

301:E6

Race, Roots, and Rock 'n' Roll:

"It's only rock 'n' roll but I like it" ... so the song goes. But is it only rock 'n' roll? Rock music has been a continuing thread in the fabric of post-World War II American culture. Rock 'n' roll has not merely mirrored the enormous social and cultural upheavals of this time, it has shaped them as well. "Race music" – the music that shocked many white Americans in the 1950s – yielded to provocative sounds that provided the musical soundtrack for the sixties, fueling the civil rights, anti-war, and other social protest movements of the turbulent era. This course will examine rock 'n' roll – its historical and musical roots, its explosive beginnings in the mid-1950s, and its rise to cultural dominance – to explore issues of race, gender, and class amidst the rapidly changing social, cultural, economic, and political landscape of mid- to late-20th century United States. Musical sources will be supplemented by a variety of readings; documentary and feature-length films will be screened.