

African-American Music MUET 3060 | Fall 2026

Tue & Thu 11:10am-12:30pm | GATE 132

Professor: Tamar Sella | tamar.sella@unt.edu

TA: Nathaniel Ash-Morgan | nathanielash-morgan@my.unt.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW

Course Description:

This course explores the social, political, and cultural context of African-American music. We will examine key case studies and artists in the long trajectory of Black music in the United States, and the key social themes and issues that accompany its study. Therefore, we will always be interested in the intertwined study of music and society. What can the music teach us about broader social context? And what can broader social context teach us about the music? Each week we will unpack issues that relate to a distinct topic, interrogating the relevant related social, political, and cultural questions. These topics will not constitute a complete survey of African American music but rather generate the study of key moments and questions. We will focus on learning through deeply listening, reading, thinking, and discussing.

Learning Objectives

- Deepen familiarity with African-American music cultures
- Gain familiarity with key questions relating to the context of African-American music history
- Develop skills in critical thinking, reading, and listening in relation to the study of musical cultures
- This is a CORE course: Develop core learning skills in critical thinking, communication, social responsibility, and teamwork

ASSESSMENT AND ASSIGNMENTS

Assessment:

15% Write Your Own Freedom Song	<u>Sep 18, 11:59pm (Canvas)</u>
30% In-Class Mid-Term	<u>Sep 29 (In Class)</u>
15% Reading Response	<u>Oct 16 11:59pm (Canvas)</u>
5% Final Project Proposal	<u>Oct 23, 11:59pm (Canvas)</u>
35% Final Project Presentation	<u>Week 13-14 (Nov 10-19) (In Class)</u>

Letter/number 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.

Freedom Song Write (and/or compose!) your own freedom song. In addition to the lyrics of your song, attach an explanation and analysis (400 words) of your creative choices and of the issues you address. Due: September 18, 11:59pm. Canvas.

Core Learning Objective Assessed: Social Responsibility

In-Class Mid Term Exam consisting of two parts: 1) Identification of musical pieces (by listening) and readings materials; and 2) Short answer analyses of musical pieces and texts. All materials will be from the musical pieces and texts that we will have seen up until that point in the semester. Exam will include all required materials assigned in advance of class, and will also include some additional key materials introduced in class lectures. In class Sep 29.

Core Learning Objective Assessed: Critical Thinking

Reading Response Write a response to a reading from Week 8 or 9. 1,000 words. Due: Oct 16 11:59pm. Canvas.

Core Learning Objective Assessed: Communication skills

Final Project: In groups, do a deep dive into the work of one African American musician/ensemble. Choice of musician/ensemble + reason + initial directions plan (400 words) Due: Oct 23, 11:59pm. Final Presentation (10-minute presentation) Due in class in Weeks 13-14 (Nov 10, 12, 17, 19).

Core Learning Objective Assessed: Teamwork

Further details and guidelines will be provided for each assignment, but in general, your work will be graded for timely submission, level of completion, following of guidelines, and thoroughness of engagement.

Please be aware that this course *might not* use Canvas as the definitive grading platform for your class grade. Please note that the grade that you see on canvas throughout the semester may not be an exact representation of your final grade in the class. Refer to the grade percentages on this syllabus in order to evaluate the grade components. Please feel free to reach out to your TA to check on your grade at any point in the semester.

IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT CLASS SCOPE AND TEACHING/LEARNING APPROACHES

Scope: The class is not a complete survey of African American music. Rather, it is an introduction to select key moments and issues, as well as to approaches of studying music in its broader cultural context.

Collaborative Learning: Collaborative learning values student insights and experiences as significant aspects of teaching and learning. It is very important to me that you feel like you are heard as part of the teaching experience and you are always invited to bring in and share aspects from your own interests and experiences. Specifically because this class is not a comprehensive survey and as such will not cover all available and relevant figure and genres, I encourage you to raise queries, suggestions, and points about topics that are of particular interest to you at any point throughout the semester. I will also provide ample time for discussion both in small and large groups. Furthermore, in the final project, you will be encouraged to delve more deeply into research on a topic of your group's choice.

Research and Study Skills: Developing skills of studying musical cultures is not an easy task! Whether you are a musician yourself, an avid music listener, or a devoted scholar in any number of areas, there will be new skills to develop in the study of musical culture. As such, we will dedicate some class time to developing skills such as critical reading, deep listening, library research, and workshopping of projects.

POLICIES

Course Policies

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. Please be aware that we *do not* use Canvas as the definitive grading platform for your class grade. Rather, I use it as a platform to communicate with you, provide you with access to materials, receive assignments that are not in-class assignments, and return feedback and grades on non-in-class assignments (and potentially some in-class presentations). Please note that the grade that you see on Canvas throughout the semester may not be a representation of your final grade in the class. Refer to the grade percentages on this syllabus in order to gauge the grade components. Please feel free to reach out to your TA to check on your grade at any point in the semester.

