

**Victoria University of Wellington  
Media Studies (SEFTMS)**

## **MDIA 205 Popular Music Studies**

### **2008 Trimester 1**

### **Course Guide**

Course Convener:  
Associate Professor Roy Shuker  
Room: 202, 42-44 Kelburn Parade  
Tel.: 463 6821  
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Course Tutor  
Brannavan Gnanalingham

Consultation Times: tba  
Room Von Zedlitz 912

Consultation Times:  
TBA

What is 'popular music culture'? Why take it seriously?  
What is the appeal of performers such as Kylie Minogue and Kurt Cobain?  
Just what is 'the music industry'; how does it shape the production and consumption of music?  
What role does 'the music press' play in the commodification of popular music?  
What are emo, speed metal, and bhangra? Who listens to them, and why?  
Why does New Zealand on Air use our taxes to support New Zealand music?  
How do we 'listen' to popular music?

**If you are interested in critically examining such questions, this course is for you.**

No formal knowledge of music is required.  
The course presupposes an active student engagement with popular music, and the discourses surrounding its production and consumption, in a manner that is both academically rigorous and pleasurable.

#### **Course Workload:**

This course is worth 22 points.  
The expectation is that this equates to an average of fifteen hours work per week, over a twelve-week trimester.  
This includes lectures, tutorials, course reading, and assignments,  
Obviously, individual effort will vary, depending when you have pieces of work due.

#### **Course Aims and Objectives:**

- The course provides a critical introduction to the study of popular music culture, with an emphasis on post-1950s rock and pop music and subsequent genres.
- Students will be introduced to issues and views/theories that relate to popular music culture and the various forms it takes.
- Students will gain an understanding of the nature and interaction of the international and New Zealand music industry; music scenes, stars and authorship; audiences and fans; textual and genre analysis; and music as a form of cultural politics.
- Through the course assignments and tutorial tasks, students will be expected to put into use critical terms, concepts, and approaches that they are presented with in the course.

**Course Lectures:**

Lectures: Wednesday 3.10 – 5.00pm. ROOM: HM 206 (Hugh McKenzie)

The lectures form the core of the course; attendance is strongly advised. The lecture sessions include relevant audio-visual material, and several ‘guest’ speakers.

**Blackboard:** Note that this course is **not** on blackboard.  
(Primarily due to issues of copyright and intellectual property).

**Tutorials:**

Tutorials will be organised at the first lecture, and lists will be posted in KP.42-44 the following Friday.

They will be held on Thursday.

**Tutorials begin in Week Two of the trimester.**

**Course Text:**

Roy Shuker (2008) *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, Routledge, London & New York.

This will be a starting point for the lectures, which will focus on illustrative case studies.

**Key books and articles**

These are held on CLOSED RESERVE or REFERENCE in the Library.

See the separate handout.

Some articles can be accessed electronically.

## 2008 CLASS PROGRAMME

(1) Wednesday February 27th

### **INTRODUCTION: STUDYING POPULAR MUSIC:**

The Archies v The MC5

#### **Course Administration:**

- Course outline: assessment.
- References
- Organization of tutorials.

COURSE READING: Textbook introduction.

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(2) Wednesday March 5th

### **THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC INDUSTRY**

Overview.

Case Studies: The Marketing-Branding of

(1) Bob Marley and the Wailers

(2) The Dixie Chicks

Reading: Textbook chapter 1.

Further References:

Keith Negus (1999) "Corporate Strategy", in *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*, Routledge, London & New York, chapter 2.

Mark Fenster and Thomas Swiss, "Business", in Horner & Swiss, eds. *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. CLOSED RESERVE

#### **Web sites:**

The Recording Industry Association of America: [www.riaa.com](http://www.riaa.com)

The British Phonographic Industry: [www.bpi.co.uk](http://www.bpi.co.uk)

The International Federation of the Phonographic Industries: [www.ifpi.org](http://www.ifpi.org)

### **FIRST TUTORIAL SESSIONS HELD: Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup>.**

Tutorial tasks allocated.

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(3) Wednesday March 12th

### **THE NEW ZEALAND MUSIC INDUSTRY**

**(1) Introductory overview**

**(2) Panel of local musicians (details tba)**

See the Reading List for resources, including web sites

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(4) Wednesday March 19th

**TECHNOLOGY:**

Introduction; a short history of formats.

The first assignment: guidelines.

Screening: The Invention of Recorded Sound

Further reading: Course text: chapter 2.

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(5) Wednesday March 26th

**ISSUES OF AUTHORSHIP AND STARDOM**

Overview; Case studies: Trevor Horn; Kylie Minogue

Further reading: Course text: chapters 3 and 4.

