

African American Music and Culture: Focus on the Blues
ANTH 517
Fall Semester, 2003
(The Year of the Blues)

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Course objective: To gain an understanding of the origins, growth, and development, plus the social, historical and cultural contexts of the blues, including its place in and influence on American music and culture. To blend anthropological and musicological approaches to understanding the music and culture of the blues.

Policy statement on plagiarism and cheating: Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper, or project; failure in the course, and/or expulsion from the university. For more information please refer to the appropriate section (Academic Conduct) of the Student Life Handbook.

Honor System: Kansas State University has an honor system. You are expected to do your own work. We expect all of the work that you do in this class to be your own.

Requirements:

Readings: A collection of readings will be available for purchase at the Arts and Sciences Copy Center. New materials will be added to the collection as time permits and student interests suggest. Please check with the Copy Center on a weekly basis for updates to the collection.

Discussions: You must read each week's assigned readings before coming to class. You must come to each class prepared to question, discuss, and critique the readings.

Viewing: In addition to video clips shown in class we expect you to watch all installments of the PBS series of films on the blues (currently schedule to air Sept 28-Oct. 4). There will be questions from this series on at least one of the exams.

Exams: There will be four exams. You must take all four of them. No excuses except in cases of documentable emergency.

Concerts: You will be expected to attend and write about at least one blues concert during the semester. We will let you know which concerts are approved. We will also recommend other concerts to you as we hear of them.

Recommended:

We highly recommend doing as much additional reading, film viewing, concert attending, and radio listening as you are able to manage. We will notify you of opportunities and make suggestions as we learn of them, but you should feel free to ask us for specific suggestions tailored to your own particular interests.

We also recommend exploring the PBS website devoted to celebrating the Year of the Blues <http://www.pbs.org/theblues/theproject.html>. There will be continual updates to the material on that site, as well as links to additional helpful sites for learning about the blues.

Grading:

Four exams @ 150 points	=	600 points
PBS series exam questions	=	200 points
Blues concert report	=	200 points
Total		1000 points

Disability Statement: If you have any special requirements that we need to know about please let us know immediately.

Course Calendar

Weeks 1-8: Beginnings and Contexts

- Week 1 (August 20) Introductions, Expectations, Guidelines, Assignments (Goins & Ottenheimer)
- Week 2 (August 27) Musican and Cultural Foundations: Africa, Europe, & the Middle East (Ottenheimer)
- Week 3 (September 3) American Beginnings: Combinations and Conditions (Ottenheimer)
- Week 4 (September 10) EXAM (Identify and discuss examples of musical and cultural elements, styles)
- Week 5 (September 17) Social & Cultural Contexts of Blues: Performers & Performances I (Ottenheimer)
(racism, oppression, the 'crossroads' idea, blues as ritual, blues as communication)
- Week 6 (September 24) Social & Cultural Contexts of Blues: Performers & Performances II (Ottenheimer)
(men and women in blues, performers as professionals, lyrics, autobiographies)
- Week 7 (October 1) Blues as Social Commentary; Appropriation & Voice; Review for exam (Ottenheimer)
- Week 8 (October 8): EXAM (short essays discussing contexts, themes & issues; questions from PBS series)

Weeks 9-16: Focus on URBAN Blues

- Week 9 (October 15) Introductions, Expectations, Guidelines, Assignments (Goins & Ottenheimer)
- Week 10 (October 22) Blues Form & Respective Players (Goins)
- Week 11 (October 29) Harmonica Players, Guitarists, Pianists, Vocalists (Goins)
- Week 12 (November 5) EXAM (identify and discuss examples of musical & cultural elements, styles)
- Week 13 (November 12) Blues in Pop, Jazz and R&B, Rock (Goins)
- Week 14 (November 19) The Modern Era Bluesmen (Goins)
- Thanksgiving Break
- Week 15 (December 3) Review for exam (Goins)
- Week 16 (December 10) EXAM

The PBS series

- Sunday Sept 28: Feel Like Going Home (Martin Scorsese)
- Monday Sept 29: The Soul of A Man (Wim Wenders)
- Tuesday Sept 30: The Road to Memphis (Richard Pearce)
- Wednesday Oct 1: Warming by the Devil's Fire (Charles Burnett)
- Thursday Oct 2: Godfathers and Sons (Marc Levin)
- Friday Oct 3: Red, White and Blues (Mike Figgis)
- Saturday Oct 4: Piano Blues (Clint Eastwood)

N.B.---We reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus and course overview as necessary.

