This course addresses popular music - broadly defined as music produced and consumed through mass media technologies - from different industries, genres, and sites throughout the world. Our aim is to use popular music as a window into the many cultural and social processes accompanying globalization. In particular, we will examine the role of popular music in transcending, reinforcing, or negotiating popular conceptions of nation, gender/sexuality, ethnicity/race, and class. Diverse musical examples and case studies will be discussed in relation to broader themes of cultural production and consumption and the construction of cultural identity. Students do not require any formal training or background in music to participate fully in this course.

ASSIGNMENTS
(Note: All assignments other than reading assignments due at 11:59PM on Thursday of the specified week)

Introductory Assignment - Personal Playlist (Week 2) - Description on page 5
Signature Assignments
1. Concert Promotion (Week 4) – Description on page 6
   Primary objective: Communication
2. Ethical Reflection Paper (Week 7) - Description on page 8
   Primary objective: Personal Responsibility
3. Music Video Analysis (Week 10) - Description on page 10
   Primary objective: Critical Thinking
4. Global Playlist (Multiple Deadlines) - Description on page 12
   Primary objective: Social Responsibility

Evaluation
- Quizzes – 30%
- Reading Reflections – 10 %
- Personal Playlist Assignment – 10%
- Signature Assignments
  - Concert Promo Project – 10%
  - Popular Music Ethics Paper – 15%
  - Music Video Analysis – 15%
  - Global Pop Playlist – 20%

Attendance Policy
Students will be deducted 2% from their final grades for their first two unexcused absences and 5% per absence for each subsequent absence. After 5 unexcused absences, they will be asked to withdraw from the class.
Core Objectives (Component Area 1: Languages, Philosophy & Culture)

**Critical Thinking:** Students will engage critically with popular music and other cultural products and behaviors. They will analyze musical examples in relation to broader social and cultural processes, and understand the role that popular media – and our participation in it – play in global discourses of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, and identity.

**Social Responsibility:** Students will develop broader cultural horizons through exposure to diverse sounds, societies, and ideologies. They will explore the many social, cultural, ideological, and political discourses surrounding the transition to globalized mass media in many parts of the words, and will engage in discussions of these issues with their peers.

**Personal Responsibility:** Students will develop an awareness of the ethical issues surrounding the production, marketing, and consumption of popular music. They should develop sensitivity to the role of popular music in large-scale public debates about cultural and social values, and also about the issues of representation, exploitation, and oppression that may underlie popular music’s production or message. They will also be encouraged to reflect on the ethical dimensions of their own participation in popular culture.

**Communication:** The core assignments will challenge students to use multiple forms of media to communicate social, cultural, and artistic ideas to different types of audiences. Students must demonstrate a mastery of precise and nuanced English at a level appropriate for academic discourse, in assignments as well as class discussions.

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**Course Outline**

**Week 1**
Jan. 16 & 18

Defining “Popular Culture”

**Week 2**
Jan. 23 & 25

**Part I: Defining “Place” in Age of Globalization**

What is “World Music”?

Social construction of genre; politics of collaboration; forms of Cultural Capital; Representing “others”

Genres: Mbube a cappella, Soukous, Zouk, Rai, Cuban Son

Reading: David Byrne (1999) – “I Hate World Music”

Documentary Films: Graceland: The African Concert, Buena Vista Social Club

**Week 3**
Jan. 30 & Feb. 1

Sounds of the City

“Soundscapes”; The politics of place, Subcultures and subcultural capital

Tokyo, New Orleans, Istanbul, Denton

Documentary Films: Sukiyaki and Chips: The Japanese Sounds of Music, Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul
Week 4
Feb. 6 & 8
Global Production and Consumption
Globalization; Appadurai’s “Flows and Scapes”; Diaspora; Hybridity
Genres: Mariachi, Bhangra, Salsa
Reading: Arjun Appadurai
Documentary Films: How Clubbing changed the World

