ANTHROPOLOGY OF JAZZ

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Robin D. G. Kelley

This course explores the “jazz world” broadly speaking, from an anthropological/ethnographic perspective. Covering a variety of different periods in the history of this modern music, we will examine memoirs, autobiographies, films and recorded music, as well as scholarly anthropological and ethnographic accounts of what has been popularly called the “jazz life.” The course is partly organized around space and location (e.g., the club, the recording studio, the dance hall, the “industry”), but the scope is global. We will extend our sights beyond the U.S. and look at local jazz cultures in other parts of the world, notably Japan.

Throughout we will examine tensions of race, gender, class, and sexuality. And we will pay particular attention to the way musicians themselves understood and narrated their world. Hopefully, students will come away from this course with a better understanding of jazz as well as the discipline of anthropology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are responsible for keeping up with the reading assignments and participating fully in discussion. The final grade will be based on two short essays, a group research/creative project based on site-specific field work, and class participation. The project will be worth one-third of your grade, the two papers combined account for one-third, and class participation will make up the remaining one-third of your final grade. The short papers will assess and critique the reading assignments for whatever week for which you are responsible. These papers must be posted on Courseworks at least 24 hours in advance of class (i.e., by 2:00PM each Monday).

Because this is a seminar, you are expected to contribute to discussion—informed, of course, by the week’s reading. I generally do not tolerate late papers without a plausible excuse. Late papers will be docked one-half of a grade for each day it is late. In order to participate fully in class discussions you must keep abreast of the reading assignments.

I encourage all students to read beyond the assigned readings (particularly from works on the suggested reading list) and contribute any additional insights or information to class discussion.

REQUIRED READING

Books

Sidney Bechet, Treat it Gentle (New York: Da Capo, 2002)


**Articles**


**SUGGESTED READING**


Farah Griffin, *If You Can’t be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* (New York: The Free Press, 2001)


George Lipsitz *A Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (1994).


Chief Bassey Ita, *Jazz in Nigeria: An Outline Cultural History* (Lagos: A Radical House
Publication, 1984)


Charles Mingus, *Beneath the Underdog* (1971)


David Ake, “Regendering Jazz: Ornette Coleman and the New York Scene in the Late 1950s,” in *Jazz Cultures* (2002)

Ingrid Monson, “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse,” *Journal of American Musicological Society* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1995), 396-422.


**WEEKLY TOPICS**

**Week 1: Introductions**

No reading assigned

**Week 2: Omar’s Song: Stories of Origins**

Sidney Bechet, *Treat it Gentle*, chaps. 1-4

**Week 3: Social and Musical Meanings of Jazz Performance**
Ingrid Monson, “Chapter 2: Grooving & Feeling Chapter 3: Music, Language & Cultural Styles” from Saying Something [excerpts]

Guthrie P Ramsey Jr. Chapter 2 "Disciplining Black Music: On History, Memory & Contemporary Theories" from Race Music

Dana Reason "Navigable Structures & Transforming Mirrors: Improvisation and Interactivity" from The Other Side of Nowhere

Week 4: The Jazz Club/The Concert Hall

Mezzrow, Really the Blues, Chapters 1-7

Sidney Bechet, Treat it Gentle, chaps. 5-7

Eric Porter, Chapter 7 "The Majesty of the Blues" from What is This Thing Called Jazz

Week 4: Policing Jazz Musicians

Paul Chevigny, Chapter 3 "The Music in the Clubs" Chapter 4 "Regulation as Denigration" from Gigs [excerpt]

Week 5: CASE STUDY: Race Men and Jazz: Sidney Bechet’s World

Sidney Bechet, Treat it Gentle, [remaining chapters]

Horace Tapscott, Songs of the Unsung, chaps. 1 - 2

Week 6: The Business: Anatomy of Political Economy of Jazz

Frank Kofsky, Black Music, White Business

Michael Jarrett, “Cutting Sides: Jazz Record Producers” from The Other Side of Nowhere

Week 7: Ethnographies of Swing: Dance and the Dance Hall

Joel Dinnerstein, Chapter 7: "America's National Folk Dance: The Lindy Hop" from Swinging the Machine [excerpt]
Tapscott, *Songs of the Unsung*, chaps. 3-6

**Week 8: CASE STUDY: Problem of Hipness and the White Negro – Mezz Mezzrow’s World**

Mezz Mezzrow, *Really the Blues*, [remaining chapters]

FILM: “Paris Blues” and “Young Man with a Horn” [excerpts]

**Week 9: NO CLASS**

**Week 10: “Can She Play?”: The Life of Women Instrumentalists in the Jazz World**

“Melba Liston” and “Clora Bryant,” in *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (1998), available online either through E-books or access through CLIO. Here is the site: [http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple;sort=Freq;c=acls;cc=acls;sid=26bc8ee194d3ee50cebf06c48d8d5b27;rgn=full%20text;q1=clora%20bryant;view=toc;subview=short;start=1;size=25;idno=heb00026.0001.001](http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?type=simple;sort=Freq;c=acls;cc=acls;sid=26bc8ee194d3ee50cebf06c48d8d5b27;rgn=full%20text;q1=clora%20bryant;view=toc;subview=short;start=1;size=25;idno=heb00026.0001.001)

Pauline Oliveros "Harmonic Anatomy: Women in Improvisation" from *The Other Side of Nowhere*, eds. Daniel Fischlin & Ajay Heble

FILMS: “International Sweethearts of Rhythm”

**Week 11: Jazz Cultures in Japan**

E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon* [excerpts from book]

FILM: “Jazz is My Native Language”

**Week 12: CASE STUDY: The ‘Collective’ as Radical Alternative– The World According to Horace Tapscott**

Horace Tapscott, *Songs of the Unsung* [remaining chapters]

**Week 13: Class Presentation of Ethnographies**