HIST 341 (002): American Experience: Race, Class, and Sexuality in Hip Hop Culture

Fall 2017

Lisa M Gill, Ph.D. Monday/Wednesday 11:30-12:55

321 Cullimore Hall CKB 226

Office Hours: Monday 2-4pm/by appointment; virtually

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**Course Description:**

In this class, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of space, place, and culture in late 20th century urban America. This course will take an extensive look at the development of Hip-hop culture in the 20th century and provide a critical historical perspective on the changing political economy, ideology, and literature of race and ethnicity in the United States. Course methodology includes an examination of rap artists’ image manufacturing and usage, lyrical content, and an exploration of various music videos. Though we will be looking at individual scenes and distinct places, we will also consider the broader implications of representation particularly with regard to race, class and gender as well as formal and informal regulation and other relationships of power within space. However, it can provide us with a historical purchase point from which we can begin to reassess our domain assumptions about the development and significance of race and ethnicity in American life – past, present, and future. Perhaps most important, we can begin to have civil (informed, respectful, honest) interethnic discussions (among ourselves and with the authors we read).

**Learning Objectives:**

This course aims to...

1. help students have a better understanding of the origins, history, and intellectual developments that led to and continue to be active in Hip Hop culture.
2. to have concrete knowledge of the process of the historical process that encompasses American identity.
3. introducing interdisciplinary methodology.
4. increasing the skills of critical thinking as well as critical analysis in written and oral communication.

**Required Texts:**

*Various Articles*: Each week, you will be given articles, primary document, videos, speeches, etc. to prepare for our class. Primary documents and articles can be found electronically on Moodle or sent via email. Items will be listed on the class schedule of the syllabus as well as the discussion board for each class. ***You are required to bring copies of texts to every class.***

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THE COURSE. FAILURE**

**TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC F.**

**Grades and Grading:**

15% Class Participation

10% Group Project

35% Test (short quizzes and reading questions)

40% Essay (5-6 pages)

**Grades in this course will be based on written assignments (daily questions/responses, essay, test), group project and class participation (daily comments, in-class work, etc.).**

**Explanation of Requirements:**

**15 % Class Participation:** You will play a major role in determining the direction of our discussions. Your grade will be dependent on the quality of daily participation (discussion in class, in-class assignments, questions and responses, etc.), your ability to thoughtfully articulate ideas regarding the assigned readings and willingness to engage with your classmates. Hence, attending every class session is a good idea. Repeated absences (2 or more excused/unexcused), lateness or early departure will reflect in your overall grade. Completion of the assigned readings and viewing assigned films, as well as participation in class discussion, is expected. Every class session, you will be responsible for submitting or responding to questions posted in Moodle based on the readings. During class sessions, I will call on students for their views on issues raised in the readings, viewings and/or assignments. If you experience an emergency or illness, convey a message to me **AT LEAST TWO HOURS** **PRIOR** to class. **It is your responsibility to acquire missed material. Please consult your colleagues for the information you missed and notes from class sessions. There will be no make-up examinations or quizzes.**

**Questions and Responses (Graded as part of Participation 15%):** Once per semester, prior to each class session, you will be responsible for submitting questions, on Moodle, that will “start the discussion.” During the first week of classes, you will sign-up for a day to submit questions. **Questions are submitted by the “Discussion Starter” 24 hours before class.** **Responses or comments must be submitted 2 hours before class by all others.** All questions or comments should be based on the readings or viewings. Questions and responses should require some analysis and provoke thought. Simple or “yes/no” questions should be avoided. Your questions should require a combination of direct response, analysis of information presented in the readings and critical thinking. Your response should be based on assigned readings.

**10% Group Project:** To facilitate the learning process and to enhance our class experience you will present your research finding on a musical aspect of Hip Hop culture. You can choose any Rap song for your presentation to the class. Groups will be selected by the professor by the end of the add/drop period. Groups can construct a presentation on a particular difficulty in either the reception, distribution or social mobility of a particular song or aspect of Hip Hop culture. For example, Jay Z’s “U Don’t Know” discusses several issues, but overall, the issue of “hustling” in the black community to provide a subsistent income. If you choose this song, you could highlight

this aspect by presenting on the issue of income generation outside of traditional methodology. Your presentations should form a complete argument. This project will detail the research your group has found pertaining your topic. The arguments should be clearly articulated and detailed. Presentations may take any format, but must be approved by the professor beforehand.

