Course Name: Trends in contemporary Music, from Rock’n Roll to the extremes.
Course Code: MUSC 185; WGST 380
Semester: Fall 2015
Classroom number: 308
Scheduling: Wed 3:35-6:30 p.m.

Instructor Data:
Name: Daniela Costa
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Office hours: (by appointment only)

Prerequisites: None

Course Description:
Through an inter-disciplinary approach, which examines the historical, theatrical, sociological, aesthetical, and technological elements of contemporary music, the course considers a range of musical forms from classical to contemporary pop. It deals specifically with the origins and development of contemporary Rock’n roll music, the relationship between culture, subculture, style and pop music, globalization and theatre, and the production and marketing of the music. The course gives a broad overview of music innovations, trends, creative practices and movements in relation with culture, counter-culture, location, and the Global use formula theatre - big, profit-orientated, professional musicals based on the taste of the new globalized world-audiences. The explosion of rock’n roll has influenced and altered Italian singer songs-writers and Italian rock artists: the course also analyses how rock'n'roll and beat generation were somehow adapted to Italian context and contributed to renovate the contemporary Italian music and society.

Emphasis is also placed on analyzing the particular business-oriented species of cross-cultural music-theatre, interbreeding the international genre of opera-musical with world-pop music of Rock ‘n roll, to create the rock-opera, as a syncretic merging of different theatrical arts. It analyzes how, through legendary, extreme theatrical performances and Festivals productions (such as the Italian Sanremo’s Festival of the Song), certain bands or singers became some of the most popular ones in the world.

As traditional gender stereotypes across the cultural map are increasingly challenged, the topic also investigates, from the perspective of Gender Studies, the origins and variations of theatrical cross-dressing through the ages and across cultures, the complexity and the ambiguity of voices and bodies. It illuminates mysteries of sexuality, fandom, obsessions, performances, recordings, extravagant gestures, subversion, pop divas and Drags Queen. It explores the power of contemporary music to capture the fluidity of sexuality through voices that transcend the prescription of gender, reflecting at the same time the interests of young generations for the transvestism-masquerading phenomena of the 21th century productions.

No prior musical background (technical) or historical knowledge of music is required. Classes include lectures, intensive listening to recorded material and watching videotapes, class discussions, as well as attending live concert-performances in Italian theaters and concert venues, and a workshop at the Theatrical Costume Atelier (Sartoria Teatrale Fiorentina) in Florence.
Course Objectives

The course develops, throughout an interdisciplinary approach which brings together Music and Gender Studies, a deep knowledge of the ways in which contemporary Rock’n roll music and performances have changed over time. It also demonstrates the relationship between the hybridity of the Italian phenomena of the Castrato cross-dressing theatrical sound world and Italian Opera, and the contemporary transgender-masquerading Rock’n Roll performances, Rock Operas and Rock musicals.

The Songs that will be analyzed during the course are between some of the most amazing examples of Rock’n Roll music, from the Sixties, Beatles included, to nowadays.

• Gain a thorough knowledge of the works of the most representative Rock’n Roll pivotal artists, groups and related soloists. The vocal, socio-cultural and historical-psychological aspects of their works, also as representation of gender roles. Students will be able to relate each work to the social/historical and vocal context of the artist/group’s time and style. Assessed in Mid-term and Final Exam.

• To develop a sense of the evolution of contemporary Rock’n Roll music and gender roles. Students will be able to place different Rock’n Roll Songs on a chronological line and to investigate voices as sites of multiple meaning, including sonic and sexual ambiguity. Assessed in Term Paper and Final Exam.

• Acquire the ability to listen to voices and groups and to enjoy Rock’n Roll music in general! Students will be able to recognize/identify different styles of music and singing. Assessed in Quizzes on listening material.

• To conduct a semiotic analysis of the lyrics of some representative Rock’n Roll songs and to identify their gender’s symbols. Assessed in Term Paper, in Mid-term and Final Exam.

• To develop a vocabulary and communicative skills related to Rock’n Roll music. Assessed in Term Paper, Home Assignment, and class discussion.

