

MU247 SPRING 2021 FIRST CLASS
February 15-April 25
History of Rock

MEETING TIME & PLACE: This is an online course with no regular class meeting place or time (though you will be able to connect with classmates through certain assignments). Because of the course format, self-motivation and discipline is key, so stay on top of things by engaging with material on a daily basis as much as possible.

NOTE: We will meet once this semester as a group through online conferencing with a guest speaker (TBA).

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. William L. Ellis, 203 McCarthy Arts Center (office); contacts: *wellis@smcvt.edu* (email); 802-654-2993 (office), 802-301-9399 (cell). While this course is asynchronous, feel free to come by, call, or email should you have questions or need to discuss some issue with the class.

COURSE: History of Rock is a course in how we *hear* history, specifically the decades that span rock's emergence and prominence in popular music consumption from the 1960s to the 1990s. To that end, it examines the historical, social, cultural, and musical forces that contributed to the emergence and subsequent development and impact of rock and roll as an enduring form of popular music. You will come away with a firm understanding of historical trends, change, and innovation in rock, and you will be able to better identify and analyze rock music based on performer, genre, era, and influence. Lecture notes, videos, readings, guest speakers, and a comprehensive selection of several hundred songs will take the student from the birth of rock through the British Invasion, the psychedelic Sixties, and more.

NOTE: Elements in the course are subject to change, so check email and course announcements with regularity.

PREREQUISITE: None

TEXT: There is no textbook though you are responsible for reading 1) the course Notes pages and 2) the 28 supplemental readings posted on Canvas (typically 20-40 pages of reading per module).

LEARNING OUTCOMES: This course meets the requirements for the Literature and Arts LSC. In addition, learning outcomes for students in MU247 include:

- 1) Addressing rock as a musical and cultural expression through time from its blues and country music-imbued birth through post-punk expressions such as grunge.
- 2) The ability to think critically about rock as a musical, cultural, social, and historical experience, recognize its paradigms and pivotal moments, and be able to distinguish between artists, repertoire, genres, regional styles, and stylistic periods.
- 3) The ability to write critically about rock via threads, questions, responses, and a blog.
- 4) Familiarity with primary source materials in rock, including various readings, classic rock films, talks with popular music figures, and historical recordings.

HOW TO WORK THROUGH THE COURSE: This course consists of ten modules – one per week – that you must work through in chronological order and which correspond to an historical outline of the music covered, touching on numerous paradigms in rock's development from the 1950s through the 1990s. In Canvas, you can access the course's modules through the home page (the one with an image of Chuck Berry in concert). Click on each module and you will see it has a set number of components separated into "Content" and "Assignments."

Content:

- 1) **Module Intro**, a short audio lead-in;
- 2) **Notes**, which summarize module content and contain imbedded links to songs and videos;
- 3) **Readings**, primary and secondary source supplemental articles;
- 4) **Videos** related to issues, themes, and artists;
- 5) **Spotify Playlists** of songs you are expected to listen to and know.

Assignments:

- 1) **Questions** written in response to each module's notes and supplemental readings;
- 2) **Responses** that require *individual* online written reactions to the readings and listening examples;
- 3) **Discussion Threads** for online *group responses* to a pre-selected issue;
- 4) **Blog** that you will be expected to contribute to on a weekly basis (answering my prompts but also contributing freely as you make connections and discoveries – prompts are below).

NOTE: You are free to work through the modules as slow or as fast as you wish. Bear in mind that certain assignments – responses, threads - have sunset dates, so be sure to pace yourself in a timely fashion that allows you to work through material in its entirety. For example, if a module's set of assignments is due on, say, March 2, you are welcome to complete that module before then. However, after March 2, certain elements in that module may become late and/or unavailable, which will hurt your grade (see Important Note on Grading below).

GRADE: Good news – you have no paper, quizzes or final exam! Instead, your grade will be a composite average of the following four components:

1) Questions based on readings (15%): You will post 5 questions per reading *section* based on your comprehension on the content and any issues it may raise for you. Your questions must be in reaction, per module, to course notes and the related supplemental readings. Since it is impossible to monitor attendance in the traditional sense, it is essential that you take time with the readings to absorb its content and perspectives and to show me that you are engaging in the ideas being presented. Supplemental readings are posted under their related modules. You can choose to download the latter as PDFs or view them in Canvas under the preview option.

