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MUSI 139L.50: Introduction to Country Music

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School of Music at the University of Montana

Introduction to Country Music

MUS 139L Section 50

3 Credits

Fall Semester, 2014

Please read this document thoroughly...

There's a quiz at the end

Instructor Information

Professor Smart teaches this class. I do not have an office on campus. Do not try to find me there (you'll only end up lost and frustrated). If you need to contact me, please do so via e-mail using your University of Montana e-mail account. My e-mail address is amy.smart@umontana.edu. **I prefer to be called Professor Smart, not by my first name.** If you need to meet outside of class, we can set up an appointment, as I do not have office hours.

Course Information

No prior knowledge of country music is necessary to take this class. You also do not need to own a ten-gallon hat, but feel free to wear one if you have one.

Textbook:

Neal, J. (2013). *Country Music: A Cultural and Stylistic History*.
New York: DK Publishing, Inc.

You may purchase this textbook at the University Bookstore. If you choose to order it online, please expedite your shipping so that you do not fall behind in coursework. There is no excuse for falling behind as there is a copy of the book on reserve in the campus library.

Course Description

This course will explore the country music genre, including its major performers, songwriters, songs and impact on culture from the early times on the radio to the beginning of the twenty-first century. The course will examine some of the “off shoots” of country music including cowboy songs, bluegrass and rockabilly, as well as the development of country-pop and Nashville. Students enrolled in this course will evaluate country music’s content and contemporary cultural role through course readings, concert reviews, discussions and listening assignments.

Course Objectives:

Following this course, students should be able to these:

1. Describe and analyze the varieties of music that fall under the umbrella term of the “country music”
2. Identify and evaluate the contributions of influential musicians and people involved in country music
3. Understand how country music has contributed to American culture

| Learning Outcome | Assessment Method |
|---|---|
| Describe and analyze the varieties of music that fall under the umbrella term of “country music” | *Concert Review projects *Discussion Board *Final and Midterm Exams |
| Identify and evaluate the contributions of influential musicians and people involved in country music | *Discussion Board *Final and Midterm Exams |
| Understand how country music has contributed to American culture | *Concert Review project *Discussion Board *Final and Midterm Exams |

Attendance

You will be expected to login *at least* twice per week to be considered keeping current with attendance. Moodle affords me the ability to monitor the frequency at which you login, as well as what you view while logged in. Your grade will be affected should you not maintain current with your weekly attendance.

Topics

Each week you will be asked to complete a reading assignment and participate in asynchronous discussions. In addition to reading and written assignments, you will find websites to visit as well as videos to watch. The websites and videos are an important

part of the course, as they will give you further exposure to the artists/persons covered in the readings. The videos will give you the opportunity to experience the ways that the genre evolved in sound and appearance from the time of its inception. Both the websites and the videos, along with the readings, will only further help you to complete assignments to the best of your abilities. If you come across websites or videos in your studies that are not already a part of this course, please feel free to announce this link in the “General Discussion Area” of each week’s unit. Sometimes they cease to be available without warning. It is acceptable to reference these links in your writing assignments.

All websites can be found towards the bottom of the Topics menu. Video links can be found in each week’s Topic.

While it might seem overwhelming to view all of the videos and websites, they really are one of the best ways to fully experience and appreciate our material from the text. They will help you enhance your opinions and writing in this course.

Expectations for Writing Style:

As this is a college-level course, it is expected that you use advanced writing skills for your assignments. This means that you should take care when constructing sentences. For example, did you spell words correctly (watch out for homonyms)? Is there subject/verb agreement? Is your punctuation correct? Were proper grammar rules followed? Please refrain from using emoticons. A simple proofreading of your work goes a very long way! These expectations are factored into each assignment that will be graded in addition to content, focus/support of ideas, etc. Your assignments represent you. We won’t have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, so take pride in what you submit. Does this mean that I expect you to adopt a writing voice that isn’t “you?” I absolutely don’t expect this. I am only hoping you will push yourself to write well, conscientiously and most importantly support your opinions/ideas.

Citing Your Sources:

You might decide to investigate other sources for information and ideas when completing assignments. This is wonderful! The more you research and learn about a topic, the better your thought process will be when you start to write. This is not a license to copy someone else’s work and use it as your own. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You will fail the course if you are found to have plagiarized your assignments.** If you use someone else’s writing, you must use quotation marks where necessary and properly make a citation within the body of your assignment. Please use MLA form. If you need help with this, you can use a website such as <http://citationmachine.net/> to guide you. I am interested in your thoughts and ideas, not those of other people. A good rule of thumb to remember is that if it is not your original thought, you need quotation marks.

Because I’ve had students in the past who have been confused on this issue, here are some examples of plagiarism:

1. Copying and pasting material from a website you find on the internet.

2. Copying and pasting another student's discussion post.
3. Copying and pasting another student's assignment and submitting it as your own.

