Course Prefix and Number: MU/AAS 1103
Course Title: African American Music
Credit hours: Three (3) semester hours
Type of Course: Lecture
Catalog Description: Three hours lecture. A study of African musical and cultural traditions with focus on the impact of these traditions on the development and advancement of African-American music.

College of Education Conceptual Framework:

The faculty in the College of Education at Mississippi State University are committed to assuring the success of students and graduates by providing superior learning opportunities that are continually improved as society, schools, and technology change. The organizing theme for the conceptual framework for the College of Education at Mississippi State University is educational professionals - dedicated to continual improvement of all students’ educational experiences. The beliefs that guide program development are as follows:

1. **KNOWLEDGE** - Educational professionals must have a deep understanding of the organizing concepts, processes, and attitudes that comprise their chosen disciplinary knowledge base, the pedagogical knowledge base, and the pedagogical content knowledge base. They must also know how to complement these knowledge bases with the appropriate use of technology.

2. **COLLABORATION** - Educational professionals must continually seek opportunities to work together, learn from one another, forge partnerships, and assume positions of responsibility.

3. **REFLECTION** - Educational professionals must be willing to assess their own strengths and weaknesses through reflection. They must also possess the skills, behaviors, and attitudes necessary to learn, change, and grow as life-long learners.

4. **PRACTICE** - Educational professionals must have a rich repertoire of research-based strategies for instruction, assessment, and the use of technologies. They must be able to
focus that array of skills on promoting authentic learning by all students or clients, while exhibiting an appreciation and commitment to the value and role of diversity.

**Course Objectives:**

1. The student will learn the specific elements of African-American music relate it to the western musical tradition. (InTASC 2, 4, 8, 9; CFPO 1, 2, 3)
2. The student will hear music by representative composers of the major periods in African-American music from 1619 to the present. (InTASC 2, 4, 8, 9; CFPO 1, 2, 3)
3. The student will study the lives of the composers of the major periods in African-American music from 1619 to the present. (InTASC 2, 4, 8, 9; CFPO 1, 2, 3)
4. The student will become acquainted with representative forms of the major periods in African-American music from 1619 to the present. (InTASC 2, 4, 8, 9; CFPO 1, 2, 3)
5. The student will understand the stylistic characteristics of the major periods in African-American music from 1619 to the present. (InTASC 2, 4, 8, 9; CFPO 1, 2, 3)

In discussing African and African American music students learn all the fundamental elements of music and the terminology to describe these concepts.

**Rhythmic features** discussed include rhythm, meter, time line, beat, pulse, syncopation, cross rhythms, polymeters, accents, and tempo.

**Melodic features** discussed include pitch, interval, melody, scale, pentatonic scale, major scale, modal scale, blues scale, phrase, theme, key, and modulation.

**Harmonic features** discussed include harmony, chord, triad, texture, density, monophony, homophony, polyphony, heterophony, antiphony, and overlapping call-and-response.

**Lyrics features** vocal music are discussed including poetic language, themes, imagery, metaphor, personification, rhyme, and allusion.

**Tone color features** of music are discussed including timbre, vocal color, instrumental color, membranophones, idiophones, aerophones, and chordophones.

**Performance Practice features** of music are discussed including improvisation, call-and-response, lining out, communal participation, and scat singing.

**Formal features** of music are discussed including chorus, stanza, binary form, AAB phrase structure, aaab form, theme and variations, and blues harmonic structure.

The chronological study of the history of African American music includes an overview of the African legacy, African music and culture, folk traditions, general characteristics
of African American music, work songs, minstrelsy, and spirituals, the blues, gospel
music, the jazz aesthetic, the emergence of ragtime, classic jazz, the emergence of swing,
bebop, jazz: 1950 to 1970, jazz: 1970 to the present, popular styles since 1940, rhythm
and blues, soul music, to rap and beyond.

