

THE MUSIC OF FRANK ZAPPA (MUGC 4890-001/5890-001) — Spring 2012

class meetings: MWF 1:00-1:50 pm — MU 321

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SYLLABUS

REQUIRED TEXT:

Zappa, Frank, with Peter Occhiogrosso. *The Real Frank Zappa Book*. New York: Poseidon Press, 1989.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS (on reserve):

Kostelanetz, Richard. *The Frank Zappa Companion*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997.
[ML410.Z285 F7 1997]

Miles, Barry. *Zappa: A Biography*. New York: Grove Press, 2004. [ML410.Z285 M49 2004]

Slaven, Neil. *Electric Don Quixote: The Definitive Story of Frank Zappa*. London: Omnibus Press, 2003.
[ML410.Z285 S48 2003]

Walley, David. *No Commercial Potential: The Saga of Frank Zappa*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996.
[ML410.Z285 W3 1996]

Watson, Ben. *Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. [ML410.Z285 W37 1995]

CLASS STRUCTURE:

General

This course will explore the life and work of American composer Frank Zappa from a variety of perspectives — musical, social, cultural, political. Given the nature of the course, it is anticipated that the class schedule will remain somewhat flexible, occasionally departing from the general outline given below. Class meetings will occasionally include group discussion on various Zappa-related topics; thus, a free exchange of ideas is essential to a thorough exploration of the course subject. Other class time activities will include video presentations and guest visits.

Weekly Assignments & Journals

Weekly assignments include a variety of listening, reading, and viewing (video) assignments. Students will be responsible for keeping an online journal throughout the semester, which will be used to log opinions, perceptions, analyses, etc. regarding these various assignments. The quantity of these assignments differs between the undergraduate and graduate sections of the class; details are included in the Discussions section of the Blackboard site for this course. During the last three weeks of class, students will be working on final research papers and preparing class presentations (see below); so there will be a reduction in the weekly journal assignments at that time.

Research Paper

Each student will write a **research paper** on a specific topic relating to Frank Zappa's life and/or work. The body of the paper must be at least eight pages (undergraduate) and ten pages (graduate) — plus bibliography, discography, and endnotes — and will be expected to conform to MLA guidelines (typed, double-spaced, proper margins, etc.). Topic proposals will be submitted in writing and approved by the instructor during the ninth week of class.

Class Presentations (graduate students only)

The last two weeks of the semester will be devoted to graduate student **class presentations**, the topics of which should be related in some way to the final research paper. Presentations must be *exactly 20 minutes long* and may include brief musical and/or video examples; extra time will be allowed following each presentation for questions from the class.

Final Examination

Because students will be expected to dig into deeper issues regarding Zappa's work through the journals, in-class presentations, and research papers, the **final examination** will assess knowledge of more general information regarding Zappa's life, work, and philosophy. The format will be multiple choice — there will be no essay questions.

Attendance

Since we have much material to cover in a very short period of time, punctuality is crucial; to this end, chronic tardiness will be counted against you in the attendance portion of the grade (3 late arrivals = 1 absence). *Students with more than **four** unexcused absences (or the equivalent) are subject to failure at the instructor's discretion.*

GRADING:

Final grades will be based the following:

Undergraduate:

- Journals: 40%
- Research paper: 25%
- Attendance/participation: 15%
- Final Examination: 20%

Graduate:

- Journals: 35%
- Research paper: 20%
- Class presentation: 15%
- Attendance/participation: 15%
- Final Examination: 15%

NOTES:

The College of Music complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with disability. If you have an established disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and would like to request accommodation, please contact the instructor of this course as soon as possible.

The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline provides penalties for misconduct by students, including academic dishonesty (cheating/plagiarism). If you engage in academic dishonesty related to this class, you will receive a failing grade on the test or assignment, and a failing grade in the course. In addition, the case will be referred to the Dean of Students for appropriate disciplinary action.

SCHEDULE (*subject to change*):

- 1 Week of January 16:** Preliminary discussions — contextualizing Zappa's work
- 2 Week of January 23:** Precedents, and influences — vernacular music sources
- 3 Week of January 30:** Precedents, and influences — non-vernacular music sources
- 4 Week of February 6:** Overview of Zappa's work: The Project/Object
 - DUE: Journals, Section I (Monday, February 6)
- 5 Week of February 13:** Zappa as composer and performer
- 6 Week of February 20:** Zappa as composer and performer
- 7 Week of February 27:** Social and cultural context
 - DUE: Journals, Section II (Monday, February 27)
- 8 Week of March 5:** Freaks and archetypes in the Project/Object
- 9 Week of March 12:** Politics in the Project/Object
 - DUE: Research paper/class presentation proposals (Friday, March 16)
- Week of March 19: Spring Break**
- 10 Week of March 26:** Politics in the Project/Object
 - DUE: Journals, Section III (Monday, March 26)
- 11 Week of April 2:** Religion in the Project/Object
- 12 Week of April 9:** Zappa's Legacy; Barrow/Mars residency
- 13 Week of April 16:** Barrow/Mars residency; Synthesis and commentary
 - DUE: Journals, Section IV (Wednesday, April 18)
- 14 Week of April 23:** Graduate student class presentations
- 15 Week of April 30:** Graduate student class presentations; final discussion and summary
 - DUE: Journals, Section V (Friday, May 4)
- 16 Week of May 7 (Finals Week)**
 - **Monday 7 May, 10:30 AM-12:30 PM** — Final Examination