The Classroom: Classrooms are special spaces. We each have our own (busy, beautiful, stressful, difficult, joyful, and much more) life. And for an hour or two or three every week for the duration of the semester, we carve out time from those lives to share space together in pursuit of a common goal. The classroom in this course is intended to be a space of collective learning, listening, and engagement, where we can approach and interrogate new and challenging concepts together. To honor this commitment of time and energy from all of us, and this process of learning and engagement, it is important to me that we establish a space in which we all behave with respect for one another at all times.

Analog Classroom: We live in a highly digital world, with devices competing for our attention. While they serve incredible functions, they can also make it hard for us to be present with each other in the moment. The classroom in this course is intended to be a space of collective learning, listening, and engagement, where we can approach and interrogate new and challenging concepts together. To that end, it will be a completely analog and device-free classroom. No laptops, phones, tablets, gaming consoles, etc. I ask that you come prepared with a notebook and a writing utensil, and with a printed copy of your reading materials. All reading materials are available on Canvas.

Course Materials:

- Notebook
- Writing utensil
- Canvas Site and device on which to access it
- Device on which to listen to music
- Printed Materials

AI: You may have guessed it. No AI. In this course, the use of AI tools is not permissible. No matter the approach, any attempt to represent AI output as a student's own work will be considered fabrication, cheating, and/or academic dishonesty as determined on a case-by-case basis. This course is concerned with the development of critical independent thinking and communication between humans. The course is anchored in the process of student synthesis, through critical thinking, discussion, and writing, of ideas encountered through musical pieces, texts, and in lectures and discussion. Use of AI is not allowed in this class for any part of an assignment, including (but not limited to) generation of ideas, generation of text, or editing your own work. Using AI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy.

Classroom Recording: As a default, no consent is given to video recording, audio recording, or photography in the classroom. Should you want to photograph, video record, or audio record, you would need to ask the consent of the instructor.

Communication: As a ground rule, please direct all communications to TA. If a matter needs instructor attention, TA will let me know. If you need to speak with me directly, do reach out. I respond to emails within 48 hours, Monday–Friday 9 AM–5 PM (e.g., if you write me at 5pm on Friday, I will reply by 5pm on Tuesday). If you have not heard from me in 48 hours, please feel free to give me a nudge. Please put “MUET 3060” in the subject line. Please do not email me through Canvas, but rather directly to my email. For clarity's sake, the way I like to be addressed is: Professor Sella, Prof. Sella, or Dr. Sella. Take your pick!

Return of Student Work: Assignments will be returned no later than two weeks after their due 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: Each assignment will be significant for synthesizing covered material and preparing to approach new material. As such, completing them by the deadline will be key for the forward motion of the course. I understand keeping up with assignment and deadlines can be overwhelming. With that in mind, I have kept our assignment schedule simple and light, and will also, as mentioned, provide class time to workshop assignment work, in general and particularly as we near deadlines. With all of this in mind, note that late work will not be accepted, and any late assignments will be graded at a 0. Furthermore, extensions are not available. Please take a moment now to mark your calendars with the deadlines so that you can be well prepared to submit on time. Note that you will sign up for final project presentation slots for weeks 13-14 during week 8.

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 top of the document should contain an original title. The header of the first page should contain your name, date, the name of the class and instructor. When relevant, a Works Cited section will

be at the end of the document. Word counts do not include Works Cited section. Check the Resource Folder on Canvas for a correctly formatted sample document. The purpose of the Word doc submission is so that we may, if need be, provide you with margin comments. The purpose of the formatting is so that there are no impediments to legibility on our end.

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

*For more information on the following policies, please click the links.

Academic Integrity:

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. 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](#)

Access To Information – Eagle Connect: [Eagle Connect](#)

Office of Disability Access (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: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

Registration Information for Students: [Registration Information](#)

Academic Calendar, Fall 2026

Locate online

Final Exam Schedule, Spring 2026

See above

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

Undergraduates: [Financial Aid](#) | Graduates: [Financial Aid](#)

Retention Of Student Records: [FERPA](#)

Counseling and Testing: [Counseling and Testing](#)

For more information on mental health issues, please visit: [Mental Health Issues](#)

The counselor for music students is: Myriam Reynolds | Chestnut Hall, Suite 311 | (940) 565-2741 | Myriam.reynolds@unt.edu

Add/Drop Policy: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide>

Student Resources: [Student Resources](#)

Care Team: [Care Team](#)