NOTE: Questions should not be obvious, such as dates and names. Rather, they should posit queries you have with the understanding and interpreting of textual issues. For example, when reading about rockabilly, you would not want to simply ask, "What is doo-wop?" Good questions look for a better understanding of the text, such as "Why does Charles Gillett consider doo-wop one of the five types of early rock and roll, and is he correct?"

2) Online responses (30%): These take the form of individually written responses (1-2 per module) to readings, notes, musical performances, etc. They are based on both the reading of content and listening and responding to musical examples. There are 10 total response sections.

3) Online discussion threads (30%): Group-focused thread grades should take the form of online class discussion, i.e., a conversation among your peers that shows you comprehend and can apply course content. You will be graded not only on how well you respond to the prompt question provided in the thread but how well and how frequently you interact with and respond to the written thoughts of fellow classmates. A discussion thread isn't a discussion, after all, if you merely answer the prompt. That's only part of the assignment; the other part is making informed comments and having friendly debates and inquiry with peers in the class. So be sure to revisit the thread after your first post to see what others are saying and chime in accordingly. Threads open on **Mondays** after which you will be expected to respond to the prompt by that **Thursday** and other posts by that **Sunday**. Failure to post your initial response by the Monday sunset date can result in up to a 5-point reduction of your grade for each day it is late – late

responses, after all, do not allow for reflection nor does it give others time to respond to your comments, which defeats the purpose of a discussion thread. You are also expected to respond to at least 2 thread posts by other students plus generate at least one question yourself in your initial post based on the topic at hand. Discussion threads are assessed on both the quantity and quality of your responses. Needless to say, those who choose to post responses five minutes before a thread closes will not receive the same grade as those who take time each week to engage in a more meaningful way with the discussion. There are 10 total discussion threads.

4) **Class blog** (25%): Access through Blogger at <https://mu247rock.blogspot.com/>. I expect you to **post at least once a week** and also **respond to at least two posts by peers and/or the professor weekly**. It is my hope that the blog will be one of the more exciting, participatory elements in this class. Indeed, the blog allows you to post video and other media in addition to text. You are encouraged to post more than ten times in the course but must respond at the very least to the following **ten prompts**:

Blog Week 1 (due by Feb. 21): Class introductions.

Blog Week 2 (due by Feb. 28): Post a song or act that to *your ears* marks the beginning of rock.

Blog Week 3 (due by Mar. 7): Post on a 1950s rock act and/or song.

Blog Week 4 (due by Mar. 14): Post on a 1960s soul act.

Blog Week 5 (due by Mar. 21): Post an iconic musical moment from the 1960s.

Blog Week 6 (due by Mar. 28): Post on a 1960s garage rock act.

Blog Week 7 (due by Apr. 4): Post on a 1970s arena, punk, or new wave act.

Blog Week 8 (due by Apr. 11): Post on a 1980s indie rock act.

Blog Week 9 (due by Apr. 18): Post on a 1990s *non-grunge* act.

Blog Week 10 (due by Apr. 25): Post on a current act.

The blog is also your forum to discuss ideas and issues, present your own discoveries and findings, share music, and, most of all, stay connected with one another. Be creative with the site. It is for your collective expression as a class. ****PLEASE include your last name in your post headings so everyone knows who is posting** (e.g., "Smith Introduction"). One caveat: when linking to outside sites, be careful not to link to inappropriate content or non-secure sites, i.e., best to stick with proven sites such as YouTube or Vimeo.

IMPORTANT NOTE on GRADING: There are no quizzes and exams. However, your individual and collective responses via threads, your written assignments, and the blog will be judged not only on frequency of commentary but on understanding and application of course content. I expect **proper grammar usage and punctuation** in all writing assignments (sloppy writing – lack of capitalization, subject/verb agreement etc. – will not be rewarded). Furthermore, **academic integrity** is essential in a class such as this, which can rely heavily on Internet access and information. Suffice to say, plagiarism and cheating are never tolerated and will result in a failing grade. Given the pace of this class, it is essential that you work through each module in the allotted weekly time. For each day that an assignment is late, 5 points will be deducted from the final assignment grade; after one week, that missing assignment will be given a 0. Grading scale: A (100-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-88), B (87-83), B- (82-80), C (79-70), D (69-60), and F (59-0). You also have the option to take a pass/fail grade should you choose (please notify me prior to the end of the course).

PREPARATION: Unlike face-to-face courses, this online course is completely dependent on work outside of the classroom. Per Saint Michael College's guidelines, First Class students are expected to devote a minimum of **6-8 hours per week** for the ten-week online course (reading assignments are typically 20-40 pages per week). This allows you to meet requirements for readings, listening, viewing, written assignments, and overall research and study.

A NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY: This is a course that works only as well as your computer does. Because your computer's health is paramount, I urge you to 1) read the trouble-shooting Technology

Guide on the home page; 2) alert me if and when things happen; and 3) use the Saint Michael's IT help desk (ext. 2020) as your first line of defense. This entails you create a work order through IT, which will respond in a timely fashion. Computer problems, however, are NOT allowed as an excuse to miss deadlines and the expectations of course work. If your computer gets misplaced, is stolen, or dies, find another one that works. In an online course, you are accountable for maintaining access and staying engaged.

History of Rock & Roll – Class Outline:

This is a self-paced course. Before you proceed with the modules, you must read the introductory materials, especially the syllabus. Note that, unless otherwise stated, sunset dates for all assignments are at 11:59 p.m. on Sundays of each week.

Module 1: Roots of Rock February 15-21

■Module 1 sets the stage for how, why, and where rock emerged the way it did. This module specifically delves into the cultural, social, and musical milieus – decades in the making – that came together to make rock and roll happen when it did by the mid-1950s. Blues, country, gospel music, and more all played a part – as did teen culture and other factors of post-WWII America – in rock's creation and earliest era.

Texts: Notes + readings 1.1 (Ford), 1.2 (Gillett)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Feb. 21**

Module 2: The 1950s – The Northern Band Sound & Memphis February 22-28

■Module 2 examines two of the five types of early rock, namely the Northern Band sound of Bill Haley and the rockabilly template of Elvis Presley and others at Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee.

Text: Notes + readings 1.1 (Guralnick), 1.2 (Cash)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Feb. 28**

Module 3: The 1950s – Chicago, New Orleans & Doo-Wop March 1-7

■Module 3 details the other three types of early rock: the Chicago sound of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, the New Orleans stamp of Little Richard and Fats Domino, and the vocal finesse of the doo-wop groups.

Text: Notes + readings 2.1 (Berry), 2.2 (White)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Mar. 7**

Module 4: The 1960s – American Shores (Soul, Surf, Folk, and More) March 8-14

■Module 4 takes into account several non-rock genres and sounds – jazz, the Brill Building school of girl group hits, and soul music – that would greatly inform rock expressions of the 1960s, then looks at two concurrent scenes of the early 1960s: surf music (exemplified by Dick Dale and the Beach Boys) and the folk revival (best exemplified early on by Bob Dylan).

Texts: Notes + readings 4.1 (Szatmary), 4.2 (Miller), 4.3 (Brackett)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Mar. 14**

Module 5: The British Invasion & Garage Rock March 15-21

■Module 5 explores the full expressive scope of the British Invasion, from the Beatles and the Rolling Stones to the Animals, the Yardbirds, and many other key acts; America's reaction to the Brit sound – garage rock – is also examined.

Texts: Notes + readings 5.1 (Bordowitz), 5.2 (Booth), 5.3 (Palmer)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Mar. 21**

Module 6: The Psychedelic Era March 22-28

■Module 6 looks at the mature musical expressions of the 1960s, notably psychedelic music in all its manifestations – from the Grateful Dead to the Doors to Pink Floyd – plus the role of rock festivals.

Texts: Notes + readings 6.1 (Gleason), 6.2 (Tamarkin), 6.3 (Murray) + 6.4 (Gilmore)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Mar. 28**

Module 7: The 1970s March 29-April 4

■Module 7 examines the Me Decade, an era of musical extremes and excess as well as great innovation (the birth of punk, hip-hop and disco, after all).

Texts: Notes + readings 7.1 (Brackett), 7.2 (Loder) + 7.3 (Whitman)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Apr. 4**

Module 8: Punk April 5-11

■Module 8 dives deeper into punk, arguably the most influential form of rock since the genre's birth. Its origins, influences, and diverse displays are all explored.

Texts: Notes + readings 8.1 (Palmer), 8.2 (Miller), 8.3 (McCain)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Apr. 11**

Module 9: The 1980s – MTV & Indie Regionalism April 12-18

■Module 8 looks at the game changer known as MTV but also takes into account the flip side, i.e., the non-commercial bands and regional scenes (Athens, Minneapolis, etc.) that ultimately gave rise to alternative rock in the 1990s.

