

THE MUSIC OF FRANK ZAPPA (MUGC 4890-027/5890-028) — Spring 2015

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

instructor: Dr. Joseph Klein

office: MU 2005

phone #: (940)565-4926

e-mail: joseph.klein@unt.edu

teaching assistant: Ermir Bejo

office: MU 2001

e-mail: ErmirBejo@my.unt.edu

Blackboard site: <https://ecampus.unt.edu/webct>

Supplemental course website: <http://www.courses.unt.edu/josephklein/zappa>

UNT Libraries (for online audio): <https://audioreerves.library.unt.edu>

SYLLABUS

REQUIRED TEXT:

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

RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS (on reserve):

Carr, Paul. *Frank Zappa and the And*. Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013. [ML410.Z285 F68 2013]

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 & Discussion board

Weekly assignments include a variety of music, archival video (concerts, interviews, documentaries), and reading assignments. Students will be responsible for posting entries to an online discussion board each week, which will be used to log opinions, perceptions, analyses, etc. pertaining to these assigned materials. The quantity of these assignments will differ 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 will thus primarily choose their own music, video, and reading materials those weeks, as determined by the research topic; as a result, weekly discussion board postings during that time will be somewhat less structured.

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 (approximately 2000 words) for undergraduate students and twelve pages (approximately 3000 words) for graduate and honors students — 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 tenth week of 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, a comprehensive **final examination** will assess knowledge of more general information regarding Zappa's life, work, and philosophy. This will be an online exam, and the format will be entirely multiple choice. In order to help students prepare for this exam, there will be two **practice quizzes** during the semester in the same format as the final.

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 **three** unexcused absences (or the equivalent) are subject to failure at the instructor's discretion.*

GRADING:

Final grades will be based the following:

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

NOTES:

Office of Disability Accommodation: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940-565-4323.

Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress: A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Students cannot exceed attempted credit hours above 150% of their required degree plan. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. Please visit <http://financialaid.unt.edu/satisfactory-academic-progress-requirements> for more information about financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress. It may be wise for you to schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course being doing so.

Academic Integrity: Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of “F” in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at: <http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>.

Student Behavior in the Classroom: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr.

Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE): The SETE is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to students at the end of the semester, providing a chance to evaluate this course; further instructions will be provided at that time. *You are strongly encouraged to complete this online survey prior to the end of the semester.*

SCHEDULE (*subject to change*):

- 1 Week of January 19** — Background and concepts: contextualizing Zappa's work; The Project/Object
- 2 Week of January 27** — Precedents and influences: vernacular music sources
- 3 Week of February 2** — Precedents and influences: non-vernacular music sources
- 4 Week of February 9** — The Works: Zappa as composer and performer
- 5 Week of February 16** — The Works: Zappa as composer and performer
- 6 Week of February 23** — The Works: Zappa as composer and performer; *Practice Quiz 1*
- 7 Week of March 2** — Social and cultural context
- 8 Week of March 9** — Freaks and archetypes in the Project/Object; Zappa in popular culture
- Week of March 16** — Spring Break
- 9 Week of March 23** — Sex and drugs in the Project/Object; race, gender, and sexuality in the Project/Object
- 10 Week of March 30** — Politics in the Project/Object; *Research paper proposals due*
- 11 Week of April 6** — Politics in the Project/Object
- 12 Week of April 13** — Religion in the Project/Object; *Practice Quiz 2*
- 13 Week of April 20** — Arthur Barrow residency; *FZ Class Band concert (Thurs., April 23, 8 pm, Voertman Hall)*
- 14 Week of April 27** — Zappa's Legacy; Bob Zappa interview
- 15 Week of May 4** — Synthesis and final discussion; *Research papers due (Fri., May 8)*

Final Examination: online exam (available on Monday, May 11)