You'll notice that the common phrase here is "copying and pasting." Just avoid being dishonest in this course and we will not have problems. I do check for plagiarism regularly. You decided to be in college, you must now also choose to do the work. If you can't, please drop the course.

Assignments:

You will find information on course assignments in this syllabus as well as in each week's topic. If you have questions on how to proceed with an assignment, please e-mail me (amy.smart@umontana.edu).

*****Weekly** assignments (meaning asynchronous discussion submissions) are due on the last day of the current course week, Sunday. For example, Week 1 of the course runs from Monday, August 25- Sunday, August 31. All work for that week is due by 9pm MST on Sunday, August 31. **All work must be submitted by 9pm MST. Late work will not be accepted.** Due dates are not suggestions, but rather deadlines. I can't make exceptions for some and not others, so please take notice. If you send me an email with an excuse for why you didn't submit an assignment, I will feel sad that you missed the assignment but that is all.

*****Exams, the concert review projects and the assignments for the last week of the semester have different due dates and times. Please make sure you are aware of when things are due.**

Here is a brief outline of class assignments for each week:

| Dates | Material to be Covered |
|------------------------|--|
| Week 1 (8/25 – 8/31) | Reading: Chapter 1 Syllabus Quiz Asynchronous Discussion 1 |
| Week 2 (9/1 – 9/7) | Reading: Chapter 2 Asynchronous Discussions |
| Week 3 (9/8 – 9/14) | Reading: Chapter 3 Asynchronous Discussions |
| Week 4 (9/15 – 9/21) | Reading: Chapters 4 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 5 (9/22 – 9/28) | Reading: Chapter 5 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 6 (9/29 – 10/5) | Reading: Chapter 6 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 7 (10/6 – 10/12) | Reading Chapter 7 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 8 (10/13 – 10/19) | MIDTERM |

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| | Concert Review Project |
| Week 9 (10/20 – 10/28) | Reading Chapter 8 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 10 (10/27 – 11/2) | Chapter 9 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 11 (11/3 – 11/9) | Reading Chapter 10 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 12 (11/10 – 11/16) | Reading Chapter 11 Asynchronous Discussions |
| Week 13 (11/17 – 11/23) | Reading Chapter 12 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 14 (11/24 – 11/30) | Reading Chapter 13 Asynchronous Discussion |
| Week 15 (12/1 – 12/7) | Reading Chapters 14 and 15 Asynchronous Discussions |
| Week 16 (12/8 – 12/12) | Final Exam Concert Review Project |

****** Please note there is an assignment due on the Sunday of Thanksgiving Break. You are more than welcome to complete it before Sunday, November 30 so that you do not have any work to do while on your break. Monday- Wednesday of that week we are still in session, so you have plenty of time to get things completed if you don't want work while we are on break.**

The Midterm and Final Exams

The midterm and final exams will be made available on Moodle. The week of the midterm exam you will have access from Monday, October 13 at 9:00pm MST until Wednesday, October 15 at 9pm MST. The week of the final exam you will have access from Wednesday, December 10 at 9:00pm MST until Friday, December 12 at 9:00pm MST. **Thursday at 9:00pm MST is the date and time by which each test needs to be completed and submitted.** Do not log in on Thursday at 8:58pm expecting to be able to take the exam. Once the time is 9:00pm you will be locked out of the exam and ultimately out of luck. Finally, your exams are your responsibility and no "make ups" will be offered.

Here are the dates for the exams again: Midterm 10/13 – 10/15 at 9:00pm MST
Final= 12/10 – 12/12 at 9:00pm MST

Moodle will log you out of the exam after three hours. **SAVE YOUR WORK** to a word document so that you don't lose your work. You have been warned. Every semester a few people don't heed my advice and they end up angry with me, demanding that I reopen the exam for them. It is not your right to have this done for you. **SAVE YOUR WORK.**

Asynchronous Discussions

This course requires that all students take an active part in all asynchronous discussions. An asynchronous discussion is simply a way to have an online conversation with other members of the class. “Asynchronous” means that the conversation is not happening all at once. Responses will filter in throughout the week. **A minimum of two postings is required of each student each time there is a specific discussion topic.** One of these postings should be of a more “extensive” nature, i.e.: at least a paragraph in length and is worth 25 points. The second posting can be a response to something another member of the class has written, and is worth 10 points. To clarify: for each topic I post during the week, you are to give two responses.

These discussion assignments will be graded on your depth of contribution, focus of your ideas and supporting evidence for your opinions. You should view these discussions as a central component of the course. These discussions will make our work together that much more rich and rewarding. Your ideas are valued and play a significant role in the course. It should go without saying that it is expected that all students’ ideas be treated with respect. Although differences of opinion are welcomed, they must be presented and reacted to with courtesy and remain germane to the topic at hand. I will post the topics for said asynchronous discussions each time. There are direct links to each discussion within each Learning Unit in the weeks they have been assigned.

