

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### **PLANET RAP: Global Hip Hop and Postcolonial Perspectives**

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**Professor J. Griffith Rollefson**

\*NB: This is a course for which I am currently developing a multi-authored textbook (along the lines of Jeff Todd Titon's widely used specialist-centered ethnomusicology text, *Worlds of Music*)

Undergraduate Lecture

#### ***Aims and Objectives***

In this course we will study the global spread of hip hop music and culture. While the course will include an introduction to hip hop history and hip hop studies in the US, we will focus on the ways that hip hop artists outside of the US have employed African American modes of cultural resistance and commercial engagement and in so doing made audible the continuities between the African American experience of "double consciousness" and the global discrepancies and asymmetries of postcoloniality.

#### ***Description of the Course***

In this lecture and discussion course we will track hip hop's prehistory in Afro-Caribbean sound system culture and its birth as an urban culture in the Bronx, learn of the culture's subsequent spread throughout the US and its occupied territories along a trajectory from Puerto Rico, Panama, and the Philippines and its spread along US military networks from Japan to Germany and Turkey, to its eventual conquering of the postcolonial dynamics between France, Algeria, and Senegal, the UK, South Asia, and South Africa, and beyond. The course concludes with a look at the ways that hip hop theorizes neocolonial relationships between the US and Mexico and/as Native America.

In looking at hip hop communities around the planet we will examine the ways that hip hop culture has provided a political platform and an international network for the resistance of mainstream national cultures and for the expression of minority identities. However, in addition, we will also look at the ways that hip hop is not only a "resistance vernacular," but a highly mediatized, globalizing, and potentially commercializing and "Americanizing" force (for better and for worse). Although we will read into postcolonial cultural theory in the course, our investigations will focus on analyzing and understanding the hybridized musical means through which these seemingly contradictory cultural politics are composed and performed. At the end of the semester we will have a better understanding of hip hop's musical and rhetorical structures and its performativities and get a glimpse into the ways that the music—in its global and globalized forms—represents a microcosm of how culture, race, media, and empire function in contemporary societies.

#### ***Suggestions for Preliminary Study***

The course reading will range from music history narratives, to postcolonial theory and cultural studies texts, to close musicological readings of specific tracks. The following selected bibliography is intended as a starting point for scholarly inquiry. Students are encouraged to gain a familiarity with the literature during the course and to mine this bibliography and its footnotes for sources for your own research project due at examination time.

Berger, Harris M. and Michael Thomas Carroll. *Global Pop, Local Language*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2003.

Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005.

Condry, Ian. 2006. *Hip-hop Japan: rap and the paths of cultural globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Durand, Alain-Philippe, Ed. *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Flores, Juan. *From Bomba to Hip Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Forman, Murray. *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip Hop*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1993.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Marshall, Wayne, Raquel Z. Rivera, and Deborah Pacini Hernandez, eds. *Reggaeton*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010.
- Mitchell, Tony. 2001. *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Neal, Mark Anthony and Murray Forman, eds. *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Perry, Imani. 2004. *Prophets of the hood: politics and poetics in hip hop*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Ramsey, Guthrie P. *Race music: black cultures from bebop to hip-hop*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2003.
- Raphael-Hernandez, Heike. *Blackening Europe*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Schloss, Joseph Glenn. *Making beats: the art of sample-based hip-hop*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. 2004.
- Sharma, Nitasha Tamar. *Hip Hop Desis, South Asian Americans, Blackness, and a Global Race Consciousness*. Durham: Duke University Press. 2010.
- Spady, James G., H. Samy Alim, and Samir Meghelli. *Tha Global Cipa: Hip Hop Culture and Consciousness*.
- Strode, Tim and Tim Wood. *The Hip Hop Reader*. New York: Pearson, 2008.
- Wright, Michelle. *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Zuberi, Nabeel. *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

Our listening and cultural analyses will also cover a range of musical artifacts from early hip hop club tapes to contemporary YouTube posts from around the globe. Students are encouraged to immerse themselves in hip hop history listening during the course. Many good introductory listening lists are available online, but a good start will include early tracks ranging from the Sugar Hill Gang's seminal 1979 commercial hit, "Rapper's Delight," to Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five's archetypal 1982 politically conscious track "The Message." As a preparatory exercise with a more recent artifact, students are also encouraged to listen closely to Jay-Z and Kanye West's 2011 *Watch the Throne* with an ear attuned to the postcolonial and holding in mind the interplay of commodification and resistance on the album.

### **From the Book of Modules:**

Total Marks 200: Research Project of c. 3,000 words - 100 marks; Folio of coursework exercises - 100 marks

### **Marking Breakdown:**

*Folio of Coursework (all posted to the Online CIPHER) [100 marks]:*

3 Weekly Discussion Leader Online Reading Responses (3 paragraphs, 20% Each = 60% total)  
 Weekly Critical Responses to 1 of your Peers for Each week (3 sentences, 1% Each=15% total)  
 → for a grand total of 75%

Close Reading of One Track (25%)

*Research Project (posted to the Online Research Gallery) [100 marks]:*

Digital Research Project/Paper/Object  
 (10% Proposal + 75% Final Project + 15% Critical Responses)

### **Coursework:**

#### **Weekly Online Discussion (The Cipher):**

Discussion leaders: 3 Paragraphs posted to the Cipher by Monday @ 5pm

Discussion Three times this semester Discussion Leaders will be required to post a three-paragraph reading and listening response to the "Forums" section of Blackboard. In around 500 words pose a well-crafted response to that week's reading and listening assignment—either as a new thread or within a classmate's existing thread. Craft your response around an underlined guiding question or thesis

statement (1-2 sentences in the response). For full credit you must post your response by Monday at 5pm before class on Tuesday.