Weeks 1-8: Beginnings and Contexts

Week 1 (August 20): Introductions, Expectations, Guidelines, Assignments (Goins & Ottenheimer)

lecture/discussion: defining the blues

music: various

assignment: bring a definition of the blues, bring one or two examples on CD; read everything, come to class prepared to discuss, question, challenge.

Week 2 (August 27): Musical and Cultural foundations: Africa, Europe, & the Middle East: (Ottenheimer)

READINGS

Joseph E. Holloway "The Origins of African-American Culture." In, Joseph E. Holloway, ed. *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 1-18.

(optional: Richard Waterman: "African Influence on the Music of the Americas." In, Sol Tax, ed. *Acculturation in the Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 207-18.)

Paul Oliver: "African Influence on the Blues." *Living Blues* 8 (Spring 1972): 13-17.

David Evans: "Africa and the Blues." *Living Blues* 10 (Autumn 1972): 27-29.

Paul Oliver: "Echoes of the Jungle?" *Living Blues* 13 (Summer 1973): 29-32.

Portia K. Maultsby: "Africanisms in African-American Music." In, Joseph E. Holloway, ed. *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 185-210.

Harriet Ottenheimer: "Comoro Crossroads: African Bardic Traditions and the Origins of the Blues." *Human Mosaic* 26(2) (1993): 32-38.

Paul Oliver: "Afterword" (included in reprinted version of *Savannah Syncopators*). In, Paul Oliver, ed. *Yonder Come the Blues*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 114-128.

LECTURE/DISCUSSION

1. defining the blues: why it's important to have a baseline
2. finding the blues: using combination of anthropological and musical insights
 - from anthropology: relativism, holism, comparison, fieldwork; structure, function, identity retention, acculturation, reinterpretation, syncretism, polychronicity
 - from music: melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, function, role melisma, blue notes, call & response vs dialogue, polyrhythm, polymeter
3. searching for blues in all the wrong places; the overall influence of Africa on America
 - Africa & Europe (musically, culturally), the slave trade, bardic traditions, Bantu cultures
 - the Waterman-Oliver-Evans debate (misplaced focus?)

LISTENING/VIEWING

1. what is blues? - use Fruteland Jackson's "Blues 2.0" is is blues? Why? Why not?
compare: Cousin Joe: "Life is a one way ticket" or a Muddy Waters or a Robert Johnson AAB
 - lyrics--expressive, personal
 - poetic structure AAB
 - harmonic structure I IV V
 - vocal/melodic style: shout style
2. Where are these elements from? What other elements come from those places? How can we find out?
Critical Listening & reading
 - from music: melody, harmony, rhythm, structure
 - from anthro: holistic, comparative, fieldwork-based: structure, function, identity retention, reinterpretation, syncretism
 - from both: polychronicity vs monochronicity (use CHERNOFF)

start with comparison of bardic styles
 european (Jean Ritchie?)
 mideastern (Om Khalsoum)
 west african (Bai Konte) --- www.coraconnection.com
 east african (Inzouddine) -- comoro blues

then more examples exploring range of possibilities, there and here:
lyrics (subject matter--not always possible)
 personal--impersonal
 complaint--moral

structure (verse, through compose, call response, dialogue)
verse (or progressive)

 European - use clancy or folk stuff
 comoros women's tari

through composing (Son House calls this 'long meter')

 Bai Konte, Herbie Hancock
 Tutsi praise song, Go down ol Hannah
 how come my dog don't bark?

call/response

 african work song
 comoros ??
 mardi gras indians

dialoguing

 Inzouddine
 any blues and guitar example, or cousin joe

rhythm (polychronicity, monochronicity)

polychronicity

 Chernoff
 w afr xylophone or drumming
 comoros ndzedze
 Video: Wadaha (also Dagomba?)
 professor longhair
 mardi gras indians

vocal style (melisma and shout)

melisma

 call to prayer
 Tutsi praise song again
 comoros mzumara
 aaron neville

repeat bardic styles--what do you hear now? can you identify something different from same areas?

 european different example
 mideastern ??
 west african ??
 east african ?? (tanzania? Zanzibar??)

