





History (HIST) 311

Blues, Jazz, and the Emergence of Modern African American Musical Culture, 1900–1970 (Revision 1)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

Individualized study online 

Credits:

3

Areas of study:

Arts or Humanities

Prerequisites:

None

Precluded:

None

Challenge:

HIST 311 has a challenge for credit option.

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

In HIST 311, in an effort to demonstrate the value of an interdisciplinary approach to the history of key modern African American musical forms, you are encouraged to think about questions of musical origins, authenticity, race, gender, and identity. You will observe as you go through the course that African and African American musical cultures have been attended by a rich and varied literature. This literature includes sociological and musicological texts, nonacademic writing, and musical autobiographies and biographies. Without due attention to these, the academic study of African American musical culture would be sorely lacking.

The idea throughout this course is that the history of modern African American and American popular music is a distinct part of the plurality—though no melting pot—of the wide-ranging world cultures that constitute what is plural about the American scene today. This plurality is constituted by forms of cultural expression particular to certain places and regional histories. It is about the different tastes and experiences of the peoples that make up the never-settled and never-complete multiplicity of American society and culture.

Outline

The course consists of four units, broken into smaller subunits. Assigned readings include textbook chapters and academic essays, all available online.

Unit 1: Introducing Blues and Jazz—Music, Culture, Race, Gender, and Identity

Unit 2: Harlem Renaissance and the Emergence of the Jazz Age, 1920–1940

Unit 3: From Swing to Bebop—Bird's Black Genius and Hipster Culture, 1940–1960



Unit 4: Rhythm and Blues, Rock 'n' Roll, Soul, and the Jazz Avant-Garde, 1950–1970

Learning outcomes

In the study of the emergence of popular music in the United States through the particular themes and focuses of this course, you will learn to


- assess the way in which African Americans, imported as slaves from Africa, retained traces of African-originating musical and cultural practices and through these retentions contributed substantially to the unique ways in which modern American musical culture developed;
- interpret in interdisciplinary ways the social circumstances and cultural backgrounds within which modern blues, jazz, and other genres of popular music were created;
- analyze the complex relationships between race, class, and gender in the history and evolution of recorded music;
- integrate into your thinking and analysis an appreciation for the far less celebrated and acknowledged lives and contributions of key African American women singers and musicians to the art of jazz music;
- objectively assess both the possibilities and difficulties of attempting to label and form genre distinctions between the various interrelated musical forms such as rhythm and blues, soul music, and rock 'n' roll; and
- interrogate the aesthetic compulsions and visionary ambitions of such significantly innovative jazz musicians as Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and John Coltrane.


Evaluation

To **receive credit**  for HIST 311, you must achieve a course composite grade of at least **D (50 percent)**  and a grade of at least 50 percent or better on the final examination. The weighting of the composite grade is as follows:


Activity	Weight
Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Assignment 3	30%


Activity	Weight
Final Exam	30%
Total	100%


The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the [Exams and grades](#)  section of the Calendar.


To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's [online Calendar](#) .

Materials

Comforth, Bruce M., and Gayle Wardlow. *Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2019.  (Print)

Goodman, John F. *Mingus Speaks: Interviews with John F. Goodman*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.  (Print)

Griffin, Farrah J. *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artists and Progressive Politics During World War II*. New York: Civitas Books, 2013.  (Print)

Lordi, Emily J. *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013.  (Print)

All other materials are available online.


Challenge for credit

Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about [challenge for credit](#)  can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation





To **receive credit**  for the HIST 311 challenge registration, you must achieve a grade of 100 percent on the Challenge Essay Assignment. The final grade is 100 percent based on completion and submission of the Challenge Assignment: 50 percent for reading and preparation work on the assignment and 50 percent for the submitted assignment.

Activity	Weight
Challenge Essay Assignment	100%
Total	100%



Challenge for credit course registration form

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#) 
- › [Program planning](#) 
- › [Request assistance](#) 
- › [Support services](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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