

Victoria University of Wellington
School of English, Film, Theatre, and Media Studies
Media Studies

MDIA 205 Popular Music Studies

2009 Trimester 1 (Monday 2 March – Friday 5 June 2009)

Course Outline

Course Convener:

Associate Professor Roy Shuker

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Tel.: 463 6821

Email: roy.shuker@vuw.ac.nz

Consultation Times:

Tuesday 11am-12 noon

Wednesday 11am-12 noon.

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 Learning 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 4.10 – 6.00pm. Room: Hunter (HU) LT 323

(NOTE: given last bus services from the campus, I will try and finish prior to 6.00pm)

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:

Only the main course guidelines and reading list are on BB. The lectures are not posted there. (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 by the following Friday.

They will also go up on Blackboard.

Tutorials will be held on Thursday afternoon and Friday, early afternoon.

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.

There also some very useful **web sites**, though at times these need to be treated with caution (as, indeed, do all sources).

I shall go through available resources more fully at the first class, and in the first tutorial sessions.

2009 CLASS PROGRAMME

(1) Wednesday March 4th

INTRODUCTION: STUDYING POPULAR MUSIC CULTURE:

The Archies v The MC5

Course Administration:

- Course outline: assessment.
- Reference List
- Organization of tutorials.

COURSE READING: Textbook introduction.

(2) Wednesday March 11th

THE INTERNATIONAL MUSIC INDUSTRY

(i) An Overview.

(ii) The Marketing-Branding of Bob Marley and the Wailers; 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

Websites:

The Recording Industry Association of America: www.riaa.com

The British Phonographic Industry: www.bpi.co.uk

The International Federation of the Phonographic Industries: www.ifpi.org

Who Owns What: www.cjr.org/resources/

FIRST TUTORIAL SESSIONS: Thursday, March 12th and Friday March 13th.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ATTEND YOUR FIRST TUTORIAL,
when the tutorial tasks will be allocated.

(3) Wednesday March 18th

THE NEW ZEALAND MUSIC INDUSTRY

At the grassroots: local musicians (details tba)

(4) Wednesday March 25th

THE NEW ZEALAND MUSIC INDUSTRY & THE STATE

Guest Lecturers:

Brendan Smyth, NZ Music Manager, New Zealand On Air.

Cath Andersen, Chief Executive, New Zealand Music Commission.

See the Reading List for resources, including web sites.

ESSAY OPTION 1: The New Zealand Music Industry
DUE Monday March 30th

(5) Wednesday April 1st

TECHNOLOGY

Introduction; a short history of formats.

Screening: The Invention of Recorded Sound (part of).

Further reading: Course text: chapter 2.

(6) Wednesday April 8th

THE MUSIC PRESS & MUSIC JOURNALISM

Further reading: Course text chapter 9

Note: there will be no tutorials this week, because of the closure for Easter.

ESSAY OPTION 2: Music and the Internet
DUE Wednesday April 8th

MID TRIMESTER BREAK 10 April – 26 April

ESSAY OPTION 3: Music Press
DUE Tuesday April 28th

(7) Wednesday April 29th

ISSUES OF AUTHORSHIP AND STARDOM

Overview; Case studies: Trevor Horn; SAW; Kylie Minogue

Further reading: Course text: chapters 3 and 4.

(8) Wednesday May 6th

TEXTS & GENRES; COVERS & THE CANON

Further reading: Course text: chapter 6

ESSAY OPTION 4: Auteur/star study

DUE: Friday May 8th

(9) Wednesday May 13th

GENRE CASE STUDY (DETAILS TBA)

(10) Wednesday May 20th

AUDIENCES AND CONSUMPTION

EXAMPLE: Record collecting as a social practice

Further reading: Course text: chapter 5

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

(11) Wednesday May 27th

POLITICS

FURTHER READING: Course text. Chapter 12.

(12) Wednesday June 3rd

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)

ASSIGNMENT OPTION 5: POLITICS**DUE: Friday June 5th****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 1,200-1,500 words 40%
- (3) Essay 1,200-1,500 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 OPTION 1: The New Zealand Music Industry/scene**DUE: Monday March 30th**

"The contemporary New Zealand music industry remains marginalized and underdeveloped within both local and international markets".

With reference to illustrative examples, critically discuss this claim.

ESSAY OPTION 2: Popular music and the Internet**DUE Wednesday April 8th**

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

MID TRIMESTER BREAK 10 April – 26 April

ESSAY OPTION 3: Music Press

DUE Tuesday April 28th

Undertake a critical content analysis of a current popular music magazine, situating it within the broader context of the music industry. [Your analysis should use at least two issues; your magazine can be on line, though the task is easier if you have ‘hard copy’].

ESSAY OPTION 4: Auteur/star study

DUE: Friday May 8th

Make an argument for conferring auteur status on one popular musician or group. You need to relate your discussion to auteur theory in relation to popular music.

[Avoid extensive career details; include a select discography]

ASSIGNMENT OPTION 5: POLITICS

DUE Friday June 5th

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

Examination Period: **Wednesday 8 June – Wednesday 1 July 2009**

EXTENSIONS AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

The following is now Media Studies Programme policy and practice:

Lateness penalties

- Assignments submitted after the deadline without a written extension will be penalised at a rate of 2% (out of a total of 100) per working day. In other words, if you get 50% for an assignment, after one day your grade will drop to 48%, then 46% the following day etc.
- Late assignments are likely to receive limited feedback.
- The weekend counts for one day (i.e. an assignment due on Friday that is submitted on Monday will receive a 2% penalty).
- Please ensure that you are aware of the time that your assignment is due, as well as the date, as this is the cut-off time utilised in calculating lateness penalties.

Extensions

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload do not constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor’s certificate) where appropriate. Extension requests must be submitted to the

Admin Tutor (in MDIA101, 102, 103, and 201), or the Course Co-ordinator (in all other MDIA courses). Tutors cannot grant extensions.

**The Final Date for submission of any written work in this course is Friday June 5th.
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 or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

This website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates.

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such MATERIAL.

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

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>