MUS 156  
History of American Pop Music

Course Number                             Course title
3

Credits                             Hours

Catalog description:
Analytical and historical survey of American popular music with an emphasis on the period from 1950 to the present. Students will develop an understanding of the cultural, social, technological, and musical forces shaping each decade covered. Students will apply critical analysis to musical styles, instrumentation, and song structure in addition to issues of race, ethnicity, social class, and gender as formative factors influencing its evolution.

Prerequisites:  None                      Co-requisites: None

Required texts/other materials:

Last revised:  Fall 2016

Course coordinator:  Scott Hornick, Assistant Professor of Music – CM 149; 570-3716; hornicks@mccc.edu
**Course Goals:**
The student will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and explain a wide variety of pop musical styles and genres.  *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A and G)*
2. Understand that popular music is shaped by and, in turn, has an impact on the social, political, and cultural milieu from which it arises. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A and G)*
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the chronological development of American pop music in the context of social, political, and historical forces affecting its evolution. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A, C and G)*
4. Investigate, realize, and discuss the multicultural nature of American pop music as a hybridization and synthesis of disparate cultural influences including African, Latino, Caribbean, Scots – Irish folk music, as well as European “art” music. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A, B, C, E and G)*
5. Analyze the role that fashion, archetype, and image play in the marketing and appeal of musical artists. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6 and 7; MCCC Core Skills A and G)*
6. Identify and distinguish between the use of confessional and artificial imagery in the content of pop music lyrics. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6 and 7; MCCC Core Skills A and G)*
7. Understand how technological advances such as radio, recording media, (analog discs, magnetic tape, CD’s), electronic instruments, digital recording and editing software, and the internet create the circumstances under which new forms of popular music develop and, conversely, how new forms of music serve as a catalyst for further technological development. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A, D, E and G)*
8. Explore and discuss the tension between art and commerce and the ancillary issue of critical vs. popular success. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A and G)*
9. Develop an individual “critical voice” demonstrated by the ability to analyze specific pieces of pop music, assessing their relative artistic merits, and defending his or her view to others both in writing and through discussion. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 6, 7 and 8; MCCC Core Skills A and G)*
10. Analyze and discuss the issue of racial and gender discrimination throughout the history of American pop music. *(Gen Ed Goal 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9; MCCC Core Skills A, C, D and G)*

**Course-specific General Education Knowledge Goals and Core Skills**

**General Education Knowledge Goals**

**Goal 1. Communication.** Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.
**Goal 4. Technology.** Students will use computer systems or other appropriate forms of technology to achieve educational and personal goals.
**Goal 5. Social Science.** Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.
**Goal 6. Humanities.** Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.
**Goal 7. History.** Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.
**Goal 8. Diversity.** Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples.
**Goal 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action.** Students will understand ethical issues and situations.

**MCCC Core Skills**

**Goal A. Written and Oral Communication in English.** Students will communicate effectively in speech and writing, and demonstrate proficiency in reading.
**Goal B. Critical Thinking and Problem-solving.** Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills in analyzing information.
**Goal C. Ethical Decision-Making.** Students will recognize, analyze and assess ethical issues and situations.
**Goal D. Information Literacy.** Students will recognize when information is needed and have the knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for college level work.
**Goal E. Computer Literacy.** Students will use computers to access, analyze or present information, solve problems, and communicate with others.
**Goal G. Intra-Cultural and Inter-Cultural Responsibility.** Students will demonstrate an awareness of the responsibilities of intelligent citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society, and will demonstrate cultural, global, and environmental awareness.
Evaluation of Student Learning
Each student’s attainment of these objectives will be assessed using the following means of evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Tools</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of and performance on weekly reading and writing assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm visual and aural test of students ability to identify performers,</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>musical structures, styles and chronological context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion and presentation of a research paper whose content will focus</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on an artist or genre, the degree of his/her/its social relevance, his/her/its</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place in the chronology of the music and impact on its further evolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A written “review” of a recording using appropriate journalistic language and</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employing established norms of critical analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation in class discussion</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Integrity Policy
As stated in the student handbook, “A student will be guilty of violating academic integrity if he/she
(a) knowingly represents the work of others as his/her own, (b) uses or obtains unauthorized
assistance in the execution of academic work, or (c) gives fraudulent assistance to another
student.” Students should read the Academic Integrity policy in the MCCC Rights and
Responsibilities Handbook.

*Academic Dishonesty will result in failure of this course.*

Accommodations
Mercer County Community College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in
its programs. If you have a documented differing ability or think that you may have a differing
ability that is protected under the ADA or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact
Arlene Stinson in LB 216 {stinsona@mccc.edu} for information regarding support services.

