: mistakes/technical flaws are like scars in fine leather.

Detach Here:

This portion of the page must be signed by the student and returned to Mr. Abrams in room 197 by no later than Friday, September 5.

Student Acknowledgment of receipt:

I have read and understand the contents of this syllabus including the course description, the attendance policy, the participation expectations and the grading policy.

Student’s Printed Name

Student’s Signature