All topics must be pre-approved by the professor. Groups will provide the professor with a breakdown of each members’ responsibilities/tasks. Groups will be required to meet at least four times and provide a report of the meeting to the professor. Additionally, each member of the group will be required to provide the professor with a grade for other members of the group, and a reasoning for their decision. Your individual grading should coincide with your meeting reports. Each group should also select at least one member to the following roles: researcher, writer, lead communicator, organizer/task master and mediator. Each group will select a presentation date and present their information to the entire class. Your presentation should deal with the creation of the medium and the issue. Your group may choose to answer some of the following questions: How was the issue resolved? Did society come to value or devalue the medium as a result? Is the medium unable to escape negative categorization because of the issue? Are all members of society able to access the medium equitably? Is there a persuasion toward a particular group in society?

**40% Essays:** There are two paper assignments that will be completed by the end of the semester. Each paper has a page requirement of 5-6 pages.

**Paper #1** *2/28* **– Hip Hop culture as a representation of American cultural practices or Hip**

**Hop culture as a dismissal of American cultural practices**

**Paper # 2** *4/29* **– Rap in the 21st Century or Is Hip Hop only Trap? – The State of Rap in**

**the 21st Century.**

Your essay will consist of a 5-6 pages paper on a Hip Hop culture or Rap music and/or its development, influence, and relationship to societal structures of power and mobility. Papers are restricted to the subject areas that are listed below. All paper topics must be pre-approved 2 weeks in advance. You are welcomed to hand in an assignment early for feedback and comments. Your essay may answer the following questions:How might political ideology or policy influence the development of a particular area of rap? What is the nature of the ambivalent relation between communications technologies and social power? All papers must be pre-approved by the professor. You may narrow your topic by time, genre of rap, political event or administration, country, etc. Above all, **your paper must have an argument/ thesis statement proved throughout the paper.** All papers must be submitted electronically, via Moodle or email. Late papers will not be accepted. The paper length (5-6 pages) does not include the “Work Cited” or “Bibliography” page. If you have trouble with thesis construction, please see me for help.

**30% Test**: You will take pop quizzes 4 times during the semester. The goal of these quizzes is to test your ability to comprehend course readings and apply them to the content of that week of the course. To assess your knowledge of the topic and themes, you will be required to take two ***(3/25; 4/15)*** short examinations. Topical questions will be distributed for certain themes, theories, songs or genres. They are designed to prepare you for discussion by thinking and writing about the issues at hand in each unit. You must upload your responses to the proper Moodle link for credit. There will be two of these short quizzes. These quizzes will test your knowledge of the important songs and artists

studied throughout the semester.

**Assistance with completion of all Assignments:**

A professor’s job is to facilitate learning, but your acquisition of knowledge is largely dependent on your effort in a course. It is my belief that academic reading and writing are essential to academic thinking and creating. Students should be prepared for class and utilize the skills previously acquired (and those developed in class) to further their learning, reading and writing process. Writing should be clear and excite passion in the writer. To help you in this process, I am happy to meet, review or discuss any situation that may adversely influence your progress through the course. Additionally, I offer extra credit assignments. ***Any student who believes they are in need of assistance for any assignment should contact me immediately.*** Be sure to utilize the **Writing Center** (<http://www5.njit.edu/writingcenter/>) and follow the code of Academic Integrity (<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>)

**Note: All work must be typed and must be submitted via email. All assignments are due on respective due-dates by 11:55pm (23:55).**

**Accommodations:**

Students who require accommodations because of a disability should visit and talk to the professor during the first week of class. (<http://www5.njit.edu/studentsuccess/support-services-and-accommodations/>) Please make sure the professor received your memo of accommodations. It is the student’s responsibility to follow-up with me regarding all accommodations that require the professor’s participation.

**Use of Electronic Devices**

Please vibrate or turn-off all cell phones, tablets, and other electronic devices during class meetings. Text messaging during class is unacceptable. **If you need to text or call, please go outside the classroom.** No use of cell phones or texting, Gchatting, Tinder, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, etc. If students cannot conduct themselves without disruption, I will disallow computers in the classroom. Anyone who wishes to use a laptop must sit in the front row of the classroom. If you are found texting during class, you will be penalized. If your cell phone rings during class, you will be penalized. This policy applies to everyone during class time and is made to make our brief time together productive.

