AMERICAN FOLKSONG AND BALLAD
Rutgers University—Spring 2010
Index 74080

Course Approach. This is a course about social concerns in folksongs—sources and circulation in oral tradition, with reference to lyrical folk songs, traditional ballads, broadside ballads, native American ballads, and commercial country music.

If we consider music as social practice, we realize that in the United States, as elsewhere, it is one of the most tenacious markers of ethnic identity. It is also, and obviously, a marker for region, class, and gender.

Musical practice revolves around communities or music-cultures. The "classical" music-culture, supported by schools, universities, and conservatories, embodies bourgeois values. The MTV version of rock, directed by Ivy-educated executives, offers formulaic sounds and soft-core pornography to the world. The country music industry, arguably the nation's largest music moneymaker, with its "hat acts" and "outlaws," plays out themes of maladjusted suburban cowboys and rural nostalgia, while reaffirming working-class identities, southern regionalism, and good old boy (and good old gal) sexism. Here and there, communities offer pockets of musical resistance, usually based on ethnicity, religious belief, or social values.

This course is intended for anyone fascinated by these pockets of resistance to the mainstream, both live and on record, more than just the top 40. It will guide you to older musical forms that are at the roots of today's rock and roll: from blues that is still alive and flourishing in Chicago to regional music that's survived relatively unchanged for many years, from Cajun music in the French areas of Louisiana to non-commercial genres from the dust bowl of Oklahoma.

It's for those who share a passion for old music and vanishing lifestyles. It's about an older America that had regional music and regional beers. It’s also about hot sauce, barn side graphics, railroad trains, and gospel churches.

LEARNING GOALS

Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:
Students will be able to synthesize an interdisciplinary dialogue among the different methods that compose the American Studies investigation of culture across time and space in history, literature, and folk music of the peoples of the United States with special reference to Anglo, African, Native American, French-Canadian, and Cajun cultures. Students will be able to write well, speak articulately, and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

Additional Learning Goals Met by this Course:
The course in American Folksong and Ballad will provide students with preliminary training in ethnomusicology with the necessary analytical and methodological skills to understand traditional music. We will devote special attention to folk and closely related grassroots music such as gospel, western swing, and folk revival genres. Among other things, students will learn to

- Listen to, analyze, and describe folk music
- Evaluate folk music and folk music performances.
- Understand relationships between folk music and the other arts
- Understand folk music in relation to American history and culture.

**WARNING:**

There are no formal prerequisites for this course, but this is not a course for the faint of heart or the lazy. Only three books are assigned, but do not be deceived: the material is difficult, the workload is heavy, and I expect a great deal from you. Therefore, please read the following description of course requirements and organization carefully.

You may feel that you will not be comfortable in taking "American Folksong and Ballad" as I teach it. If not, there is no shame in taking another course with another professor. If you do choose to stay, however, this syllabus is the contract between us.

Note that there is a preliminary exam after the first three weeks. If you do poorly on this exam, I would urge you to drop the course right away before you invest too much time.

**Required Texts**

Peter Guralnick, *Searching for Robert Johnson*
Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk*
Kip Lornell, *Introducing American Folk Music* (Primis)

Books are available from

New Jersey Books, 37 Easton Avenue, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901,

**Course Requirements**

If you have a scheduling conflict with any of these exams, please drop the course now! Check course schedule for dates.

**PRELIMINARY EXAM** 20%
Covers the material of the first three weeks
All objective questions
Absolutely no makeups or alternate scheduling

**MIDTERM EXAM** 30%
Covers the material of the first half
All objective questions
Absolutely no makeups or alternate scheduling
FINAL EXAM 50%
Covers the material of the second half
Half objective questions; half essay
Absolutely no makeups or alternate scheduling

ATTENDANCE
Time has meanings that speak loud and clear in any organization. It tells the organization whether you care or not. Efficient operation of the class and optimal educational results depend on all students being on time for class and maintaining a good attendance record. Excessive tardiness and/or absenteeism are grounds for a substantially lowered grade, no matter how well you do on the exams. An outstanding attendance record, on the other hand, along with vocal participation in class discussion, can augment a student's final grade.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Please come up to the front of the room and check in before you take your seat. If you arrive late, be sure to check in after class before you leave.

