

Studies in 20th-C. American Music

Required Purchases

Ives, Charles E., Essays before a Sonata--purchase if possible: note: we have been informed that this is currently unavailable (out-of-print)

Michener, James, Tales of the South Pacific.

Recommended Purchase

COMPACT DISCS: Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings. [2 Columbia CD's, C2K 46222 ("Roots 'n' Blues" Series, 1990)]: your final paper will be concerned with some aspect of this; you will probably want to have your own copy.

[Also recommended: COMPACT DISC: Legends of the Blues: Volume One [anthology: Blind Lemon Jefferson, Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Willie Johnson, Lonnie Johnson, Leroy Carr, Peetie Wheatstraw, Big Bill Broonzy, Muddy Waters, and others. Columbia CD, CK 46215 ("Roots 'n' Blues" Series, 1990)]

This is a course devoted more to ideas, reading, thinking, discussion, and controversy, than to the mastery of large bodies of factual information. **This is not a "survey" course.** You will be assigned only a few pieces to listen to, but we shall consider most of them in some detail, as springboards for thought. Most of the material is from the period 1910-1950.

The main questions to be faced are: What aesthetic/contextual/analytical "tools" do we need to "understand" differing pieces of music that spring from or respond to markedly differing/diverse American subcultures? What are our presuppositions in listening to any of these musics, and to what extent might we profit by examining these presuppositions critically?

Accordingly, this course stresses critical reading and thinking, the examination of our own judgmental axioms, and the clear, mature presentation of ideas in written and spoken form. Our main areas of study will be: **Ives**; **Early Recorded Blues** (Bessie Smith, Robert Johnson, and others, plus some instrumental blues and jazz styles, such as King Oliver and Duke Ellington, as well as, if time permits, some early rock adaptations of "rhythm and blues"); **Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue**; **"Mainstream" Popular Song and Broadway Musicals of the 1920s and 1940s** (Shuffle Along, Show Boat, and, especially, South Pacific).

This class will have neither a midterm nor a final exam.

As essentially a "thinking" course, the requirements for the student will be:

- **Class attendance and individual participation in discussions:** both will be required and will be considered in the assigning of a final grade;
- **one 8-10 pp. term paper on some aspect or example of the blues tradition;**
- **two brief three-page essays, one on Maynard Solomon's view of Ives and the other a movie-review of South Pacific;**
- **one "Top-Ten Points" (J. Peter Burkholder) list to hand in**
- and a few other daily assignments.

Please notice also that the course requires you to read not only the required-purchase materials but also some other written accounts and essays. In some instances you will be asked to be prepared to discuss in class an article that you have read.

This course invites (and expects) classroom discussion and your active participation in it. You will be often be given aesthetic, analytical, or cultural questions to consider and prepare to discuss as a group during the next class. While often preserving a fundamental lecture-format, the class (as befits the subject) will frequently be opened for "democratic" participation. Total agreement on any important point will (I hope) be rare.

Note: in order to stress the diversity of varying American subcultures, this course deals with a selection of widely differing musics and aesthetics, chosen, in part, to display maximal contrast with each other. Each of us might feel most comfortable with a different segment of the assigned music; few of us will feel "at home" with it all. One purpose of this course is to try to deal with all of these styles in the classically "disinterested" manner--on a plane of equal sympathy and understanding. Above all, the goal is avoid evaluating one style by using the criteria or norms of a differing style.

Your final grade will be based on the compiled results of several indices:

SOLOMON ESSAY		
BURKHOLDER "TOP-TEN"		
ANY ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS	together:	25%
MOVIE REVIEW		
 BLUES TERM PAPER		 50%
 CLASS ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION,		
DISCUSSION		25%

Failure to hand in the Blues paper will result in an automatic F. Failure to hand in one of the other items of written work will result in the lowering of your final grade by one letter; failure to turn in two projects will lower your grade by two letters, etc.

All essays, worksheets, term papers, etc. must be prepared and handed in on time--no exceptions. The reason for this is to facilitate class discussion based on your reading and work.

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-2:00, or by appointment. E mail: hepok001@maroon.tc.umn.edu

LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

The following is the list of works that will be assigned during the course.
Recordings have not been placed on reserve, but are readily available in the library.
We shall move through the list as the course progresses.

