

MUET 3060: African American Music

Class Meeting Time and Location: Tuesday & Thursday 11am-12:20pm in Sage Hall, Room 354

Professor: Nathaniel Ash-Morgan (he/him/his)

Email: NathanielAsh-Morgan@my.unt.edu

Communication Preference: Canvas Message (see policies)

Office Hours: Thursday 3:30 – 4:30pm via Zoom

Zoom link: <https://unt.zoom.us/j/7994332740>

If you can't meet during Zoom office hours, send an email to arrange a meeting in person or via Zoom.

Teaching Assistant: Ashutosh Ashutosh

Email: AshutoshAshutosh@my.unt.edu

Grader: Erika Soveranes

Email: Erika.Soveranes@unt.edu

Course Description

This course explores African American music culture through an ethnomusicological lens, focusing on a multiplicity of connections between musical expression and lived experience. After examining African music and culture, we will trace the development of African American musical traditions as a powerful form of cultural innovation – often in direct response to oppression and forced displacement.

We will examine how African American music has shaped and been shaped by broader social, political, and cultural forces. Rather than offering a comprehensive survey, this course centers on selected topics that illuminate the reciprocal relationship between music and society. Through key case studies and a loosely chronological structure, the course investigates pivotal moments in the history of Black music in the United States, focusing on the questions it raises about identity, resistance, community, and power. In sum, this course aims to answer a fundamental question:

What can African American music reveal about historical context – and how does that context shape the music itself?

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate a deeper understanding of African American music cultures and their historical development
- Engage with key questions about the social, political, and cultural contexts of African American music

- Strengthen critical thinking, listening, and analytical skills in relation to musical and cultural study
- Fulfill CORE curriculum goals by building competencies in critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and teamwork

Attendance Expectations

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. Attendance will be taken each class and uploaded to Canvas. Worth 15% of your final grade, each class is worth approximately 0.5% of your grade. Due to the sheer volume of excused absence requests, all students will start with an extra 1% to your grade, which essentially allows you to miss two classes. Last but certainly not least, four or more absences without prior approval will result in the automatic failure of the class.

In sum, excused absences will still result in the lowering of your grade (with two freebies built into the system with the extra 1%, which you may use as a slight extra credit bump with perfect attendance), but you should still inform me and the TA, Ashutosh Ashutosh, via Canvas message (or email if you are unable to send a Canvas message), of any excused absences so that any excused absence does not count toward your maximum of four unexcused absences.

Component		Details / Due Dates
Attendance & Participation	30%	Class Attendance & Participation: 15% Weekly Reading/Written Assignments or Discussion Posts: 15%
Core/Special Assignments	30%	Core Text Summary: 10% - Due Sept. 11 th Women in Classic Blues: 10% - Due Oct. 6 th Black Church Ethnography: 10% - Due Nov. 3 rd
Listening / Short Answer Quizzes	15%	Three quizzes (lowest score dropped)
Core Final Project	25%	Final Presentation: 10% - Due Date TBD Final Written Paper: 15% - Due Dec. 8 th

Letter/Percentage Scale:

A 90-100 | B 80-89.99 | C 70 – 79.99 | D* 60-69.99 | F <60 *Please note that D is considered a passing grade at UNT.

Class Attendance & Participation

Your presence and voice matter. Come to class prepared – having done the assigned readings

and writing – and be ready to contribute to small-group and whole-class discussions and activities. From time to time, there will also be informal ways to participate and stay engaged.

Group Presentation In groups of three, present research and analysis of a musical piece or video from that week's list of songs and videos. 15 minutes. I will make a sign-up sheet available. Due: In-class on Thursdays between Week 3 and Week 13. ***Core Learning Objective Assessed: Teamwork***

Core Text Summary Write a summary of one of the three pieces we will have read in class by the due date. 600 words. Due: Sept. 11th (11:59pm) in Canvas. ***Core Learning Objective Assessed: Communication Skills***

Black Church Ethnography For this assignment, you will attend a service or meeting at one of the local churches listed below which have granted permission for students from this class to attend to conduct participant-observation fieldwork. You should dress appropriately and conduct yourself respectfully, remaining mindful of the beliefs and attitudes of others. You should take notes discreetly and maintain an open mind to forms of culture and worship that may be unfamiliar to you. Finally, take a moment to listen to conversations and ask questions about traditions, music, etc. Students may choose to attend in pairs or in small groups. Each student will submit a paper (800 words) based on your experience. The paper should engage with relevant assigned readings from class. Your paper should describe your own experience and reactions, and may also address questions that I have given you. Due Nov. 3rd (11:59pm) in Canvas. ***Core Learning Objective Assessed: Social Responsibility***

Final Project Develop a research and/or research-informed creative project that explores a topic of your choice in African American music. May take the form of a research presentation and/or a creative project presentation. Project Proposal (400 words) Due: November 10th (11:59pm). Final Presentation (10 minutes presentation + 5 minutes to field questions and feedback from your classmates): Presentations during Weeks 15, 16 and final exam date (you will be assigned a day during those weeks). ***Core Learning Objective Assessed: Communication skills and Critical Thinking***

I will provide further details and guidelines for each assignment, but in general, I will grade your work for timely submission, level of completion, adherence to guidelines, and thoroughness of engagement.