Week 5
Feb. 13 & 15
Africa’s Diasporic Loops
The Black Atlantic; Creolization; Minor Transnationalisms
Genres: High-Life, Hiplife, Afrobeat, Soca, Reggae
Documentary Films: Fela: Music is the Weapon

PART II: CULTURAL CAPITAL AND MODES OF PRODUCTION
Week 6
Feb. 20 & 22
Dream Factories
Culture Industry; Fandoms; Idol Culture; Production of Fantasy
Genres: K-Pop, Bollywood
Listening: K-Poparazzi (RadioLab Podcast)

Week 7
Feb. 27 & March 1
Re-Mix, Re-Sample, Re-Invent
Sampling; Remix Culture; New paradigms of ownership, production, consumption, community
Vocaloid, Reggaeton, EDM
Reading: Adorno – “On Popular Music”
Documentary Films: Scratch

PART III: ISSUES OF IDENTITY
Week 8
March 6 & 8
Popular Music and Race
Cultural Identity & Racial Identity; “Double Consciousness”; Cultural Appropriation
Genres: Hip-hop, Joik, Romani Brass
Reading: Stuart Hall

March 13 & 15
** SPRING BREAK **

Week 9
October 24 & 26
Rediscovering (and Re-Imagining) “Roots”
Folk Revivals; Folk Fusion; “Authenticity”; The Imagined Village; Ethno-pop; Indigenous rights; Language and Identity
Genres: Eurovision, Native American Rap, Sufi Rock,

Week 10
Oct. 31 & Nov. 2
Religion in Popular Music
Sacred/Secular Divides; Religious Communities and Popular Culture; Censorship
Genres: Qawwali, Christian Rock, Soul, Gospel
Documentary Film: The Taqwacores

PART IV: CONFLICT, PROTEST, AND POLITICS
Week 11
November 7 & 9
Popular Music and Political Protest
Hegemony, Music as Protest, Popular Culture as a Site of Contest
Genres: Punk

Week 12
November 14 & 16
Sounds of Displacement
Music in Exile; Refugee Music; Cultural nostalgia; Music and Memory
Cambodian Psychedelic Rock, Tehrangeles, Vietnamese Diaspora
Reading: Nhi T. Lieu (2007) – “Performing Culture in Diaspora”
Documentary Film: Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock & Roll

Week 13
November 21 & 23
LGBT Identity in Popular Culture
Queer Club Culture; Queer Icons; Popular Culture and “Normalcy”; Androgyny

Week 14-15
November 28 & 30
Topics TBD

STUDENT RESOURCES AND POLICIES

Writing Lab
Strong writing skills are an important asset in academic and professional life in every field. During class, we will work to improve student writing skills through instructor feedback and group workshops. However, many students will benefit from intensive focus on writing skills that we will not have time to provide during class. I encourage all students who wish to further develop their writing skills to work with the UNT Writing Lab.
http://writinglab.unt.edu/

Student Counseling and Testing Services
It is important to us for students to excel academically, but it is far more important that you maintain your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Students face many demands and responsibilities from their academic and personal lives and sometimes the stresses or anxieties can be overwhelming if not dealt with. As your instructor, I am happy to be a part of your support network, and am always open to talk if you have issues you would like to discuss. Additionally, UNT provides its students many resources for mental and emotional health.
http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-testing-services

Office of Disability Accommodation
The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable 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 a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable 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 reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly
encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. 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.

**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, 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.

**Assignment Descriptions**

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**My Personal Playlist**

Your assignment is to compile a “Personal Playlist” of FIVE songs. Each song should mean something special to you or say something about you. You are entirely free to decide which criteria to use when choosing songs. For example, you may choose to include a particular song because:

- The song expresses something about your ideas or personality
- The song stimulates a strong emotional response
- The song is associated with certain memories – special events or periods in your life
- The song is associated with certain people – friends, family, community, etc.
- You simply enjoy the way it sounds!