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**ESSAY TOPIC 1: MUSIC AND THE INTERNET.**

**DUE Friday March 28th**

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(6) Wednesday April 2<sup>nd</sup>

**TEXTS & GENRES; COVERS & THE CANON**

Further reading: Course text: chapter 6

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(7) Wednesday April 9<sup>th</sup>

**SOUND AND IMAGE: MUSIC VIDEO**

**Guest lecturer:** Brannavan Gnanalingam

Further reading: Course text: chapter 5 (pp.107-117); chapter 8

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**ESSAY TOPIC 2: GENRE**

**DUE Friday April 11<sup>th</sup>**

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**MID TRIMESTER BREAK (April 14<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>)**

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**ESSAY TOPIC 3: MUSIC VIDEO**

**DUE: MONDAY April 28th**

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(8) Wednesday April 30th

**THE MUSIC PRESS & MUSIC JOURNALISM**

**Guest lecturer:** Simon Sweetman.

Further reading:

Course text: chapter 9

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(9) Wednesday May 7th

**AUDIENCES AND CONSUMPTION**

FANDOM: Record Collecting as Social Practice

Further reading:

Course text: chapter 5

SCREENING: Desperate Man Blues; Vinyl; High Fidelity (Extracts).

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(10) Wednesday May 14th

**POLITICS**

Introduction

Guidelines re. essay topic 4.

FURTHER READING:

Course text: chapter 5

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(11) Wednesday May 21st

**MORAL PANIC AND POPULAR MUSIC**

SCREENING: Marilyn Manson & Columbine (Much Music Video).

Further Reading:

Course text; chapter 13.

Martin Cloonan & Rebee Garofalo, *Policing Pop* (ON RESERVE)

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Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup>

**ASSIGNMENT TOPIC 4: POLITICS. DUE**

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(12) Wednesday May 28<sup>th</sup>.

**HISTORIES: why 1955?**

(a taster for those interested in MDIA 305)

**Class fun quiz (but with serious prizes)**

**ASSESSMENT:**

**Internal: 100%**

**To complete the course requirements, students must submit two assignments, the tutorial task, and attend at least 75% of the tutorial sessions. The value of the written work is:**

- (1) Tutorial presentation (individual topics provided at first tutorial) 20%
- (2) Essay 1,500 – 1,800 words; 40%

(3) Essay 1,500 – 1,800 words; 40%

### **Tutorials**

These begin in Week Two of the trimester.

You should attend at least 75% of your tutorial sessions. A roll will be kept, and you will present a specific tutorial task as an integral part of the course.

Tutorial presentation. Each of you will make a brief (10 minutes) presentation on a provided topic (these will be randomly allocated at the first tutorials).

The presentation and following discussion will be useful material for writing the tutorial paper (1,000 words). This must be handed to the tutor no later than one week after the presentation.

The presentation is not assessed; only the paper version will be graded.

Essays. Write on any TWO of the following:

(IF YOU DO MORE THAN TWO, THE 'BEST TWO' COUNT TOWARDS YOUR COURSE ASSESSMENT)

### **ESSAY TOPIC 1. MUSIC AND THE INTERNET. DUE Friday March 28th**

With reference to specific examples, critically discuss the impact of the Internet on the production, distribution and consumption of popular music.

SEE Course reference handout.

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### **ESSAY TOPIC 2. GENRE. Due Friday April 11<sup>th</sup>**

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Choose one popular music genre. (CONTINUES NEXT PAGE)

(a) Outline the variations within the genre to demonstrate that it does not comprise "a monolithic whole."

(b) What do critics and consumers of the genre have to say about the functions of this genre for its listeners/fans.

(Your essay should include reference to examples of the genre to support your argument, and could include interview data).

Starting points :

Borthwick, S. and Moy, R. (2004) *Popular Music Genres: an introduction*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. LIBRARY CLOSED RESERVE

The authors develop a general schema for studying musical genre, apply this to a number of major genres, and provide a useful list of further resources in relation to each.

Fabbri, F. (1999) 'Browsing Musical Spaces: Categories and the Musical Mind', conference paper, produced online by permission of the author, (At [www.tagg.org](http://www.tagg.org))

**ESSAY TOPIC 3: MUSIC VIDEO.**  
**Due Monday April 28<sup>th</sup>**

View the collection of music videos on reserve for this course in the AV Room, University Library.

Undertake a critical analysis of three of these music videos, with reference to the critical literature on the subject.

**ESSAY TOPIC 4. POLITICS.**  
**Due Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup>.**

"Popular music has no political significance".  
 Critically discuss this claim, with reference to specific examples.

REFERENCES: SEE COURSE READING LIST: section 12

**Extensions and Late Essays**

Extensions can only be granted by the course coordinator (Associate Prof. Shuker), and only in exceptional circumstances.

Late essays submitted without an extension will be given a maximum grade of C..

No essays will be accepted later than one week after the due date.

If you feel you may need an extension, speak to or email me BEFORE the due date, providing relevant certification (e.g. a doctor's certificate, a note from a counselor, etc.)

**The Final Date for submission of any written work in this course is Friday May 30<sup>th</sup>.**

**Permission to submit work after that date must be sought in writing from the Course Convenor, and will only be granted in the most exceptional circumstances.**  
**GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being



studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under “about Victoria” on the Victoria homepage at:

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/calendar\\_intro.html](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html)

Information on the following topics is available electronically under “Course Outline General Information” at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.*

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

*Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.*

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning,
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course,
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

[www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html)