Class activities and exams call for the students to understand the relationships between
music and other art forms, to understand the relationship between music are disciplines
outside the arts, and to understand the relationship of music and history. Students will be
exposed to a cross-disciplinary view of the arts in an historical, as well as stylistic
context. Principles and teaching strategies will include:

• Music practices, works, and musicianship are social-cultural constructions.
• A complete understanding of the meaning of music always requires a
comprehension of the inter-related dimensions of the musician, the music, the
music making, and the cultural/social/historical context.
• The study of music includes its relationship to dance, drama, story telling,
literature, geography, sociology, religion, history, and heritage.

Topics Covered in the Course:

I. Song in a Strange Land 1619-1775 [3 contact hours]
   A. The African Legacy/African Diaspora (Southern, 3-22)
   B. Music in the Colonies (Southern, 23-28)
   C. Congregational and Recreational Songs (Southern, 28-58)

II. Songs of African-American Liberation 1776-1865 [3 contact hours]
   A. Black Musicians in the Continental Army (Southern, 63-71)
   B. The Birth of the Black Church (Southern, 71-89)
   C. Ethiopian Minstrelsy (Southern, 89-96, 231-244)

III. Antebellum America: Songs in Urban Areas [3 contact hours]
   A. Music in the Cites (Southern, 97-127)
   B. Music of the Black Church (Southern, 127-137)
   C. Music and the Anti-Slavery Movement (Southern, 140-150)

IV. Antebellum America: Songs along the Countryside [3 contact hours]
   A. African Traditions in the South (Southern, 136-140)
   B. Daily Life on the Plantation (Southern, 153-167)
   C. Entertainment for the Southern Elite (Southern, 175-177)

V. Black Music and Musicians in the Early National Period [3 contact hours]
   A. Primary Sources of Black Music (Southern, 151-153)
   B. Songs of Narration and Social Comment (Southern, 156-161)
   C. Recreational Music (Southern, 167-175)

VI. African American Life: Importance of Music [3 contact hours]
A. The Worship Service (*Southern*, 177-184, 262-264)
B. Spiritual Songs (*Southern*, 184-190)
C. Folk Songs (*Southern*, 190-204)

VII. The American Civil War and Emancipation [3 contact hours]
A. Songs of the People (*Southern*, 224-227)
B. Dissemination of the Spirituals (*Southern*, 227-231)
C. Music after the Civil War (*Southern*, 205-217, 223-224)

VIII. Black Performers and the Concert Stage [3 contact hours]
A. Itinerant and Community Musicians (*Southern*, 244-255, 259-261, 298-300)
B. Brass Bands and Dance Orchestras (*Southern*, 257-259)
C. Festivals and Extravaganzas (*Southern*, 256-257)

IX. Black Music in the New Century [3 contact hours]
A. Concert World (*Southern*, 265-287)
B. Symphonies, Orchestras, and Opera Companies (*Southern*, 287-296)
C. Theaters and Theater Music (*Southern*, 296-298)

X. Musical Styles and Forms [3 contact hours]
A. Vaudeville and Musical Comedies (*Southern*, 300-302)
B. Musicals on and off Broadway (*Southern*, 303-305)
C. Black Entertainment Abroad (*Southern*, 305-307)

XI. The Music Business [2 contact hours]
A. Early Recordings of Black Musicians (*Southern*, 307-311)
B. Professional Organizations (*Southern*, 311-312)

XII. Early Precursors to Jazz [3 contact hours]
A. The Emergence of Ragtime (*Southern*, 313-332)
B. The Blues (*Southern*, 332-340)
C. Brass Bands and String Bands (*Southern*, 340-358)

XIII. The Great War and the Harlem Renaissance and Beyond [4 contact hours]
A. The Jazz Age (*Southern*, 365-403)
B. Gospel, Jazz, Blues, and Pop (*Southern*, 466-522)
C. Singers, Instrumentalists, and Composers (*Southern*, 523-566)

XIV. Barry Gordy and the Motown Song [4 contact hours]
A. Barry Gordy (My Courses)
B. Smoky Robinson (My Courses)
C. The Temptations (My Courses)
D. The Supremes (My Courses)

XV. Rap Music [3 contact hours]
A. The New Pop (*Southern*, 598-609) (My Courses)
B. The Business of Rap (My Courses)
Text (Required) Approved for the Course:


Method of Instruction: Lecture

Suggested Student Activities:

a) Daily reading assignments (objectives 1-6)
b) Daily listening assignments (objectives 1-6)
c) Guided listening to recordings (objectives 1-6)
d) Concert attendance
e) Class discussion (objectives 1-6)
f) Video viewing (objectives 1-6)
g) Participation in music-making and other class activities (objectives 1-6)
h) Class papers and projects (objectives 1-6)
i) Guest lectures (objectives 1-6)

MSU Honor Code:

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

The Mississippi State Honor Code can be found at [http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/](http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/)

Technology:

Technology is used in the delivery of the course content in this class. Students will watch videos and You Tube broadcasts of selected musical styles as selected by the instructor.

Diversity:

The tradition of African American music is one of the most exciting and diverse aspects of the North American musical panorama. It is also, arguably, the most important ethnic vernacular tradition in America. This is so because African American musical styles make up the broadest and most enduring array of vernacular styles in America and historically, have been the most influential.

A wide variety of musical and historical styles are recognized including the African heritage, the African diaspora, psalms and hymns, recreational fiddle and banjo music for dancing, pattin’ juba, ‘Lection Day Festivities, Pinkster Day, martial music of the fife & drum, brass band music, music of the Black Church, camp meeting spiritual songs, ring
shouts, spirituals, cake walk, minstrelsy, the concert stage, concert bands and orchestras, music in theater, dancing in Congo Square, John Conny or Junkanoo Festivals, voodoo, anti-slavery songs, underground railroad songs, music of the Negro Philharmonic Society, field hollers and work songs, “red hot music” of the dance halls and dives, traveling road shows, Army Bands, ragtime, blues, jazz, swing, Harlem Renaissance, gospel, the Black Revolution, bebop, cool jazz, free jazz, Latin jazz, fusion, rhythm and blues, soul music, rock and roll, funk, disco, and rap.


Disability:

In accordance with section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Mississippi State University reasonably accommodates students who demonstrate, through appropriate documentation, a qualified disability. The department of Student Support Services (SSS) is the designated unit on campus where students with disabilities identify themselves when requesting academic accommodations. For additional information, call SSS at (662)325-3335 or visit the SSS office in 01 Montgomery Hall or their website at (http://www.sss.msstate.edu/).

Field Component:

This course does not have a field component. During each semester, a blues musician (e.g. Jesse Robinson) and a gospel singer (e.g. Charlene Minor) visit the class to share their music and lives with the students. The guest presenters sing, lead communal singing, speak to the students, and answer questions.
Evaluation of Student Progress:

1. Four written tests (including final exam)
2. Two projects

Project I. Design Musical Instrument
Musical instruments are needed to perform music. Students will design and construct a unique musical instrument that they can use to play music. We will discuss instrument design in class, so students will have sufficient context for designing an instrument to play sounds. Class time will also be spent on various strategies of improvisation and composition.

Project II. Harlem Renaissance
The Harlem Renaissance is the name given to the period from the end of World War I through the middle of the 1930's during which a group of talented African-Americans produced a sizable body of poetry, fiction, drama, essays, art, and music. Common themes included alienation, marginality, the use of folk material, and the use of the blues tradition. The Harlem Renaissance was more than a literary movement; it included racial consciousness, the “back to Africa” movement, racial integration, an explosion of music (particularly jazz, spirituals, and blues), painting, and drama. For this project, student will a) choose one prominent personality and write a three-page page b) make a brief class presentation showcasing the work of the selected personality.

Method of Evaluation:

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Grading:

- 90 – 100 = A
- 80 – 89 = B
- 70 – 79 = C
- 60 – 69 = D
- Below 60 = F

No make-up tests will be given unless prior arrangements are made, or an emergency causes you to miss the test.
Attendance Policy:
This course participates in the Mississippi State University Path Finder program, which reminds freshmen of the importance of class attendance. In accordance with this initiative, attendance will be taken daily. Attendance is imperative; see MSU Bulletin for policy.

Bibliography:


