

***Hip Hop Culture***  
**AM260/MU205B**

Spring 2008  
TTH 12:40-2:00 pm  
Tisch Learning Center 303

<b>Professors:</b>	Lei Ouyang Bryant	Joshua C. Woodfork
<b>Joint Office Hours:</b>	Tisch 305A Wednesday 4:30-5:30 PM	
<b>Office Hours:</b>	TTh 5:00-6:00 PM and by appointment	TTh 2:30-3:30 PM and by appointment
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES**

What is hip hop? Using an interdisciplinary approach this course engages with answering this question. In a collaborative approach students will identify current and historic elements of hip hop culture in US society and internationally. Hip hop culture may be understood as a youth arts movement and is therefore often misrepresented or portrayed negatively in the media or by outsiders. Through multimedia analysis, critical reading and listening, and student led discussion, students will develop the skills necessary to critically analyze hip hop culture. Throughout the course of the semester we will work toward developing an outreach project that aims to educate the community on hip hop culture and why it matters.

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- ❖ identify and provide examples of the four main elements of hip hop culture
- ❖ describe the evolution of hip hop culture
- ❖ understand that hip hop culture is national and transnational and that it operates in larger contexts including race, class, gender, and sexuality
- ❖ recognize relationships between artistic expression and U.S. society
- ❖ distinguish among, and formulate, types of questions asked by different disciplines
- ❖ develop skills in critical listening, communication, collaboration, and writing

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

In order to successfully complete this course, students are responsible for the following:

- ❖ **Reading and Listening Assignments:** Students are expected to complete all of the reading and listening assignments and be prepared to discuss them in class each session.
  - **Texts:** The following required book can be purchased at the Skidmore Shop; it is also on reserve at the Scribner Library:
    - Watkins, S. Craig. *Hip Hop Matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*. Beacon Press, 2006. ISBN-13: 9780807009864
  - **WebCT:** Additional materials may be posted on the course WebCT and will be announced in class. Course assignments and other course updates will also be posted regularly on WebCT.
  - **Additional Resources:** Additional books and audiovisual materials that may be useful for presentations, papers, and general reference may be found on Scriber Library's course reserves.
- ❖ **Attendance:** Class meetings will include additional audio and visual materials (some of which is exclusively available during class meetings) and presentations, therefore class attendance is imperative to succeed in this course. Students are responsible for work missed during absences.

Students are allowed (but not encouraged) three excused absences. Students missing more than three classes will have their final grade lowered by **10 points** for each day missed (e.g., if you have an 80 in the class, your grade will be lowered to a 70). According to the *Student Academic Handbook* and the *Faculty Advisor Handbook*, “any students who miss more than a third of the [class] sessions may expect to be barred from the final examination. In such cases, the course grade will be recorded as F.”

➤ Students are expected to arrive on time to class. Tardiness will not be permitted. Two late arrivals to class will count as one absence.

❖ **Class Participation (20%)**: The bi-weekly meetings are your chance to reflect on ideas raised in the class materials and critically engage with your classmates. Students are expected to take initiative for their own learning by attending and *actively* participating in all class discussions, activities, and assignments. Both quantity and quality of class participation will be considered in grading. As a class, we will devise guidelines for classroom discussion. Class participation will be evaluated based upon a variety of means, including: a) attendance; b) two external events response essays; c) participation in class discussions; and, if necessary, pop quizzes.

➤ **External Events**: Students are required to attend two external events: one selected from those listed on the syllabus and one selected from the “Additional External Events” list on WebCT. This list will be regularly updated as events are announced. Within a week of attending the chosen activity, students will write and submit a **two-page** review response essay.

❖ **Book Critique (20%)**: Using the course text, *Hip Hop Matters*, students will write a **five-page** review. In this review, students should critique the presentation of the material, strengths, weaknesses, purpose, scope, and content of the book.

❖ **“My Hip Hop” (5%)**: Students are asked to consider their relationship, thoughts, and ideas about hip hop culture. The assignment is two-fold. First, students will present a visual image, film clip, television clip, or website that extends or challenges course themes. Students have five-minutes to present their chosen material and to discuss why they selected this representation. Second, students need to hand-in a one single-spaced page paper covering, in a more formalized manner, the same ground as the oral presentation.

❖ **Community Outreach Project (25%)**: As a class, we will develop an outreach event that will educate our community (on and off-campus) about hip hop culture, demonstrating our semester’s research and learning. The goals and methods of the event will be developed as a class but will include components such as research presentations, local talent showcases, performances, and interactive stations.

