

THE MUSIC OF FRANK ZAPPA (MUGC 4890-001/5890-001) — Spring 2018

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

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Blackboard site: <https://learn.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 music (by Zappa and others), archival video (concerts, interviews, documentaries), and reading assignments that span a wide range of the available literature on Zappa and his work — from newspapers and periodicals to scholarly journals. Students will be responsible for posting entries to an online discussion board each week, which will be used to log their reflections on these assigned materials. The quantity of these assignments will differ between the undergraduate and graduate sections of the class; details are included in the Weekly Assignment section of the Blackboard site for this course. During the final weeks of class, students will be working on their research papers, and will thus primarily choose their own music, video, and reading materials for those weeks, in support of the particular 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 2500 words (approximately 10 pages) for undergraduate students and 3500 words (approximately 12 pages) 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 discussion boards and research paper, 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** (not for credit) 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%

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Access to Information — Eagle Connect: Your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs at my.unt.edu. All official communication from the university will be delivered to your Eagle Connect account; you are expected to check your UNT email account on a regular basis (or have those messages auto-forwarded to your personal email address) in order to keep apprised of course-related information. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward your e-mail: eagleconnect.unt.edu.

Academic Dishonesty: Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: (a) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (b) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; (c) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: (a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

Acceptable Student Behavior: 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 Dean of Students 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 deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Disabilities: 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 disability.unt.edu. You may also contact them by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress: An undergraduate 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/sap> for more information about financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress. It is recommended that you 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.

Retention of Student Records: Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT): Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The short SPOT survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Please look for the email in your UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete your survey. Once you complete the survey you will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the spot website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

SCHEDULE (*subject to change*):

- 1 Week of January 15** — Background and concepts: contextualizing Zappa's work; The Project/Object
- 2 Week of January 22** — Precedents and influences: vernacular music sources
- 3 Week of January 29** — Precedents and influences: non-vernacular music sources
- 4 Week of February 5** — Zappa as innovator and iconoclast
- 5 Week of February 12** — Zappa as composer and performer (part 1)
- 6 Week of February 19** — Zappa as composer and performer (part 2); ***Practice Quiz 1***
- 7 Week of February 26** — The studio as instrument: Zappa and technology
- 8 Week of March 5** — Social and cultural context for Zappa's life and work
- Week of March 12** — Spring Break
- 9 Week of March 19** — Freaks and archetypes in the Project/Object
- 10 Week of March 26** — Zappa in popular culture; Drugs, alcohol and sex in the Project/Object; ***Research paper proposals due***
- 11 Week of April 2** — Race in the Project/Object; Religion in the Project/Object (part 1)
- 12 Week of April 9** — Religion in the Project/Object (part 2); ***Practice Quiz 2***
- 13 Week of April 16** — Politics in the Project/Object (part 1); Arthur Barrow residency (*tentative*)
- 14 Week of April 23** — Politics in the Project/Object (part 2); Bob Zappa interview (*tentative*)
- 15 Week of April 30** — Zappa's Legacy; Synthesis and final discussion; ***Research papers due*** (*Fri., May 4*)

Final Examination: online exam (available on Monday, May 7)