3. The issues: slavery, Bantu influence, Oliver-Evans, Ottenheimer,

Week 3 (September 3)
American Beginnings: Combinations and Conditions (Ottenheimer)

READINGS

- LeRoi Jones: "Slave and Post-Slave." In LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (New York: Morrow, 1963), 50-59
- LeRoi Jones: excerpt from "Primitive Blues and Primitive Jazz." In LeRoi Jones, *Blues People* (New York: Morrow, 1963), 60-70.
- David Evans: excerpt from "Folk and Popular Blues (Origins of the Blues Form)" David Evans, *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 41-48.
- Harriet Ottenheimer: "Blues in the Heartland: African-American Music and Culture in the Middle West. In Gerald Early, ed. *Black Heartland: African American Life, The Middle West, and the Meaning of American Regionalism* (African and Afro-American Studies Occasional Papers Series Vol 1, No. 2, 1997): 16-36.
- David Evans: "Goin' Up the Country: Blues in Texas and the Deep South. In, Lawrence Cohen, ed. *Nothing But the Blues: The Music and the Musicians* (New York, London, Paris: Abbeville Press, 1993) 33-85
- Bruce Bastin: "Truckin' My Blues Away: East Coast Piedmont Styles." In Lawrence Cohen, ed. *Nothing But the Blues: The Music and the Musicians* (New York, London, Paris: Abbeville Press, 1993) 205-231.

LECTURE/DISCUSSION

slavery (small farms, plantations, cities), compared with other American and World systems
slave songs (hollers, shouts, spirituals), play-party songs
post emancipation music (minstrelsy, ragtime, jubilee singers, singing societies)
European and African contacts and interinfluences

LISTENING/VIEWING

field hollers (esp texas+burundi comparison)
worksongs (esp call-resp styles to compare with african examples), shouts, lining out
ragtime & 1800s pop tunes
delta, texas, piedmont blues styles
urban heartland blues styles (esp prof longhair for polychronicity)
segments from Leadbelly film (the competition scene in the Memphis bar?)
Comoros: video of dancing the 'gabusi', (west Africa? dancing in Dagomba?)

Week 4 (September 10)

exam

(identify and discuss examples of musical & cultural elements, styles)

Week 5 (September 17)

Social and Cultural Contexts of Blues: Performers and Performances I (Ottenheimer)
(racism, oppression, the 'crossroads' idea, blues as ritual, blues as communication)

READINGS

- Richard A. Peterson. "Market and Moralists Censors of a Rising Art Form, Jazz" *Arts in Society, Censorship and the Arts*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1967).
- Julio Finn: "Robert Johnson at the Crossroads" In, Julio Finn *The Bluesman: The Musical Heritage of Black Men and Women in the Americas*. (London, Melbourne, New York: Quartet Books, 1986) 210-223
- Gayle Dean Wardlow: "Stop, Look, and Listen at the Cross Road" In, Gayle Dean Wardlow *Chasin' that Devil Music: Searching for the Blues*. (San Francisco: Miller Freeman Books, 1998) 196-206.
- Pleasant Joseph: "Messin' Around" In, Pleasant "Cousin Joe" Joseph and Harriet Ottenheimer *Cousin Joe: Blues from New Orleans*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Pressm 1987) 62-80.
- Daphne Duval Harrison: "Riding 'Toby' to the Big Time" In, Daphne Duval Harrison *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s*. (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988) 16-41.

Harriet Ottenheimer: "Catharsis, Communication and Evocation: Alternative Views of the Sociopsychological Functions of Blues Singing. *Ethnomusicology* 23:1 (1979): 75-86.

LECTURE/DISCUSSION

racism, oppression, life in the South, accommodating
the crossroads myth, blues and religion, blues and preaching, blues and ritual, blues and communication

MUSIC/VIDEOS

Son House - anything
Willie Brown - East St. Louis Blues
Robert Johnson - Cross Road Blues, Hellhound on my Trail, Stones in My Passway
Honeyboy Edwards - reminiscences, anything else
Video: from Crossroads: segment about meeting devil at the crossroads

Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Sippie Wallace, other early blues women
BB King - How Blue Can You Get?
example of preaching?
Video of Cousin Joe: interaction with audience, talking, encouraging....

Week 6 (September 24)

Social and Cultural Contexts of Blues: Performers and Performances II (Ottenheimer)
(men and women in blues, performers as professionals, lyrics, autobiographies)

READINGS

Richard K. Spottswood: "Country Girls, Classic Blues, and Vaudeville Voices: Women and the Blues" In, Lawrence Cohen, ed. *Nothing But the Blues: The Music and the Musicians* (New York, London, Paris: Abbeville Press, 1993) 87-105.
Daphne Duval Harrison: "'Wild Women Don't Have the Blues': Blues from the Black Woman's Perspective. In, Daphne Duval Harrison *Black Pearls: Blues Queens of the 1920s*. (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1988) 62-111.
Harriet Ottenheimer: "Life-story Narrative as Reflexive Ritual (Blues for "Ed")" *Human Mosaic* 28:2 (1994): 60-64.

lecture: men and women in blues, performers as professionals, lyrics and autobiographies
music: women's lyrics vs men's lyrics, humorous blues (cousin joe), sexual innuendo in blues (roosevelt sykes, rufus perryman, ma rainey)
video: segments from Crossroads (image of singer as professional); cousin joe at piano (from New Orleans video), possibly some of wild women video?
assignment: watch the first three installments of the PBS series, come to class with questions, critiques, discussion points.