For each song, you will write 2 paragraphs describing why you chose that song.

In the **first paragraph**, describe to the reader what this song means in your life. Is there something that hits you about the words? The singer’s voice? The guitar solo? Do you listen to it while working out? Do you listen to it with friends? Is it a song from your childhood? Is it a song for Sunday barbecues with the family? Is it a song you listen to only when you’re happy? Only when you’re sad? Do you think your life or personality might be different in any way if you had never heard this song?
In the second paragraph, describe what your relationship with this song might say more broadly about YOU. In this paragraph, think about our in-class discussions about identity, self, taste, subculture, and other related issues. Do you think you might have a different relationship with this song if you had different life experience? If you had different friends? Do you think other people may have a similar relationship with this particular song, or do you feel that you hear/experience the song in a way that is unique to you?

After all five songs, write a 2-3 paragraph conclusion describing what you might have learned about yourself and your tastes from making the playlist. Was there any connection between the songs? Perhaps they all have similar sounds or instruments. Perhaps they are all from completely different styles, but expressed similar ideas or values. And if they were all completely different, how does each one describe a different aspect of your personality, experience, and tastes?

A GOOD (high-scoring) paper will demonstrate a serious attempt by the writer to bridge sensory experiences with life experiences. Students should reflect on how their tastes, ideas, and perspectives relate to their socioeconomic conditions, social background, cultural upbringing, and formative memories. Students should also be willing to engage critically with the media products with which they interact on a daily basis. A paper that simply lists songs and provides basic Wikipedia-esque information about them will not receive a high grade.

Grading Criteria:

A: Student’s work exceeds expectations. Analysis is detailed and demonstrates introspective and insightful thinking. Presentation is clear; writing is well-structured and contains few or no errors.

B: Student’s work meets expectations. Work reflects a clear attempt at analysis. Presentation is good, but could use improvement; writing may contain some distracting errors.

C: Student’s work falls short of expectations. The basic parameters of the assignment are met, but there is little evidence of analysis or introspection. Writing contains multiple distracting errors.

D: Students work fails to meet expectations. Work may fail to conform to the required parameters, or show a clear lack of effort or understanding of the assignment. Writing contains multiple distracting errors.

Concert Promotion

A great band/performer from outside the US is coming to perform here in Texas, and YOU are in charge of promoting their concert!
For this assignment you should:

1. Design a 1-page promotional flyer/poster promoting the concert to an audience who have NEVER heard of this band before.
2. Write a brief (1-2 page) explanation of the design decisions that you made in your promo poster.

For the poster, you should be creative about how to a) attract the attention of people who have never heard of this performer(s), and b) how to describe to them who the artist is and why they are interesting. You may decide to use comparisons to familiar genres/artists, e.g.:

“Come listen to the Cambodian Katy Perry!”
“It’s punk rock – but in KILTS!”

You may refer to the performer(s) social or cultural importance in their home country:

“She’s the queen of Azerbaijani Reggae!”
“Hear the song that defined the Arab Spring!”

You might describe the unfamiliar sounds or sights that audiences can experience:

“You’ve heard accordion before – but never like this!”
“Experience the face-melting power of Malaysian death metal!”

Additionally, you should use images that are not only attention-catching, but that say something important about the performer.

In your written explanation, you will describe why you made the decisions that you did regarding text, images, layout, or anything else. Explain why and how you chose to emphasize certain facets of the performers, and provide background information about the performer as needed.

Core Objective: **Communication**

In this assignment, you must present an unfamiliar audience with an informative and enticing description of a foreign musical artist. To accomplish this, you must carefully consider which information to include, and how best to convey it creatively. Projects will be assessed based on their effectiveness at using text and image to convey a clear and enticing idea of what potential audiences can expect at this imagined concert, AND why it is culturally, socially, or musically significant.