Charles Ives: Piano Sonata No. 2, "Concord, Mass," complete
 Symphony No. 2, complete
 Symphony No. 3, complete
 Violin Sonata No. 4, complete
 Violin Sonata No. 2, third movement (finale)
 The Fourth of July

[TAPE 1, SIDE A, B]

Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake: Shuffle Along (recorded excerpts from 1919-1921)
 Sissle, Blake, Gertrude Saunders, et al.---New World
 Records, NW 260) [SIDE B BEGINS WITH
 "Mirandy"]

[TAPE NO 2: SIDE A]:

Selected Jazz Performers of the 1920s (* = from The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz)

Bessie Smith, "Yellow Dog Blues" (recorded 5 May 1925) (with Henderson's Hot Six,
including Joe Smith, cornet; Charlie Green, trombone; Buster

 Bailey, clarinet; Coleman Hawkins, tenor saxophone;
 Fletcher Henderson, piano; Charlie Dixon, banjo)

 "St Louis Blues" (14 January 1925) (w/Louis Armstrong, cornet)

 "Reckless Blues" (14 January 1925) (w/Louis Armstrong)

King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band: "Dippermouth Blues" (6 April 1923)
 (w/Louis Armstrong, cornet)

 *"Dippermouth Blues" (2nd version, 23 June 1923)

King Oliver and His Orchestra: "Sugarfoot Stomp" [= "Dippermouth Blues"] (May 1926)

Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra: "Sugarfoot Stomp" (1925)

Ethel Waters: "Black and Blue" (1 April 1930)

Louis Armstrong: "Black and Blue" [1929]

COMPACT DISC: Legends of the Blues: Volume One [anthology: Blind Lemon Jefferson, Mississippi John Hurt, Blind Willie Johnson, Lonnie Johnson, Leroy Carr, Peetie Wheatstraw, Big Bill Broonzy, Muddy Waters, and others. Columbia CD, CK 46215 ("Roots 'n' Blues" Series, 1990)]

COMPACT DISCS: Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings. [2 Columbia CD's, C2K 46222 ("Roots 'n' Blues" Series, 1990)]

Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein: Show Boat (1927 version: COMPACT DISC--
NOT ON TAPE)

[TAPE 1: SIDE B,
portion--after
the end of Shuffle Along]

Show Boat (excerpts from the 1962 Columbia 2nd 2nd
recording, with John Raitt, Barbara
Cook, William Warfield, etc.)
"Cotton Blossom"
"Where's the Mate for Me?/Make Believe"
"Ol' Man River"
"Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man"

George Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue (1924)

Rodgers and Hammerstein: South Pacific (1949) [original Broadway cast]
"My Girl Back Home" from South Pacific [movie
soundtrack]

MOVIE: South Pacific (1958)

Recording: Selections from South Pacific (1986--CBS Records Kiri Te
Kanawa, Jose Carreras, etc.)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Several of these readings--or extracts from them--
may be assigned during the quarter.

Ives, Essays before a Sonata.

You will be expected to have understood Charles Ives's basic musical philosophy as expounded here. You should be familiar with this material as we approach the end of our Ives segment.

Ives, Memos, selections (portions mentioned in class).

*J. Peter Burkholder, "'Quotation' and Paraphrase in Ives's Second Symphony," 19th-Century Music 11 (1987), 3-25. (ASSIGNED: TOP-TEN LIST)

James Hepokoski, "Temps perdu," The Musical Times, Vol. 135 (December 1994), 746- 51.

Look at: J. Peter Burkholder: Charles Ives: The Ideas behind the Music. (New Haven, 1985)

Look at Clayton W. Henderson, The Charles Ives Tunebook (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1990)--on the reference shelf (near the front desk of the music library).

*Maynard Solomon, "Charles Ives: Some Questions of Veracity," Journal of the American Musicological Society, 40 (1987), 443-70. [WRITTEN RESPONSE DUE]

Robert Kimball, Jacket Notes to Shuffle Along.

Henry Louis Gates, The Signifying Monkey [Widely read, "leading-edge" discussion by perhaps the leading scholar of African-American Studies of the African [-American] tradition of "signifying" as the heart of black expression and cultural discourse; favors open-endedness, not Western "closure," etc. Gates's book is informed by contemporary (often politicized) literary theory . There are many implications here for the study of blues.]

Houston A. Baker, Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory (Chicago, 1984), especially the "Introduction," pp. 1-14. [In one of his relatively early books, an eminent African-American scholar (and advocate of emphatic ethnic politics) posits the thesis that "Afro-American culture is a complex, reflexive enterprise which finds its proper figuration in blues conceived as a matrix. . . . The matrix is a point of ceaseless input and output, a web of intersecting, crisscrossing impulses always in productive transit. . . . [The Blues] are the multiplex, enabling script in which Afro-American cultural discourse is inscribed." (pp. 3-4); This may be useful as part of term-paper preparation.]

Greil Marcus, Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music, 3rd rev. ed. (New York, 1990), pp. 19-35. [emphatically non-scholarly and "pop-culture" romanticized in tone; very clumsy and often inaccurate in its musical descriptions--yet a useful homage to Robert Johnson, as seen through the eyes of a rock devotee searching for the roots of his own musical experience. All the benefits--and follies--of what Adorno called the "fan-as-critic" are to be found here.]

Arthur Maisel, "Talent and Technique: George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue," in Trends in Schenkerian Research, ed. Allen Cadwallader (New York: Schirmer, 1990), pp. 51-64.
[WRITTEN OR ORAL RESPONSE MAY BE ASSIGNED]

James Michener, Two Stories from Tales of the South Pacific

a) "Our Heroine" (106-32)

b) "Fo' Dolla" (156-216)

also recommended: "An Officer and A Gentleman" (40-58) and "A Boar's Tooth" (232-52)

Hammerstein and Logan, South Pacific (book; i.e., text of the Broadway musical: photocopied, on reserve).

THE ESSAYS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: GENERAL INFORMATION

The Shorter Essays

At various points in the course you will be asked to provide a typed, double-spaced, 3 pp. essay/reaction (written in good prose) for one assigned reading (***Solomon**); you will be asked to prepare and hand in a list of "The Ten Most Important Points" (***Burkholder** on Ives's Second Symphony); perhaps a summary or reaction to Arthur Maisel's analytical essay on Rhapsody in Blue; and at the end of the course you will be asked to write a 3 pp. **Movie Review of South Pacific**.

You may be asked to read your written paper aloud in class to initiate a discussion.

Please read this paragraph carefully: Your Solomon essay/reaction is, in effect, a brief response that, to some extent, reflects your own considered reaction to the reading. Do not provide colloquial, "off-the-cuff" reactions. **A good strategy** is to strive to understand the underlying principles, assumptions, and methodologies of the writers involved, and then to discuss those principles, assumptions, etc. What is the author attempting to prove or demonstrate--why was this piece written at all? Are his assumptions valid? short-sighted? biased? fair? self-serving? Is the logic sound? the evidence irrefutable? Following up on this strategy produces a "critique" (or analysis) of the reasoning that lies behind the article. **Another strategy** is to compare these principles or assumptions to those underpinning other things that you have read for class: that is, you might like to allow your understanding of one article impact on your understanding of another--to let the readings of the term "mix" with each other. Simply to summarize the "factual" content of the article and to do nothing more is inappropriate: it does not involve much thought. Note: You will want to convince me in some way or another that you have understood the reading thoroughly. Avoid overly emotional responses and peripheral issues. Dig deeply. Say something worth saying.

You are expected to prepare your essays with great care--again, you may be asked to read your essay aloud in class on the date that it is due (and then defend it).

Note: no grade on the essays is necessarily final; any essay may be redone for regrading within two class sessions of receiving it back. Your revisions (if you choose to do this) must go beyond the mere "plugging-in" of my comments.

The Term Paper

Note: If time permits, the last class session will include a presentation (by the authors) of the two or three best papers.

For the 8-10 pp. term paper**, you should choose one or two blues tracks from Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings and submit it/them to a close study--in terms of both text and music. How does the poetic/image/musical/accompaniment structure serve the goals of the expression/"message" of the song. You will want to consider all of our assigned readings (Gates, etc.) and **integrate some of your own analysis/transcriptions [?] into the paper**. The paper can be modeled after the sorts of analysis that we are doing in class, or it may strike out to engage somewhat different modes. **Due: to be determined (probably around the eighth week of the quarter): more information later.**

Alternative option: If you prefer, you can also write on some contrasting aspects of African-American blues and some of its "white" adaptations in American/English popular music/rock of the 1950s or 1960s: Elvis Presley, Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, the Beach Boys, etc.)

(If you choose the latter topic, you might wish, for example, to compare a Johnson "original" from the 1930s, such as Johnson's two takes of "Cross Road Blues," "Stop Breakin' Down Blues," or "Love in Vain," with the 1960s or 1970s covers (remakes) by Eric Clapton (on the 1968 Cream album Wheels of Fire) and/or the Rolling Stones (on Exile on Main Street, Let it Bleed, or Get Yer Ya-Yas Out!). Cf. "Malted Milk Blues" (recently covered on Eric Clapton: Unplugged). Or you may simply wish to compare the styles of otherwise unrelated songs.

Whatever your choice, the goal is simply to write a responsible paper on an appropriate level. Ultimately you should try to say something significant without resorting either to tendentious rhetoric or to inflated claims. Do not think of this assignment as the simple, straightforward "solving" of a musical piece by analysis: things are usually more complex than that. **Often, instead of the facile "solving" of a problem, the best strategy is carefully to lay out the nature of the problems that are at stake.**

**** The 8-10 pp. refers to typed, double-spaced text (with one-inch margins). If needed, use endnotes, not footnotes: these will not count as part of the 8-10 pp.**

****Grading is based on a complex of factors, including:**

- a) care taken with analysis and argumentation; quality and subtlety of thought;
- b) avoidance of overly formulaic (or reductionist) positions or one-dimensional modes of argumentation; (one goal of the class is to suggest that nothing is quite so simple or quite so one-dimensional as it might at first appear);
- c) connection of the argumentation with classwork and assigned reading;

d) careful writing (grammar; spelling; syntax) and general appearance of the typed document.