Rest of Class: 3 Sentences posted to the Cipher by Monday @ 11:59pm

After the Discussion Leaders post *their* responses, I want the rest of the class to respond to one of those posts. These need not be well crafted as the above, but should engage your students work thoughtfully and critically, pushing them, correcting them, or giving them props! These are due by midnight on Monday before class. This will kickstart the discussion in Lecture.

The Reading Responses are intended to encourage you to engage the material – not to simply read it. As I hope we all learn in this class, critical reading is really only accomplished when you are able to apply ideas in the text(s) in your own terms—to synthesize the reading. In other words, I want you to be in dialogue with the texts that we read and the music, lyrics, and images that we analyze this semester. (Don't push it, but a good rule of thumb is that it is better to read a quarter of it closely and critically than to make your eyes travel over each word without really digesting it).

This brings us to the final point regarding the Reading Responses: they are intended to establish a dialogue among Planet Rap course members in advance of class. In hip hop parlance, through our Blackboard Forum we are establishing a “Cipher” – a circle of feedback and dialogue that responds, critiques, engages, challenges, gives props, and ultimately betters the Individual Members and the Cipher as a whole. Brrrrrrrip!

**Close Reading of One Track:** You will select one hip hop track, conduct a close reading and analysis of the track, and write up the analysis in a 1000-word post. You can comment on the lyrics, music, production quality, video, etc. but this exercise should have you focusing on developing your skills in writing about the musical and artistic qualities. Use your senses to see what's there. Withhold judgment for a bit – let the sound do its work. Then connect those observations to what they might “mean.” **This is a “close reading” and is a great way to connect the “sonic to the social” – that is, to see how music creates and sustains social meaning and social bonds.** Post to the (Week 7) Cipher by 5pm on Monday before the Tuesday Class Meeting. You'll also write 2 response posts (2.5 pts ea.) to two of your peers' close readings and post them by 11:59pm that same night.

Further details TBA in class – for instance:

1. Remember the “intentional fallacy” – what the artist intended is only part of the track's “meaning.”
2. Try and connect the close reading to concepts developed in class
3. Remember that the close “reading” is, first and foremost, a close “listening” – this is what I call “Ear Work.”
4. Always shoot for “the next level.” Don't settle for the obvious answers and judgments, but push forward past the “what” to the “why,” “how,” and “for whom” level of critical discourse.
5. Remember to link the track (if at all possible) so we can listen.

### **Final Research Project:**

**Digital Research Project/Paper/Object:** The Research Project will give you a chance to delve more deeply into an area of your own interest. The projects will serve to expand the focus of the course and may focus on an MC, DJ, group, hip hop art form, local scene, album, track, a genre, a radio format, or any other subject of inquiry so long as it relates to global hip hop and has something new to say about the music in relation to the issues we discuss in class. Remember: this is your chance to say something original about this music!

While you may choose to write a 3000-word research paper (fully-footnoted, etc.) I encourage you to create an alternative research project online such as a Podcast, a Prezi object with embedded media (prezi.com), a Youtube video overwritten with translations and analysis of a music video, a website about an artist or issue, a documentary video of a local or international hip hop act, or anything else that documents your research. The sky's the limit—there are many, many ways to present research. These more interactive formats might be more appropriate for documenting hip hop research.

The final projects (research paper as pdf or digital research object) will be posted to the Planet Rap Blackboard Gallery during reading week, and as a final meeting of the Planet Rap Cipher, we will comment on each other's projects. After completing the final project each member of the cipher will post responses about three other projects in the style and manner of the Reading Responses (for an additional 5% of the Final Project grade). Full requirements and details will be handed out and posted to Blackboard later in the semester.

We will discuss some important tools for music research in section, including RILM, music index, and Lexis Nexis. Note: Project Details Subject to Change.

Proposals will be due in Week 9. These should be 150 words and include 3 initial sources.

### **Course Plan:**

**Week 1: Intro, Syllabus Readthrough, Intro to Hip Hop Studies and/as Postcolonial Studies and Intro to Critical Listening and Cultural Studies**

Film excerpt – *Hip Hop: The Furious Force of Rhymes* (Smithsonian Channel)

**Core Concepts:** Close Reading, The Intentional Fallacy, Identity, Intersectionality, "Connecting the Sonic and the Social"

**Week 2: Hip Hop: The Furious Force of Rhymes**

Reading:

Selections from Starr and Waterman, *American Popular Music*

"Rapper's Delight: The Origins of Hip-Hop"

"Hip-Hop Breaks Out" from *American Popular Music*.