Note that room changes are NOT posted by scheduling on classroom doors - all such posted changes are bogus. Room changes are announced electronically only.

Weather Emergency Information
In the event of adverse weather conditions, the number to call is 732.932.7799. This is the official recorded message for school closings at Rutgers University. Please be advised that the University is rarely closed except under severe conditions such as hurricane or blizzard. If the University is open, both residents and commuters are expected to attend all scheduled classes and exams. If you are not present when the University is officially open, it will be counted as an UNEXCUSED ABSENCE. Please make your travel plans accordingly.

Office Hours
My office is in the basement of the Ruth Adams Building on the Douglass Campus, Room 024. The departmental telephone is 732.932.9174. My office hours are on Mondays and Thursdays from 1:00 to 2:00 pm. If you cannot reach me at this time, please leave a message on my direct line at 732.932.1630, and I will contact you or you can email me (agillespie@amst.rutgers.edu).

Examinations
We have three exams: a preliminary exam, a midterm, and a final. Exams are given at the scheduled times only. No exceptions will be granted to this rule. I do not think it is fair to give some students more time to study than other students. (Nor is it fair to ask for an early exam so you can start your holiday early, ahead of the rest of us.) I also feel that it is my responsibility to teach good work habits. Do not embarrass yourself by asking for a special exception.

Let us discuss exam formats. The first two exams have only objective questions. These consist of a number of multiple-choice questions, which are scored by means of an optical scanner. For these exams, you need to bring a soft lead #2 pencil and an eraser (unless you never make mistakes or change your mind). The purpose of the objective section is to test your content mastery. Here you show your ability to understand facts, concepts, and theories that have been introduced in the course. Some of the questions are of the "sound identification" type. For these
questions, you will hear a short selection from a recording previously played in class. For each selection, you will be asked one or two questions.

The final exam is half objective; the other half of your final exam is the essay section. Blue books are provided for the essay. For legibility we recommend the use of ballpoint pen for essay. The purpose of the essay section is to test your creativity in using the material of the course to generate your own insights and applications. The essay section also tests your written communication skills as well as your ability to synthesize and integrate the material of the course.

Final grades will not be given out over the departmental telephone; however, you may check online with the registrar’s office.

Legal Crib Sheets
In the belief that proper crib preparation is indistinguishable from studying, I have institutionalized and legalized the crib sheet for both the midterm and final exam for this course. You are allowed to use a legal crib sheet for both exams. My purpose is to reduce exam anxiety and to encourage good study habits. The rules are as follows:

- Both sides of a single 8 1/2" X 11" piece of paper may be used.
- Cribs must be written by hand--not typed--and signed.
- Absolutely no photocopying of maps or anything else is allowed.
- The crib sheet is to be turned in with the exam; it will not be returned.

Semester Advisory
It is characteristic of life at Rutgers that there are many competing demands for your time. However, you should bear in mind that you and you alone are responsible for keeping up with the assigned work in this course. When the semester ends with the final examination, work for this course is complete. Therefore, please be advised that once the course has ended, there will be absolutely, positively no further opportunities for "make up" exams or "extra credit" work to improve your grade. Such after-the-fact activities are manifestly unfair to everyone else in the course who has done the work all along. The time to work on this course is now, not after the class is over.

Assigned Music on Reserve
Compared with other American Studies courses, the reading responsibilities for this course are relatively light. However, the listening responsibilities are much heavier. Normally, every class session will be illustrated with several examples of recorded music. At the end of every week, these recordings will be placed on reserve in the media room of the Douglass Library. For mastery of the material, it is suggested that you listen to each tape at least twice--once in class when it first presented and once later on your own.