❖ **Class Facilitation (30%)**: Students will work in groups to develop an introduction to their assigned topic (ex. Graffiti, DJ, MC, breakdancing, gender, or globalization). Using the assigned film as a springboard for discussion, students will research and select reading and listening assignments appropriate for the class and develop a viewing guide. Each group will facilitate class discussion based on their topic and related film, reading, and listening assignments.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

❖ **Class Decorum & Preparation**: Please be respectful of your fellow students, the learning process, and the professors. In order to effectively use our time together, we expect you to come prepared for class each day. More specifically, we expect you to: arrive on time, turn off cell phones or other electronic devices, and bring your books, assignments, and other necessary materials to class. As noted above, if you are chronically late, unprepared, or otherwise distracted during class, your class

participation score will be lowered. Inappropriate actions will not be tolerated and may be reported to the Dean of Studies Office.

- **Language:** Please note that course materials may include explicit content. It is expected that this content will operate within the community norms established at the beginning of the semester.
- ❖ **Accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability, please bring the professors your semester memo of accommodations as soon as you obtain it. If you think that you need accommodations but do not yet have them, set up a meeting with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Student Academic Services. It is the student's responsibility to follow-up with the professors regarding all accommodations that require the professors' participation. To ensure full use of accommodations the student is advised to speak with the professors at least 7 days before any assignment date listed on the syllabus.
- ❖ **Deadlines:** Assignment due dates and times are not negotiable. You must attend presentations when they are scheduled and hand homework and papers in on time (at the beginning of the class on the day that they are due). Please remember to be conscious of the due dates and plan accordingly, as missed deadlines will result in a grade of zero.
- ❖ **Paper Formatting Guidelines:** All papers and projects should be typed and doubled-spaced using 12-point font and one-inch margins throughout. Please use double-sided printing for all assignments.
- ❖ **Citations:** Please remember to properly quote and cite your sources. Parenthetical notations are acceptable, but do not forget that any ideas taken from another source (even if not directly quoted) must also be properly referenced. If you have any questions about appropriate citation procedures, see the Skidmore Expository Writing Network:  
[http://cms.skidmore.edu/writing\\_guide/index.cfm](http://cms.skidmore.edu/writing_guide/index.cfm)
- ❖ **The Skidmore Honor Code:** Because the College functions as a tightly integrated community of curricular and co-curricular experiences, a strict allegiance to its standards of conduct is essential for every student's well-being and intellectual growth. Students should make certain they understand the high value we place on honesty, cooperation, and consideration and the penalties the College imposes for infractions in these areas. Skidmore not only promotes intellectual honesty vigorously but severely punishes such offenses as plagiarism and cheating on exams.
- ❖ **Academic Integrity:** Any of the following acts, when committed by a student in any academic exercise, will not be tolerated and shall constitute academic dishonesty:
  - *Plagiarism:* (un)intentionally representing the words or ideas of another as one's own, including direct quotation, paraphrase, or borrowed facts or information
  - *Cheating:* intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids
  - *Falsification:* intentional and unauthorized falsification or fabrication of any information or citation
  - *Facilitating academic dishonesty:* intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code
  - *Other forms of Academic Dishonesty:* multiple submission, forgery, sabotage, or alteration will not be tolerated.

When completing your writing assignments, please consult the "Academic Integrity Checklist" found at the Dean of Studies webpage:

[http://cms.skidmore.edu/dean\\_of\\_studies/integrity/checklist.cfm](http://cms.skidmore.edu/dean_of_studies/integrity/checklist.cfm)

All questions regarding academic integrity should be directed to the professors. Academic dishonesty has serious consequences and may result in failure of the assignment, failure of the course, referral to the Integrity Board, probation, suspension, or dismissal.