Teaching Method

Interdisciplinary approach by studying Rock’n Roll’s textual analysis, music features, audience reception, and singing/production practices also from the perspective of gender’s studies, sexuality, subject formation and related cultural theory. Classes include lectures, class discussions, listening quizzes, individual and group work assignments, and during the lessons musical recordings will be played and videos/films shown. We will attend live performances at Theatres/Concert Venues in Florence (TBA). We will also hold one special class/workshop at the Sartoria Teatrale (Theatre Costume Atelier). Students are also responsible for the success of the teaching method, as the pedagogical value of a method has to be enacted by each participant in the process.

Teaching Commitment

As a teacher, my primary goal is to serve as a mentor to my students, to inspire their enthusiasm for the learning process, and to create a setting that enables them to strengthen their own talents, challenging them and demanding a level of competence and commitment appropriate to their abilities. In my teaching experience I have been able to shape my courses so as to make Music and Gender studies, vocalism, style, language and culture come alive for my students. Having devoted my own life to such studies I am able to bring a passion, enthusiasm and commitment to creative
scholarly inquiry and share with students a wide range of material that is both innovative and inspiring.

**Decorum**

Cell-phones off; no food and beverages admitted, except for bottled water.
No technical devices are accepted (laptops, I pads, etc)
Disrupting behavior (doing something else during the course, engaging in private conversations, playing with electronic devices) is not accepted and if repeated it will negatively affect the attendance and participation part of the final grade or may result in removal from the course.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is taken at the beginning of class from the first day of the semester. The student entering class after attendance is taken has to contact the professor at the end and announce his/her presence. However, this does not mean that coming late is accepted. Two late arrivals may be excused, three turn automatically into an absence and will affect the attendance and participation part of the final grade.

**Students can miss one week's work, irrespective of the course formula (three sessions, two sessions, one session).** It is their responsibility to make up for the missed work. If they miss a quiz or a report they are not allowed to have it at another time, unless the absence is for certified medical reasons and the professor and Dean agree.

More than one week’s work missed is going to be penalized as follows:
One extra absence:
1. by lowering the attendance and participation grade
Two extra absences
2. by lowering the final grade by a whole letter grade
Three extra absences
3. by grading the whole course F

**Assessment Criteria**

The final grade for the course will be compounded from the following:

- Class Participation 10%
- Mid-term test 20%
- Research paper 25%
- Final test 25%
- Listening Quizzes 10%
- Home Assignment 10%

**Class Participation (10%)**: The grade will be calculated to reflect your participation in class discussions, your capacity to introduce ideas and thoughts dealing with the texts, your ability to interpret different uses of literary language and to express your analysis in intellectual, constructive argumentation. When determining your class participation grade, traditional criteria such as material preparation, completed reading before class, and collaborative group work are also evaluated. But it is the active, meaningful and informed verbal and written contribution that you make that is most important to your overall participation grade.
Midterm (20%) and Final (25%) examinations: The midterm and final exams are designed to establish and communicate to you the progress you are making towards meeting the course learning objectives. They are comprised of both ID and essay questions, which test your abilities to identify, apply, and synthesize course content.

Research Paper (25%): The purpose of the research paper is for you to assess the development of your competence over the course outlines of the semester. The final paper requires you to drawing on activities and exercises from throughout the semester to help you write a thoughtful and reflective self-assessment essay that tracks the development of your own personal intercultural competence in terms of analysis of the issue, coherent development of the thesis showing grasp of the aspect discussed, and correct references to good sources.

The final research paper has to focus on a topic regarding Trends in contemporary music, from Rock’n Roll to the extremes chosen by the student and approved by the teacher and developed through serious researches, readings, analysis, comparisons, observations. Guidelines for the paper will be distributed in class on the first days of class (research paper form).