To effectively demonstrate communication skills, your project must a) contain a clearly defined “message” about the band/artist and their importance; b) organize visual and textual material in a way that will attract audiences; c) include a well-developed justification of your design choices that shows thorough understanding of the artist(s) involved; and d) demonstrate skilled use of English to communicate effectively with a broad audience.
Students who receive an A or B on the assignment (80% or higher) are considered to have successfully met this core objective.

Grading Criteria:

A: Student’s work exceeds expectations. Visual presentation is creative, effective, and professionally executed. Content is effectively organized and thoroughly developed. Presentation and writing demonstrate effort to engage with cultural or artistic discourses. Writing is well-structured and contains few or no errors.

B: Student’s work meets expectations. Content is well-organized and developed. Visual presentation is creative but lacks professional execution. Presentation and writing do not engage deeply with cultural or artistic discourses. Writing may contain some distracting errors.

C: Student’s work falls short of expectations. Content is poorly organized and not well-developed. Visual presentation shows little effort or polish. Presentation and writing do not attempt to engage with cultural or artistic discourses. Writing contains multiple distracting errors.

D: Students work fails to meet expectations. Work may fail to conform to the required parameters, or show a clear lack of effort or understanding of the assignment. Writing contains multiple distracting errors.

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**ETHICAL REFLECTION PAPER**

In this 3-4 page paper, you will reflect on an ethical issue related to popular music’s message, production, or consumption. You will choose from a selection of topics based on the ideas and issues we discuss during class. Topic selections will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class in Week 4 or 5.

A complete and well-structured paper should include the following:

1. **Introduction**
   Introduce the issue you wish to discuss and briefly state the argument you wish to make.

2. **Background Information**
   Give the reader background information about the specific case study you wish to use to illustrate your argument. This section need not be a thorough chronicle of the history of the band/genre you are discussing; it should focus on information relevant to the ethical discussion.

3. **Ethical Analysis**
   This should be largest section of your paper. In this section, you will analyze the ethical implications of popular media and its production and consumption within the
case study you have chosen. You may choose to take a firm stance on a single issue, or you may choose to describe a major debate that exists within this research area and describe the arguments that exist on both sides of the fence.

4. **Personal Action**
   The conclusion to this paper should not simply summarize the arguments you have already advanced. It MUST suggest a proposed course of action that YOU, the writer might take to address this issue. Could you organize an event on campus? Start a letter-writing campaign? The proposal does not need to be a magic solution that can solve things overnight, but it does need to be something that YOU could potentially do, assuming you had the right resources and support.

5. **References**
   As always, you are expected to cite sources from which you have obtained relevant historical, cultural, or theoretical material. List of references should be formatted in a consistent style.

**Core Objective: ***Personal Responsibility*

This assignment requires students to reflect on the ethical debates that characterize popular music and its production and consumption. Successful completion of the assignment requires students to describe an ethical issue, analyze its relationship with popular media, and suggest possible solutions.

Students who receive an A or B on the assignment (80% or higher) are considered to have successfully met this core objective.

**Grading Criteria:**

A: Student’s work exceeds expectations. Student skillfully describes and analyzes an ethical issue from multiple perspectives supported by examples from popular culture. Student skillfully suggests possible solutions and considers their impact and potential consequences.

B: Student’s work meets expectations. Student adequately describes and analyzes an ethical issue from multiple perspectives supported by examples from popular culture. Student suggests possible solutions and considers their impact and potential consequences.

C: Student’s work falls short of expectations. Student only partially describes and analyzes an ethical issue from multiple perspectives supported by examples from popular culture. Possible solutions are not clearly defined or are poorly justified and not thoroughly considered.