Class Scope and Teaching Approach

Course Scope

This course is not a comprehensive survey of African American music. Instead, it focuses on select key moments, figures, and issues, emphasizing the study of music within its broader social and cultural contexts.

Collaborative Learning

This course values student voices as essential to the learning process. In class and in online discussions you will have the opportunity to express what you hope to gain from the course and what topics are particularly of interest. You are sincerely encouraged to contribute your insights and experiences throughout the semester. Since the course does not cover every relevant genre or figure, your suggestions and questions are welcome at any time.

Developing Research & Study Skills

Studying musical cultures requires a unique set of skills — whether you're a musician, a curious listener, or new to the field. We will dedicate class time to building and practicing critical reading, deep listening, research strategies, and project development skills to support your growth as a scholar and listener.

Class Policies

Communication: For attendance and grading issues, please use the Canvas message tool and send the message to myself, Ashutosh, and Erika. This will avoid confusion and prevent us from having to forward your message to the appropriate individual. If it is a personal or sensitive matter, feel free to email or speak to me directly. We will respond to your Canvas message or email within 48 hours during weekdays; if you have not heard from one of us within that window, please feel free to send a reminder.

Canvas Use: Please make sure you have access to the Canvas site, and locate the Files tab and the Assignment tab. Please also make sure you receive announcements, as I will use Canvas to deliver information via announcements.

Classroom Agreement: Unless you receive prior approval to monitor your communication device, kindly suspend all cell phone use in class so that we can maintain a respectful and accommodating environment. Kindly put your cell phones out of sight and out of mind. Laptops, pads, etc. are allowed, but you must refrain from non-class activities. This includes doing work for other classes and communicating via online messaging and social media.

Classroom Recording: Unless you receive prior consent, no photography, video, or audio recording is permissible.

Return of Student Work: Assignments will be returned no later than two weeks after their submission date, or, where relevant, by the final grade submission deadline, whichever comes first.

End-of-Semester Jury: Students should not schedule their end-of-semester jury against a regularly scheduled class.

Late work: All assignments are allowed a 24-hour window from the exact due date. I know juggling Canvas due dates can be overwhelming, so this is designed to be a kindness to you in

case you miss the deadline. As such, all assignments will remain open for submission 24 hours after the deadline. No late work will be accepted after the 24-hour window.

Extensions: If you need extra time to complete an assignment, please let me know at least 48 hours before the due date. If a dire emergency occurs, please reach out and I will likely be quite understanding. However, extensions will not be granted if asked within less than 48 hours before the due date. Extensions longer than 48 hours will generally not be granted. Extensions will not be granted on the final project.

Guidelines for Written Work: Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments should be submitted on Canvas, uploaded in Microsoft Word Doc format (as a UNT student, you may download Microsoft Office applications, including Word, for free [here](#)) with Times New Roman, double-space, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. The document should be saved with some indication of the assignment and your name. The header of the first page should contain your name, date, the name of the class and instructor. The minimum word count does not include the Works Cited section.

Syllabus Change Policy: Syllabus is subject to change at the professor's discretion. Any changes will be reasonable, and I will provide you with ample notice.

UNT Policies:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam [or specify alternative sanction, such as course failure]. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students (Office of Academic Integrity), 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.

See: [Academic Integrity](#)

LINK: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

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 classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

See: [Student Code of Conduct](#)

Link: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

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. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect.

See: [Eagle Connect](#)

LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

ODA STATEMENT

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter. You can now request your Letters of Accommodation ONLINE and ODA will mail your Letters of Accommodation to your instructors. You may wish to begin a private discussion with your professors regarding your specific needs in a course. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access.

See: [ODA](#)

LINK: disability.unt.edu. (Phone: (940) 565-4323)

Health and Safety Information

Students can access information about health and safety at: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

Registration Information for Students

See: [Registration Information](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/students>

Academic Calendar, Fall 2025

See: [Fall 2025 Registration Information](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-academic-calendar.html>

Final Exam Schedule, Fall 2025

<https://registrar.unt.edu/exams/final-exam-schedule/fall.html>

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress

Undergraduates

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 hours registered. 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.

Students holding music scholarships must maintain a minimum 2.5 overall cumulative GPA and 3.0 cumulative GPA in music courses.

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.

It is recommended that 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 before doing so.

See: [Financial Aid](#)

LINK: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

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 Canvas 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.

See: [FERPA](#)

Link: <http://ferpa.unt.edu/>

COUNSELING AND TESTING

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor for students in need. Please visit the Center's website for further information:

See: [Counseling and Testing](#)

Link: <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>.

For more information on mental health resources, please visit:

See: [Mental Health Resources](#)

Link: <https://disparities.unt.edu/mental-health-resources>

ADD/DROP POLICY

Please be reminded that dropping classes or failing to complete and pass registered hours may make you ineligible for financial aid. In addition, if you drop below half-time enrollment you may be required to begin paying back your student loans. See Academic Calendar (listed above) for additional add/drop Information.

Drop Information: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-academic-calendar.html>

STUDENT RESOURCES

The University of North Texas has many resources available to students. For a complete list, go to:

See: [Student Resources](#)

Link: <https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

CARE TEAM

The Care Team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of university officials that meets regularly to provide a response to student, staff, and faculty whose behavior could be harmful to themselves or others.

See: [Care Team](#)

Link: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>