- The subject of the research paper should be decided by the end of the third week of class.
- The essay consists in the articulated and convincing treatment of a topic pertinent to the course, with a clear formulation of the ethical issue to be investigated and an equally clear conclusion. As ethics is applied philosophy, students are expected to address ethical theory and concrete examples in a balanced manner. The topic has to be screened and approved by the professor.
- On the delivery date hard copies typed in standard format are to be handed in to the professor at the beginning of class and an electronic copy readable by Word-Windows or Microsoft Word is to be submitted by email.
- Standard format: Title, minimum 8 pages but preferably more, Times New Roman, 12, 2 line spacing, Bibliography.
- Handwritten, and e-mailed papers without hard copies typed in standard format handed in to the professor, are not accepted. Also, papers left in Professor Box are not accepted. If you are absent on the date the paper is due, it must reach me nonetheless. Papers will be accepted before the established date, but only during the class hours.
- All papers should have a pertinent bibliography and properly footnoted.
- Please use at least 4 sources (of which no more than 2 internet sources/NO WIKIPIDIA!)
- Plagiarism will bring you F grade. (Plagiarism is passing off anyone else's work your own. This includes unauthorized assistance with the writing of an assignment, improperly cited sources, submission of an assignment which you did not write, submission of a “recycled” version of your old work as new, and turning in the same assignment to two or more courses without permission).
- Submitting work on time is an important part of both scholarly and professional practice. Further, Faculty schedule demands that we can grade work within SET PERIOD. It is also unfair to those who submit work on time if late work is graded without any penalty:

**Essays submitted late will receive a grade penalty as follows:** 1 day—1 letter grade (e.g., A- to B-), 2 days—2 letter grades (e.g., A- to C-), more than 2 days—grade of 0 / F on the assignment.

The deadline for handing in the paper is..
**Listening quizzes (10%)**: Listening quizzes are experiential activities designed for you to acquire and develop the ability to recognize voices and groups, and different styles and to enjoy Rock’n Roll music in general.

**Home Assignment (10%)**: The purpose of the home assignment is for you to assess the development of your critical competence in attending a live mandatory performance/concert at the Theatre or in Concert Venues. The home assignment requires you to write a review of the mandatory performance (TBA), based upon your personal impressions and critical analysis of the vocal cast, music style, performers, staging, costumes, etc.

- Standard format: Title, **minimum 3 pages but preferably more**, Times New Roman, 12, 2 line spacing.
- Handwritten, and e-mailed assignments without hard copies typed in standard format handed in to the professor, are not accepted. Also, assignments left in Professor Box are not accepted. If you are absent on the date the assignment is due, it must reach me nonetheless. Assignments will be accepted before the established date, but only during the class hours.
- **The deadline for handing in the home assignment is**.

The evaluation of papers and home assignments is done according to the following criteria:

- well formulated argument (rhetorical strategy)
- ability to approach an issue from various points of view and evaluate them critically
- good use of bibliography. Sources need to be cited and listed at the end in the Bibliography. Class notes can build the frame of your argumentation, but will not be cited as primary sources.
- clarity of expression including quality of style (grammar, spelling).

All quizzes and exams are cumulative in terms of their content and their contribution to the calculation of your final grade. The written essay/project will involve you in one piece of investigating reading and reporting.

**Failure to submit or fulfill any required assessment element results in failure for the class.**

**Significance for the final grade of attendance and participation**

A: the student has no absence, is punctual and respectful with the professors and the classmates, is always prepared for class (has done the reading and writing assignments); He/she vividly participates in class discussions and contributes with interpretations which prove fine critical sense and creativity, using a grammatically correct, semantically rich and conceptually clear language.

B – the student is respectful and punctual, is prepared for class, participates in discussions, has a good level of understanding the issues under focus and an appropriate use of language.

C – has a adequate but schematic or superficial understanding of the texts and issues under focus, is not always prepared for class, uses a simple language.

The language/art teachers will describe their own definition of grades.
Grades Significance for written assignments

Example:
Grade A: the work is an excellent synthesis of elaborated course inputs, extensive reading and original ideas; it is well articulated in a balanced argumentation and formulated in a clear, fluent style.
Grade B: the work shows a good elaboration of the course inputs, a well-conducted discourse and a good use of bibliography; it has a good level of style.
Grade C: the work proves a basic understanding of the research issue, but does not use the bibliography properly/or does not express ideas in a persuasive clear style or lacks in discourse planning, therefore needing improvement.
Grade D: The work is acceptable, but weak in terms of formulating and discussing the question under focus and organizing the discourse. It relies on non-academic sources and does not, in general, comply with the requirements, unless in minimal way.
Grade F: The work is not acceptable in terms of the basic requirements or has not been submitted in time.
Grade 0: the work has not been submitted
Grade 0 + Main Campus Report: the work has been plagiarized.