Text: Notes + readings 9.1 (Marks), 9.2 (Werner), 9.3 (Azerrad)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Apr. 18**

Module 10: The 1990s – Grunge & Riot Grrrl April 19-25

■Module 10 focuses on grunge, the most impacting form of rock in the early 1990s, as well as its equally important feminist counterpoint, the Riot Grrrl movement.

Texts: Notes + readings 10.1 (Bordowitz), 10.2 (Gilmore), 10.3 (Hanna)

Must complete by 11:59 p.m. **Apr. 25**

Supplemental Readings

1.1 Larry R. Ford, “Geographic Factors in the Origin, Evolution, and Diffusion of Rock and Roll Music,” in *The Sounds of People & Places: A Geography of American Folk and Popular Music*, 203-214.

1.2 Charles Gillett, “Five Styles of Rock ‘N’ Roll,” in *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, 23-35.

2.1 Peter Guralnick, “Elvis Presley and the American Dream” and “Faded Love” in *Lost Highway: Journeys and Arrivals of American Musicians*, 118-44.

2.2 Johnny Cash with Patrick Carr, *Cash: The Autobiography* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 78-99.

3.1 Chuck Berry, “A Long Way from St. Louis” and “The Creation of My Recordings” in *Chuck Berry: The Autobiography*, 97-120.

3.2 Charles White, “Tutti Frutti,” in *The Life and Times of Little Richard: The Quasar of Rock* (New York: Harmony Books, 1984), 55-69, 74-79.

- 4.1 David P. Szatmary, "Surfboards and Hot Rods: California, Here We Come," *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock-And-Roll*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2013), 70-79.
- 4.2 James Miller, "Dylan Goes Electric," in *Almost Grown: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, 218-25.
- 4.3 David Brackett, ed., "Bringing It All Back Home: Dylan at Newport," in *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, 3d. ed., 153-59.
- 5.1 Hank Bordowitz, "Beatlemania," in *Turning Points in Rock and Roll*, 110-24.
- 5.2 Stanley Booth, "Altamont," in William McKeen, ed., *Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay: An Anthology*, 280-93.
- 5.3 Robert Palmer, "Crossroads," in *Rock & Roll: An Unruly History*, 113-27.
- 6.1 Ralph J. Gleason, "Dead Like Live Thunder" (1967) and Nat Hentoff, "We Look at Our Parents and..." (1968) in David Brackett, ed., *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, 3d ed., 231-39.
- 6.2 Jeff Tamarkin, *Got a Revolution! The Turbulent Flight of the Jefferson Airplane*, 124-36.
- 6.3 Charles Shaar Murray, "Hendrix in Black and White" (1989), in William McKeen, ed., *Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay: An Anthology*, 162-67.
- 6.4 Mikal Gilmore, "Madness & Majesty," *Rolling Stone* 1023 (5 April 2007), in *Pink Floyd: The Ultimate Guide (Rolling Stone, 2013)*: 9-21.
- 7.1 David Brackett, ed., "Led Zeppelin Speaks!" in *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates*, 319-26.
- 7.2 Kurt Loder, "David Bowie," in *The Rolling Stone Interviews: The 1980s*, 269-77.
- 7.3 Andy Whitman, "Bruce Springsteen and the Long Walk Home," *Image 66* (online art and literature journal, accessed at <https://imagejournal.org/article/bruce-springsteen-long-walk-home/>).
- 8.1 Robert Palmer, "Walk on the Wild Side," in *Rock & Roll: An Unruly History*, 175-89.
- 8.2 James Miller, "Andy Warhol, Up-Tight," in *Almost Grown: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, 241-49.
- 8.3 Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, "All Tomorrow's Parties: 1965-1968," in *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, 3-24.
- 9.1 Craig Marks and Rob Tannenbaum, *I Want My MTV: The Uncensored Story of the Music Video Revolution* (New York: Dutton, 2011), 272-84, 353-65, 526-42.
- 9.2 Craig Werner, "'And That's the Way That It Is': The Reagan Rules, Hip-hop, and the Megastars," in *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America* (New York: Plume, 1999), 245-51, 262-80, 297-304.

9.3 Michael Azerrad, *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground 1981-1991* (Back Bay Books, 2002), 3-11.

10.1 Hank Bordowitz, "Nirvana Hits #1 with 'Nevermind'," in *Turning Points in Rock and Roll*, 201-10.

10.2 Mikal Gilmore, "Kurt Cobain's Road from Nowhere," in *Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay: An Anthology*, William McKeen, ed., 635-39.

10.3 Kathleen Hanna, Riot Grrrl Manifesto, *Bikini Kill* magazine 2, 1991.