D: Students work fails to meet expectations. Work may fail to conform to the required parameters, or show a clear lack of effort or understanding of the assignment.
Music Video Analysis

For this assignment, you are to write a 5-page analysis of a single music video. Your goal is not simply to describe the video, but to make a coherent and well-supported analytical argument. The main requirements are that your argument:

1. Engages in a discussion of how the music video relates to broader cultural or social issues
2. Is supported by evidence in the music video

For example, you might choose to say:

- This video represents the tension between traditional and popular cultural attitudes and practices in _____ culture.
- This video makes ________ statement about a current debate occurring in ______ society.
- This video demonstrates / challenges / subverts expectations of gender / sexuality / race / ethnicity in _______ country.
- This video represents an artistic / social / cultural / ideological confluence between ______ and ________.
- This video invokes ideas, sounds, symbols, or fashions in order to create or enforce a sense of identity for ________ group.

These are just a few examples, but you may think of many others! Of course, you may contact me if you have any questions.

To support your argument, you may refer to any information contained in the music video:

- The musical sounds themselves (e.g. instrumental or vocal styles, musical structure, etc.)
- The lyrical content of the song (if applicable)
- Any visual elements within the music video – why have particular images, scenes, colors, etc. been chosen to convey a particular message or identity?
- Dance choreography, style, or gesture – what messages are bodies sending that may enforce or differ from messages sent from other elements of the video?
- The “narrative” or “story” of the video
- Anything else you can think of!

In addition to citing information from the music video, you should include background research that tells the reader about the cultural or social issues that you will be discussing, and supports your claims about the music video. This can include specific articles about the band/performer/artist, but should also include deeper academic research. For example:

- You may refer to an article describing the history of the musical genre, and some of the stylistic or cultural debates occurring within that genre.
- If you are talking about how a popular music performer incorporates traditional instruments or styles, you should refer to an article providing some background information about those traditions.
- If you are discussing the way the music video engages with a political debate or social issue, you should refer to at least one academic article that describes that issue from a larger perspective.

Suggested paper outline:

1. **Introduction**
   Introduce the music video and state your argument or thesis.

2. **Background Information**
   Provide relevant background information, drawing from your research. This can include historical information about the performer, genre, the performers’ place of origin (country or city). It should also present a big picture view of any political debates, social issues, or other cultural discourses in which you plan to engage.

3. **Analysis**
   This will be the largest section of your paper. You will choose a few elements of the music video and describe how each one relates to your central argument. Be detailed and descriptive!

4. **Conclusion**
   Here is where you bring all the pieces together. Restate your thesis and give the reader a sense of how all the ideas that you described in previous sections fit together. This is also your chance to include your personal perspective and reactions to the issues discussed.

5. **References Cited**
   You must include a list of references cited in your project, presented in a standardized format (Chicago author-year citation preferred, but MLA or other common styles are also acceptable).

Core Objective: *Critical Thinking*

This assignment will require students to develop an academic argument and support it with evidence drawn from media analysis as well as background research. Successful completion of the assignment will require research skills, logical organization, and analytical thinking.

Students who receive an A or B on the assignment (80% or higher) are considered to have successfully met this core objective.

**Grading Criteria:**

A: Student’s work exceeds expectations. Student’s argument is clearly defined and strongly defended using detailed analysis of multiple aspects of the music video. Student’s conclusion demonstrates nuanced consideration of context and of potential implications.

B: Student’s work meets expectations. Student’s argument is present and defended using analysis of multiple aspects of the music video. Student’s conclusion demonstrates some consideration of context and of potential implications.
Global Playlist

This assignment has two parts. Part 1 will require extensive background research that should be conducted gradually throughout the duration of the course. Part 2 will require students to present their work to a group of peers and engage in a discussion of the social issues and discourses involved.

For Part 1, you will create a “Global Playlist” (or CD / album / mixtape) of at least 6 songs that reflect a common theme. The songs must be by different artists or bands. The theme may be a genre, a social issue, a location, or anything else – but it should engage with the concepts and discourses we have discussed throughout this course.