**Code of Conduct:**

In our class, one of our Community Agreements is to respect for difference of opinion, schools of thought and each other. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable. To submit any work in this class, you are required to complete the examination form the University of Indiana on plagiarism by **2/5/2018**. Your certificate must be **emailed** to me by **2/5/2018** at 11:59pm. If you are having trouble completing the exam, please come and see me for help. **If you do not submit the certificate, you will not be allowed to sit for any examination, complete your Academic Book Review, and take an absence for that day.** <https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/certificationTests/index.html>

**Late assignments are not accepted.**

**Note: In the case that an emergency prevents you from finishing an assignment by the deadline, students must bring a documented excuse. All papers should be submitted electronically.**

**Grading Rubric:**

A – Papers and assignments that earn an “**A**” demonstrate a thorough examination of the subject, are free of spelling and grammatical errors, and are written and organized in a way that communicates the information clearly. Class participation that earns an “**A**” includes thoughtful comments that assess materials presented in class, the readings, and your colleagues’ thoughts, in the classroom and on the discussion board. On exams, papers or other assessments at least 90% of the information provided will be correct. The class work presented, as a whole, will be excellent in every aspect.

B – Papers and assignments that earn a “**B**” demonstrate a good examination of the subject, are relatively free of spelling and grammatical errors, and are written and organized in a way that communicates the information clearly. Class participation that earns a “**B**” includes thoughtful comments that assess materials presented in class, and the readings, or your colleagues’ thoughts, in the classroom and on the discussion board. On exams, papers or other assessments, at least 80% of the information provided will be correct. The class work presented, as a whole, will be above average in every aspect.

C – Papers and assignments that earn a “**C**” demonstrate a fair examination of the subject, *may have some* spelling and grammatical errors, and the information presented may be disorganized and lack clarity. Class participation that earns a “**C**” includes some thoughtfulness in comments about materials presented in class, the readings, or your colleagues’ thoughts, in the classroom and on the discussion board. On exams, papers or other assessments, at least 70% of the information provided will be correct. The class work presented, as a whole, will be average.

D – Papers and assignments that earn a “**D**” demonstrate minimal effort, a poor examination of the subject, will have some spelling and grammatical errors, and the information will be disorganized and lack clarity. Class participation that earns a “**D**” includes few or nor comments that assess materials presented in class, the readings, or your colleagues’ thoughts, in the classroom and on the discussion board. On exams, papers or other assessments, at least 60% of the information provided will be correct. The class work presented, as a whole, will be below average.

F – Papers and assignments that earn an “**F**” demonstrate minimal effort, a poor examination and understanding of the subject, will have many spelling and grammatical errors, and the information will be disorganized and lack clarity and may be missing or incomplete. Class participation that earns an “**F**” includes few or no comments that assess materials presented in class, the readings, or

your colleagues’ thoughts, in the classroom or on the discussion board. On exams, papers or other assessments, less than 60% of the information provided will be correct. The class work presented, as a whole, will be well below average.

**Course Schedule**

1/17: Welcome, Course Introductions, Syllabus, Sign-up Sheets

<https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/certificationTests/index.html>

1/22: The Discipline of History – The Basics

Discussion: “Thinking Like a Historian”

<http://historicalthinkingmatters.org/why/>

Approaches to historical text/learning styles, Citation: The basics

Viewings: <https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/certificationTests/index.html>