The PBS series: first three installments

Sunday Sept 28: Feel Like Going Home (Martin Scorsese)
Monday Sept 29: The Soul of A Man (Wim Wenders)
Tuesday Sept 30: The Road to Memphis (Richard Pearce)

Week 7 (October 1)

Blues as Social Commentary; Appropriation & Voice; other Issues; Review for exam (Ottenheimer)

READINGS

Finn? They took our music type stuff?
Garon on appropriation

James H. Cone. "The Blues: A Secular Spiritual" In James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972; reprinted New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 97-127.

Harriet Ottenheimer: "Writing Cousin Joe: Choice and Control Over Orthographic Representation in a Blues Singer's Autobiography." Unpublished Manuscript 1997-2003.

lecture: blues as protest music? Josh White and Leadbelly and the New York leftist crowd?

what does it mean to appropriate the music of others? what's being appropriated?

taking financial advantage, how the record companies mistreated the musicians, how cover artists made so much more

researching the music, rescuing? the music, discovering? the music

czech blues, what's different? if anything (is it possible to get a cd of petr?)

music: Bessie Smith (backwater blues) Ma Rainey, Broonzy (black get back, bourgeois blues), Leadbelly?

Otis Rush Cousin Joe (railroad avenue, sip in mississippi), David Dee

elvis covering thornon,

video: ?? from crossroads. note that the music student wins the battle, saves the bluesman's soul?

assignment: watch the remaining installments of the PBS series, come to class with questions, critiques, discussion points. expect questions from the series to be on the exam.

The PBS series: remaining installments

Wednesday Oct 1: Warming by the Devil's Fire (Charles Burnett)

Thursday Oct 2: Godfathers and Sons (Marc Levin)

Friday Oct 3: Red, White and Blues (Mike Figgis)

Saturday Oct 4: Piano Blues (Clint Eastwood)

Week 8 (October 8): Exam (short essays discussing key contexts for blues, themes & issues in context)

Weeks 9-16: Focus on URBAN Blues

Week 9 (October 15) Introductions, Expectations, Guidelines, Assignments (Goins & Ottenheimer)

Overview of Urban Blues: The Main Players and Instruments

Lecture: The Significant Regions for Blues in America

Chicago (Chess, Alligator Records; Muddy, Wolf, Buddy Guy)

Texas (Walker, Collins, Rush, SRV, Hopkins)

Kansas City (jazz blues, riffs, J. Rushing, piano blues)

West Coast (Grateful Dead, Collins, Psychadelic, Cream, etc.)

video: Muddy Waters documentary

Note: Blues Masters at the Crossroads: Series of Concerts in Salina Oct 17 & 18.

Week 10 (October 22) Blues Form & Respective Players

lecture: Strick Metered, Rhymed & Measured vs Unrestricted Form:

Lyrics

Music

Form

Instrumentation

music: Lighnin' Hopkins, Jimmy Reed, John Lee Hooker, B.B. King, Albert King

video: taken from artists listed above

Week 11 (October 29) Harmonica Players, Guitarists, Pianists, Vocalists

lecture: Blues Music and Practicality of the instrumentation

Portability

volume

range
timbre
cost

music: selections chosen from wide variety

video: segments from Albert Collins

Week 12 (November 5) Exam (identify and discuss examples of musical & cultural elements, styles)

Week 13 (November 12) Blues in Pop, Jazz and R&B, Rock

lecture: Blues in the Mainstream of Pop Culture

music: selected cuts from Presley, Beatles, Hendrix, Dylan, Stones, Prince, Led Zeppelin, Clapton,

video: segments from above names

Week 14 (November 19) The Modern Era Bluesmen

lecture: The Influence of SRV, Guy, Clapton, Raitt, Cray

music: current tunes to be selected from Raitt, SRV, Guy, etc.

video: segments from SRV, Clapton, dvd,

Thanksgiving Break

Week 15 (December 3) Review for exam

Week 16 (December 10) Exam