Selections from *That's the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader*

Listening Lab List and Media on Blackboard "Announcements"

via YouTube playlists – Griff Rollefson (cybergrippy) Account:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/cybergrippy>

**Core Concepts:** Globalization, "Knowledge of Self," Afrocentrism, Breakbeat

**Week 3: Roots and Routes: The United States as a Postcolony**

Reading:

Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads*, Chapter Two "Diasporic Noise: History, Hip Hop and the Post-colonial Politics of Sound"

Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Selections)

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" (via YouTube playlists)

**Core Concepts:** Hegemony, War of Position, Contrapuntal Reading

**Week 4: Roots and Routes: Puerto Rocks, Dancehall, Reggaeton and the Circum-Caribbean**

Reading:

Flores, "Puerto Rican and Proud, Boyee!: Rap, Roots, and Amnesia"

Marshall, "From *Música Negra* to *Reggaeton Latino*: The Cultural Politics of Nation, Migration, and Commercialization"

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

**Core Concepts:** "Getting Lost in the Sauce," Networks, Flows, Banana Republic

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 5: Pacific Rim: The Philippines, FilAms, Japan, and American Cultural Imperialism**

Reading:

Villegas, "Hip Hop over Homework: Filipino Americans 'Failing?'"

<http://filamfunk.blogspot.com/2010/12/hip-hop-over-homework-filipino.html>

Film: Villegas, *Lyrical Empire: Hip Hop in Metro Manila*

Condry, *Hip Hop Japan* (Introduction and Chapter 1)

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists  
**Core Concepts:** Cultural Imperialism, Appropriation, Agency, Model Minority, Intertext

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 6: Germany and American Cultural Imperialism**

Reading:

Rollefson, *Flip the Script*, Ch 2: Aggro Berlin and Ch 3: Hot Commodities

Schmieding, "Boom Boxes and Backwards Caps: Hip-Hop in the GDR"

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

**Core Concepts:** Strategic Essentialism, Rasse, Material Culture, Hybridity, Political Econ

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 7: Postcolonial South Africa**

Reading:

Haupt, *The Guardian*, "Die Antwoord's Revival of Blackface does South Africa no Favours"

Haupt, Selections from *Static*

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

**Core Concepts:** Blackface Minstrelsy, Signification, Peer-to-Peer, Web 2.0, Kwaito

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**1000-word Close Reading of One Track** posted to the Cipher by Monday at 5pm. You may use this to build toward your Final Research Project if you'd like.

Everyone comment on two of your peers' readings as well please.

**Week 8: Postcolonial UK and South Asia**

Reading:

Edyssuria, *City Pages*, "Dancing with Myself"

Rollefson, *Flip the Script*, Ch. 5: "MIA's 'Terrorist Chic'"

Zuberi, Selections from *Sounds English: Transnational Popular Music*

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

**Core Concepts:** Commercialized Resistance, Postcolonial Paradoxes, GlobalGhettotech

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 9: Postcolonial France and West Africa**

Reading:

Appert, "Rappin' Griots: Producing the Local in Senegalese Hip Hop"

Olaniyan, "The Cosmopolitan Nativist: Fela Anikulapo-Kuti"

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

**Core Concepts:** Orality, Intertext, Aporia, Antinomies, Polyrythm

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.  
**Research Proposals Due:** 150 word proposals with 3 initial sources. Post to BB  
Assignments (Turnitin) Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 10: Postcolonial France and West Africa**

Reading:

Rollefson, *Flip the Script*, Ch. 6: "Marché Noir"

Selections from *Native Tongues: An African Hip Hop Reader*

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

**Core Concepts:** Anti-Anti-Essentialism, Nativism, black Atlantic, Enlightenment Binaries

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 11: Postcolonial Ireland / Postcolonial Whiteness**

Reading:

Rollefson, Conclusion, *Flip the Script*, "Conclusion: Strangers in Paradise"

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPOYFFlvuzLLSORTIm4O0ABV7c8sM5pmX>

**Core Concepts:** Whiteness Studies, Compound Meter, Non-Aligned Movement, Nation

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Week 12: BRN BFLO: Mexico, California, and/as Native America**

Reading:

Richard Rodriguez, "The Chinese in all of us: A Mexican American Explores Multiculturalism"

Ralph Ellison, "What America Would Be Like Without Blacks"

Listening Lab and Media on Blackboard "Announcements" and YouTube playlists

BRN BFLO playlist:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPOYFFlvuzLLJiyatpNkHeKT\\_PXOQ1gRt](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPOYFFlvuzLLJiyatpNkHeKT_PXOQ1gRt)

**Core Concepts:** Indigeneity, Liminality, Border Musics, Historicity, Creolization

**Planet Rap Cipher:**

For Discussion Leaders: Reading Responses due by Monday 5pm.

**Discussion Leaders are:**

For Everyone Else: One Response due before Monday 11:59pm.

**Exam Week: Post Research Object to the Planet Rap Research Gallery,  
Comment on Each Others' Work (3 others) within 24 hrs of deadline.  
(Exact Date and Time TBD)**