You will find a document regarding the grading of discussions in the Week 1 Topic. It is your responsibility to read, understand and ask questions (if necessary) about the document.

You are always welcome to create discussions of your own each week. You might read something in the text, find something in your research, or randomly think something that makes you want to start a discussion. Please do so in the discussion labeled “General Discussion” in each week’s Topic. Please remember that postings are to remain professional, courteous, thoughtful and respectful at all times.

Concert Review Projects

You will be required to attend two country music concerts **during** the course of this class. Some of you might have heard from student who took this course previously about this project. You might then decide to write about a concert you saw sometime before the start of our term. I will not give you credit for this. You must attend something **DURING** this course. Prior to the course you did not have my criteria for the assignment and therefore did not attend your event prepared for what you need to include in your project. Please do not submit a project for a show you saw outside of the term.

The concert can range from a local band playing at a bar, to a public performance in a park, to a major name act. Plan now for the events you will attend. Your reviews should be a minimum of one and a half pages in length (12 point font, single spaced). Correct spelling and grammar are expected. As you attend the performance, be thinking to yourself “What would a reader want to know about what I am seeing?” Take notes. Comment on such details as the make up and instrumentation of the band, the repertoire, the country music style (give evidence for why you classify it as such), and the

performance itself. Perhaps you could talk with some of the members of the band before, after or during a break at the show. You could also interview members of the audience for a nice narrative touch. Narratives add a lot to a project such as this.

The due dates for these reviews are as follows: Monday, October 13 at 9:00pm MST and Monday, December 8 at 9:00pm MST. The reason they are due on Monday is because I didn't want you to scramble trying to complete the weekly discussions and this project on the same day. **No late assignments will be accepted.** Please do not e-mail me the week before the project is due in a panic because you can't find anything to attend. If you plan ahead, you will not have this problem. You will find links for submitting the projects in the Topic of the week they are due. **The Topics menu has a document that you should read that details specifically how to write a concert review. It is in the Week 1 Topic. Use this as your guide. Please make sure that you read and understand the document well in advance of when you attend your chosen performance.**

Grading

Your grades will be based on the total points you earn for the term. The review projects and exams will be worth a significant amount of points as I do not grade on a curve.

Points for course work are assigned as follows:

Syllabus Quiz: 25

Asynchronous Discussions: 35 points (1st post is 25 points and 2nd post is 10 points)

Concert Review Projects and Exams: These are each worth 100 points

Grades will be awarded as follows:

A= 90-100%

B= 80-89%

C=70-79%

D=60-69%

F= 0-59%

*I do not offer extra credit of any kind in this course.

Just so that you know, I do not (at this point) grade on a curve. I also do not assign weights to grades. Everything is important.

Communication

Please make sure you check your university e-mail daily. This is the way I will communicate with you should I need to get a message out.

Academic Integrity

Cheating is not tolerated in any form in this class and will be prosecuted to the full extent. According to the University of Montana Code: *All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor*

and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/Index.cfm/page1321.

Accommodations

Students who are in need will receive reasonable accommodations in this online course. To request course modifications, please contact me as soon as possible. I will work with you and Disability Services in this process. For more information, please visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/> or call (406) 243-2243.

Technical Support

UMOnline Support Desk

For questions:

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. ~~U~~(excluding holidays)

Call: 406.243.4999 or 866.225.1641 (toll-free)

E-mail: courseware-support@umontana.edu

If you need additional plug-ins, please utilize this IDD webpage:

<http://umt.edu/xls/techsupport/pluginsdownloads.aspx>

Final Thoughts

It is your responsibility to thoroughly read through this document. I would go so far as to request that you print a copy for yourself for quick reference. It is your responsibility to ask me for clarification on any matter you did not find clear. When you feel you have read this document completely, please take the “Syllabus Quiz” located on Moodle. This quiz must be completed by Sunday, September 1 at 9:00pm MST.

Here is a final thought regarding late work. Life happens. We get sick. Our computers fail us. We break up with significant others. Our car dies. The list goes on. In my teaching career I have heard it all. It seems that some people think they are exceptions to the stated rules. I'll tell you now that you are not. If your computer breaks, then you need to go to a friend's house, the public library, or somewhere else to use a computer. You have an entire week to complete assignments. If you become ill on Sunday morning and are too sick to submit work because you waited until the last minute you will have to accept the zero or find a way to get your work in to me. Not doing your concert review projects because you just couldn't find any bands to see is not an excuse. There is always something going on. Waiting until three days after something is already late to tell me that you just couldn't get your work in for this, that or the other reason is your choice. Just know that although I'll appreciate the communication, late work is not accepted. That being said, there is a huge difference between that and someone talking to me well in advance of a due date about a conflict he/she might have that week. This I can work with.

I reserve the right to make changes and/or adjustments to this syllabus as I deem them necessary at any time.