Some examples:
- Identity formation through a single genre (e.g. reggae) or instrument (e.g. guitar) in popular music around the world
- Different types of music that all contribute to the “soundscape” of a single city, and how this reflects cultural differences and discourses within the city
- Music from different cultures or styles that engages with similar issues – e.g. women’s empowerment, economic inequality, “roots” revivalism

For each song, you should provide extensive liner notes in the style of Smithsonian’s Folkways record label. You can see several examples here: http://www.folkways.si.edu. Your liner notes should provide background information about each performer and song, and then describe how each song relates to the central theme. This will require considerable background research! It is best for you to start identifying songs that catch your attention throughout the course, and begin conducting your background research no later than the middle of the course.

Suggested outline for Part 1:

1. **Introduction:** Describe the playlist theme and why you have chosen it. Is there something that interests you about the musical styles included, or the social issues engaged with? What do you hope that listeners will learn by listening to this compilation?

2. **Background:** What general information does the listener need to know for a deep appreciation and understanding of this playlist? You may describe the history of the genres/styles that you are focused on, the instruments used, the places involved, etc. If there is a specific group of people – a community, a subculture, a movement, etc. –
provide us information about them. Describe any political or social debates related to the playlist.

3. **Song List with Descriptions:** In this section, you will list each song (along with artist names, and information about record label, location, etc.) For each song, describe its relationship to your main theme. Describe what to listen for, and how to listen - guide your listener through a particular experience or understanding of the song that will help them learn something through the process. You may draw attention to specific lines or quotes that have a strong impact.

4. **Bibliography and Discography:** You must include a list of references cited in your project, presented in a standardized format (Chicago author-year citation preferred, but MLA or other common styles are also acceptable). This should include not only the references you used for background research, but also the sound recordings themselves.

A complete draft of **Part 1** should be submitted by Week 14.

For **Part 2** of the assignment, you must present your playlist to a “focus group” of peers, and engage in a discussion about the social or cultural issues involved. This group must include at least 2 students (other than yourself). These may be other students from this course, or outside students.

First, you should briefly present your playlist, and play short clips of each song. Then, ask your focus group for their thoughts, impressions, and reactions. Do they think the music is “weird”? “Cool”? “Exotic”? What do they like or dislike about it? Then, engage with them in a discussion about the central ideas behind your playlist, why you felt these songs were important, and what broader cultural discourses they relate to. You will then write a brief summary of your focus group experience, in which you describe their reactions and the issues that arose during your discussion.

Your final submission of this project should include both **Part 1** and **Part 2**, submitted as a single file.

**Core Objective: Social Responsibility**

This assignment requires students to engage with multiple cultures and music styles or traditions. They must be able to research, understanding, and describe cultural, social or artistic discourses not only within other cultures, but also between different cultures. They must engage with civic responsibility by initiating a discussion of social issues with their peers, and reflecting over their own responsibilities as participants in popular culture. By successfully completing this assignment, students will demonstrate that they have gained a broader perspective on global popular media production and deeper understanding of the social discourses that exist in different societies and between globalized societies, and that they have taken the effort to engage their peers in discussions of these issues.

Students who receive an A or B on the assignment (80% or higher) are considered to have successfully met this core objective.
Grading Criteria

A: Student’s work exceeds expectations. Student demonstrates a clear understanding of relevant social and cultural discourses in Part 1, and a clear reflection about and engagement with social responsibility in Part 2. Theme is clearly defined and supported by the song selection. Individual song descriptions show depth of research, understanding, and presentational clarity.

B: Student’s work meets expectations. Student demonstrates a good understanding of relevant social and cultural discourses in Part 1, and a clear reflection about and engagement with social responsibility in Part 2. Theme is defined and supported by the song selection. Individual song descriptions show an adequate amount of research and understanding, but may lack presentational clarity.

C: Student’s work falls short of expectations. Work demonstrates little reflection about or engagement with social responsibility. Theme is poorly defined or supported. Individual song descriptions reveal lack of research or understanding.

D: Students work fails to meet expectations. Work may fail to conform to the required parameters, or show a clear lack of effort or understanding of the assignment.