Financial Aid Application Statement
It is recommended that student complete an application for financial aid to determine eligibility for
financial assistance. The application is **FREE** and available for completion beginning **October 1, 2016**
for the 2017-18 academic year. Visit www.fafsa.edu.gov to complete your application.
Applications should be completed **before** December 1, 2016. Students who are interested in
MCCC Foundation scholarships are expected to complete an application as well.
Units of Study and Learning Objectives

UNIT I: Historical and Social Context
The student will be able to:
1. Identify important musical artists and classify the musical movements and time periods to which they belong.
2. Describe, contrast, and compare various musical genres and styles and connect them in their proper chronological context.
3. Illustrate the impact that social class, race, and gender had upon the careers of specific pop artists, the composition of their audiences, and on the history of pop music in general.
4. Assess and discuss the effect that social and political forces such as the Viet Nam war, the drug culture, and the civil and women’s rights movements have on the popular music of the day.
5. Thoughtfully examine and expound on the issue of censorship throughout the history of pop music (record burnings, radio play bannings, Elvis’ “waist-up only” appearance, as well as emendations of lyrics to mollify the fears of TV executives and advertisers).
6. Examine isolated incidents of plagiarism in pop music, the resultant lawsuits against artists such as George Harrison and Stevie Wonder, in light of whether or not the suits were justified and whether the alleged plagiarism was conscious or unconscious.

UNIT II: Musical Structure and Development
The student will be able to:
1. Identify and describe typical pop song structures and conventions, such as 32-bar song form and 12-bar blues, and distinguish them from non-pop forms such as sonata, rondo, art songs, or free jazz.
2. Comprehend and discuss how disparate musical idioms such as blues, classical music, and ethnic and world music’s have been absorbed and adapted for use in modern pop forms such as funk, heavy metal, and progressive rock.
3. Assess the degree to which the cultural identities and aspirations of various racial and ethnic groups have found expression in American pop music (African American, Appalachian and rural poor white, Latino, and Caribbean) and have contributed to the evolution of both the sound and structure of the music.
4. Intelligently assess the relative artistic quality of the work of various pop artists specifying the criteria used in his/her evaluation.
5. Recognize the basic structural, rhythmic, melodic, and orchestral techniques employed in various pop music genres and be able to group related styles, e.g. Rock-a-billy, surf, funk and R & B.
6. Engage in deep listening, becoming sensitized to the defining nuances of musical detail that characterize and differentiate the various pop music genres.
UNIT III: The Role of Image, Fashion, and Archetype

The student will be able to:
1. Identify and describe the relationship between artist image, or persona, and specific musical styles or eras along with the role of fashion in projecting the image.
2. Identify obvious iconic or archetypal artists (such as Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, Bob Marley, James Brown, Prince)
3. and describe the ways in which their archetypal status embodies the expression of cultural and social values and meaning.
4. Assess the degree to which an artist’s use of image and fashion is connected with, or motivated by, a social or political statement and the degree to which the desired effect is achieved.
5. Assess the degree to which an artist’s use of image and fashion is purely cosmetic and commercial in nature.
6. Cite and identify the recurrence of specific personae and fashions throughout the history of pop music as archetypal, and analyze the impact of these archetypes on both a conscious and unconscious level.
7. Distinguish between the confessional artist and those employing artifice in terms of their respective use of image, archetype, and fashion.

UNIT IV: The Impact of Technology

The student will be able to:
1. List and describe the major technological advances during the period studied and discuss their impact on the development of pop music on the levels of both recorded and live performance.
2. Analyze recordings from different eras, identifying the time period to which they belong based on the recording techniques employed.
3. Describe the impact that new technologies have on the conception and composition of pop music.
4. Explain how the format of delivery (live concert, radio, TV, 45, LPO, CD, etc.) shapes the content and perception of pop music.
5. Assess the degree to which the evolution of pop music composition and production serves as a catalyst for further growth of technology.

UNIT V: High Art/Low Art Controversy

The student will be able to:
1. Discover and develop their individual critical voice.
2. Evaluate the criticism of others in a thoughtful manner.
3. Understand and explain the conventional critical evaluation of the major artists covered in the course and explain any deviations from the accepted view.
4. Select an artist that the student believes is of major importance and be able to write a forceful justification in terms of artistry, image, impact and influence.
5. Come to an individual conclusion as to the factors leading to critical success and to commercial success and assess why they do not always coincide.