Grades Conversion Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Version I</th>
<th>Version II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>93,6-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>89,6-93,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
<td>86,6 – 89,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>84,6 -86,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>79,6 -84,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>76,6 – 79,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>73, 6 – 76,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>=70-73</td>
<td>69, 6 – 73,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>66, 6 – 69,5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65- 66</td>
<td>64, 6 – 66, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 65</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is essential to education and represents the bond of trust between the university, the instructor and the student.
Academic dishonesty is any action by which a student seeks to claim credit for the intellectual effort of another person or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic exercise. It includes unauthorized assistance in tests and examinations; intentionally impeding or damaging the academic work of others; submitting another person’s work as your own, or providing work for this purpose; submitting work of your own that has been substantially edited and revised by another person, or providing such an editing and revision service for others; submitting material from a source (books, articles, internet sites) without proper citation and bibliographic reference; paraphrasing material from a source without appropriate reference and citation; submitting substantially the same piece of work in more than one course without the explicit consent of all the instructors concerned; assisting other students in any of the above acts.

Students who are academically dishonest will receive “0”, zero on the work in question or a failing grade for the course as a whole, depending on the
importance of the work to the overall course grade and the judgment of the instructor.

Plagiarism
Academic dishonesty can manifest itself in plagiarism, defined as claiming intellectual property on somebody else's work, in other words as cultural theft. Written assignments will be submitted to the plagiarism detection procedures of TurnItIn.com., activated on Blackboard.

A plagiarized assignment/paper, research project, etc will be graded 0 (zero) and sent to the Main Campus accompanied by a report.

Special Accommodation for students with learning disabilities
Documented learning disabilities or other medically certified problems that need special accommodation for any of the student's expected academic performances will be treated with the due attention.

Required Readings
Textbook: photocopies of selected chapters from different textbooks to be bought at: Florence Copy in Via Giuseppe La Farina, 10. Estimated cost Euro 15.

Recommended Additional Resources


Penny M. Von Eschen, Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War (Harvard University Press, 2006).

Gilmour, Michael J., Ed. Call me the seeker: listening to religion in popular music. New York: Continuum, 2005.

Shapiro, Peter. Turn the beat around: the secret history of disco. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005.


Thomas Swiss *Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory* (paperback edition), (editor), Blackwell (1998);


Clément, Catherine, *Opera, or, The Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).


Frith, Simon and Andrew Goodwin (eds.). *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Record* (New York: Routledge, 1990). (especially "Rock and Sexuality.")

**COURSE GENERAL OUTLINE** (A detailed Syllbus with dates will be provided at the beginning of classes):

Please consider that the contents of individual classes may be changed throughout the course according to the class's progress, and that some visits - whenever available and pertinent- may be included within regular class time. Classes include lectures, class discussions, excerpts of recorded material and videotapes, as well as attending live performances in Italian theaters and concert venues and a workshop at the Theatre Costume Atelier (Sartoria Teatrale Fiorentina) in Florence.
SEPTEMBER

23rd (1) Introduction to the course syllabus and used material. Aesthetic principles of Rock Music, voice, and gender.


OCTOBER

7th (3) The Who, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd.

14th (4) Theatre of Gender: David Bowie at the climax of the sexual revolution.

21st (5) Workshop at the Theatrical Costume Atelier.

28th (6) Freddy Mercury and Queen. The creation of Rock Opera.

Summing up of the first half of the course content and review.

NOVEMBER

4th (7) MID-TERM WRITTEN EXAM.


25th NO CLASS (SCHOOL OPEN)

DECEMBER

2nd (10) Transposition of genre: Bohème into Rent rock musical.

LISTENING QUIZZES


Summing-up and Consolidation of Course Content. Final review.

16th (12) FINAL EXAM
TODAY IS THE DEADLINE FOR HANDING IN THE HOME ASSIGNMENT

Special Visit and workshop at the Theatrical Costume Atelier Sartoria Teatrale Fiorentina in Florence. Date TBA. Attendance is mandatory.

Concerts dates TBA. Attendance is mandatory.