<b>COURSE CALENDAR</b>
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Tues. Jan. 22	Introductions: Overview, Syllabus, Community Norms, WebCT, Resources
Thurs. Jan 24	Student Presentations: "My Hip Hop" Reading: Watkins: Prologue, Introduction, Chapters 1-2
Tues. Jan. 29	Student Presentations: "My Hip Hop" Reading: Watkins: Chapters 3-6
Thurs. Jan 31	Student Presentations: "My Hip Hop" Reading: Watkins: Chapters 7-9, Epilogue
Tues. Feb. 5	Discussion: Watkins, <i>Hip Hop Matters</i> <b>ASSIGNMENT: Book Critique DUE</b>
Thurs. Feb. 7	Discussion: Watkins, <i>Hip Hop Matters</i>
Tues. Feb. 12	Discussion: Assignment Guidelines: Class Facilitation & Community Outreach Project
Thurs. Feb. 14	Film Screening: <i>Hip Hop: Beyond the Beats</i> (2006) Reading: Cheryl Keyes, "At the Crossroads: Rap Music and its African Nexus," <i>Ethnomusicology</i> 40.2 (Spring-Summer 1996): 223-248. [JSTOR] Listening: Posted on WebCT
Tues. Feb. 19	Discussion: Rap, Agency, and Authenticity Reading: Alice Walker, "Nineteen Fifty-Five" in <i>The Ancestral House: The Black Short Story in the Americas and Europe</i> , ed. Charles H. Rowell. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995: 562-572. [Reserves] Listening: Posted on WebCT
Thurs. Feb. 21	Group Meetings
<b>Thurs. Feb 21</b>	<b>External Event: Hip Hop Alliance: Homophobia in Hip Hop 7 PM Bolton Hall 282</b>
Tues. Feb. 26	Film: <i>Style Wars</i> (2003) Reading: Assigned by Group #1 Listening: Assigned by Group #1
<b>Wed. Feb. 27</b>	<b>External Event: Kevin Powell: "Sexism from a Male Perspective" 7-8 PM Gannett Auditorium</b>

Thurs. Feb. 28	Discussion: <b>ASSIGNMENT:</b>	Group #1: Graffiti <b>Community Outreach Project <u>PROPOSAL DUE</u></b>
Tues. Mar. 4	Film: Reading: Listening:	<i>Scratch</i> (2002) Assigned by Group #2 Assigned by Group #2
Thurs. Mar. 6	Discussion:	Group #2: Turntablism/DJs
Tues. Mar. 11 Thurs. Mar. 13	<i>Spring Break</i> <i>Spring Break</i>	
Tues. Mar. 18	Film: Reading: Listening:	<i>The MC: Why We Do It</i> (2005) Assigned by Group #3 Assigned by Group #3
<b>Tues. Mar. 18</b>	<b>External Event:</b>	<b>Hip Hop Alliance: Degrading and Sexual Lyrics</b> <b>7 PM Bolton Hall 282</b>
Thurs. Mar. 20	Discussion:	Group #3: MCs
Tues. Mar. 25	Group Meetings	
Thurs. Mar. 27	Discussion: <b>ASSIGNMENT:</b>	Community Outreach Project <b>Community Outreach Project <u>UPDATE DUE</u></b>
Tues. Apr. 1	Film: Reading: Listening:	<i>Freshest Kids</i> (2002) Assigned by Group #4 Assigned by Group #4
Thurs. Apr. 3	Discussion:	Group #4: Breakdancing
Tues. Apr. 8	Film: Reading: Listening:	<i>Nobody Knows My Name</i> (1999) Assigned by Group #5 Assigned by Group #5
Thurs. Apr. 10	Discussion:	Group #5: Gender
Tues. Apr. 15	Film: Reading: Listening:	<i>Hip Hop Colony</i> (2006) Assigned by Group #6 Assigned by Group #6
Thurs. Apr. 17	Discussion:	Group #6: Globalization
<b>Thurs. Apr. 17</b>	<b>External Event:</b>	<b>Hip Hop Alliance: The N-Word</b> <b>7 PM Bolton Hall 282</b>
Tues. Apr. 22	Community Outreach Planning <b>ASSIGNMENT:</b>	<b>Community Outreach Project <u>DESCRIPTION DUE</u></b>
Thurs. Apr. 24	Community Outreach Planning	

Sat. Apr. 26  
or Sun Apr. 27

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT  
LOCATION TBA**

Tues. Apr. 29

Discussion: Course Wrap-Up and Evaluations  
ASSIGNMENT: **Community Outreach Project RESPONSE DUE**

**Note:** Please be advised that our schedule may change as the semester progresses.

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**Additional External Events**

Mon. Jan 28	External Event:	Patrice O'Neill and Not in Our Town (1995) Film Screening and Discussion 7:30 PM Gannett Auditorium
Fri. Feb. 8	External Event:	Ujima Late Night: <i>Boondocks</i> Marathon 11 PM Spa
Sat. Feb. 9	External Event:	Ujima Fashion Show 8 PM JKB Theater
Fri. Feb. 22	External Event:	<i>Our Young Black Men Are Dying and Nobody Seems to Care</i> Play 7 PM JKB Theater
Sat. Mar 22	External Event:	Hip Hop Dance 11 PM Falstaff's
Thurs. Apr. 10	External Event:	<i>Last Chance for Eden</i> (2003) Film Screening and Discussion 6:30 PM Murray-Aikins Dining Hall, second floor