Viewings: *Hip Hop Beats & Rhymes*

**\*\*\*\*\* Certificate due 2/5/2018\*\*\*\*\***

1/24: Foundations of Rap

Discussion: “Beginning” Hip Hop Culture

**Readings: Chang 7-19; 67-85**

**Songs:** Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five, Sugar Hill, Kurtis Blow

Viewings: *Hip Hop Beats & Rhymes*

**\*\*\*\*\* Certificate due 2/5/2018\*\*\*\*\***

1/29: Foundations of Rap Continued

Discussion: Breaking

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 13-20; 31-39

**Viewing:** *Hip Hop Beats & Rhymes*

**\*\*\*\*\* Certificate due 2/5/2018\*\*\*\*\***

1/31: Foundations of Rap Continued

Discussion: Grafitti

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 21-29; 45-55

**Viewing:** *Five Sides of a Coin*

**\*\*\*\*\* Certificate due 2/5/2018\*\*\*\*\***

2/5: Foundations of Rap Continued

Discussion: The DJ

**Readings:** Chang 21-39; Forman and Neal: 443-454

**Viewing:** *Five Sides of a Coin*

**\*\*\*\*\* Certificate due 2/5/2018\*\*\*\*\***

2/7: **Is Rap Political?**

Discussion: “Beginning” Hip Hop Culture

**Readings:** Chang: 215-229

2/12: **Old School**

Discussion: Why Rap Music Became Viable as a Genre

**Readings:** Forman and Neal:61-68; 147-153

**Songs: Eric B & Rakim, Big Daddy Kane, Slick Rick**

2/14: **Golden Age**

Discussion: 1988-1996

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 437-441; Chang: 231-261

**Songs: Nas, Tribe Called Quest, 2 Pac**

2/19: **Gender in Hip Hop Culture and Rap Music**

Discussion: Black Masculinity and Feminity

**Readings:** Forman and Neal:105-115; 291-305

**Viewing:** ***My Mic Sounds Nice: The Truth About Women And Hip Hop*** [**https://youtu.be/8856AHe1RFw**](https://youtu.be/8856AHe1RFw)

2/21: **Sexuality in Hip Hop Culture and Rap Music**

Discussion: Sexuality in Hip Hop

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 265-274

**Viewing:** ***Say My Name* – On Reserve**

2/26: **Commercialism and Hip Hop Culture**

Discussion: Becoming Hip Hop

**Readings:** Chang: 407-435

**2/28 – First Paper Due Today**

## 2/28: The White Rapper

Discussion: Race and Class in Hip Hop

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 119-132

**Songs: Everlast, MC Search, Eminem, Iggy Azalea, Macklemore**

3/5: **Gangsta/Gangster Music**

Discussion: Hardcore Rap

**Readings:** Chang: 299-329

3/7: **Negative Associations**

Discussion: Violence - American Traditions

**Readings:**

**Viewing:**

**3/12- 3/16: Spring Break**

3/19: **Rap goes Corporate**

Discussion: Hip Hop Industry

**Readings:** Chang: 437-465

3/21: **Is Rap Music, Music?**

Discussion: Musicality in Rap

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 393-404

**3/25: Short Test Due Today**

3/26: **Political Power in Rap**

Discussion: Agency of Rap Music

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 351-361

***3/28 NO CLASS***

**4/2 Last Day to Withdraw from Course**

4/2: The Underground

Discussion: Underground Rap

**Viewing:** ***From Rap to Riches:*** **New York Underground Rap** [**https://youtu.be/HB7QKefzUlA**](https://youtu.be/HB7QKefzUlA)

4/4: **The Business of Rap**

Discussion: Hip Hop as an industry

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 525-538

4/9: **The Business of Rap Continued**

Discussion: Hip Hop as an industry

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 541-556

4/11: **Youth Culture in Hip Hop**

Discussion: Youth Culture

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 557-572

**4/15 – Short Test Due**

4/16: **Location, Location, Location**

Discussion: Place and Space in Hip Hop

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 201-221

4/18: Visualizing Hip Hop

Discussion: Commodification of Culture

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 593-607

**Viewing:** **2005 VH1 VIDEO VIXEN DOCUMENTARY:** <https://youtu.be/YEjiqyH2rOc>

4/23: **Outside of the US**

Discussion: Rap around the World

**Viewing:** Europe <https://youtu.be/WO9Et8laUG8>

Korea <https://youtu.be/ryD5aAH3fbY>

UK (Blackpool & Grime): <https://youtu.be/AXFQsnbN0NQ> <https://youtu.be/eW_iujPQpys>

South Africa: <https://youtu.be/EtvtDXLdnZI>

4/25: **The Cross Over**

Discussion: The Popularity of Hip Hop; Presentations

**Readings:** Forman and Neal: 579-589

**4/29 Paper Due**

4/30: **Wrap – Up;**

Discussion: Presentations