You have the choice of listening to this assigned music in the traditional library reserve room setting--the Music/Media lab--or on the Internet, using the best available technology. Located on the lower level of the Douglass campus library, the Music/Media lab is part of the Laurie Music Library. Students may listen to their assigned reserves on one of the lab's many playback stations. The lab hours are Monday-Thursday 8:00 am to 11:00 pm; Friday 8:00 to 5:00; Saturday 10:00 to 6:00; and Sunday 1:00 to 11:00.
Online Music Reserves
To access music reserves via the Internet, please follow this path:

1) Go the Rutgers Libraries Homepage: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/

2) Click on IRIS, the search engine for the libraries.

3) Click the blue button at the top of the screen that says "Reserve Desk"

4) Type in your instructor's last name, Gillespie, click on "Instructor," and then click on the Professor's full name in the list that follows.

5) Choose the correct course for the online reserves. It will have (AUDIO) following the course number, 01:050:365

6) Chose the audio reserve you want to listen to--they are listed alphabetically by title--by clicking on "View" and then on the hyperlink provided.

7) At this point, Real Player will ask you for a username and password. Your professor will provide these at the beginning of class. Once entered, you can listen to the streamed audio reserves as often as you like, replaying sections if you wish.

Requirements
To access online reserves you will need a computer with a soundcard and Real Player installed. The latter can be downloaded from www.real.com. If you don't have a computer, you can access the reserves from one of the RUCS student computing labs or the computer alcove on the first floor of the Douglass Library.

Help
For help, contact Jan Reinhart (jreinhar@rci.rutgers.edu) or John Rake (johnrake@rci.rutgers.edu) at the Music Library, 732.932.9023 ext. 34

Courtesy Policy
Students must turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before entering the classroom. Laptop usage is a privilege, not a right. To use a laptop, you must first get permission from me. Laptops may be used for taking notes, but may not be used for searching the web, emailing, or playing games.

Students who engage in rude and/or disrespectful behavior (for example, chronically arriving late to class, disruptive talking, private conversations, sarcastic jokes, disrespectful attitudes) that disturb or undermine the professor, the class, or another student’s ability to learn will be asked to drop the course.
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<tr>
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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
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<td>Thursday, January 21</td>
<td>OPENING CLASS</td>
<td>Distribution of Syllabus&lt;br&gt;Review of American Geography&lt;br&gt;Basic concepts of folklore&lt;br&gt;Saints and Sinners in American music</td>
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<td>Monday, January 25</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL SONGS AND SINGERS</td>
<td>Jimmie Rodgers, b. Mississippi 1897&lt;br&gt;Explore <a href="http://www.jimmierodgers.com">www.jimmierodgers.com</a></td>
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<td>Thursday, January 28</td>
<td>“SONGCATCHER” (2000)</td>
<td>See this film on reserve on your own prior to coming to class. Doctor Lily Penleric, a musicologist, visits a rural school in Appalachia where she finds a treasure trove of old ballads</td>
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<td>Monday, February 1</td>
<td>“O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?” (2000)</td>
<td>See this film on reserve on your own prior to coming to class. The adventures of three men sprung from a chain gang in 1930s Mississippi as they try to recover the buried loot from a robbery.</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 4</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL SONGS AND SINGERS</td>
<td>Woody Guthrie, b. Oklahoma 1912&lt;br&gt;Recommended: Bound for Glory&lt;br&gt;Explore <a href="http://www.woodyguthrie.org">www.woodyguthrie.org</a></td>
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<td>Monday, February 8</td>
<td>“HIGH LONESOME: THE STORY OF BLUEGRASS”</td>
<td>In-class video traces the evolution of bluegrass, its folk roots in Kentucky, its founder Bill Monroe, and other key figures&lt;br&gt;See <a href="http://www.billmonroe.com">www.billmonroe.com</a></td>
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<td>Thursday, February 11</td>
<td>DEPRESSION ERA RADIO</td>
<td>The Popularity of Brother Duets&lt;br&gt;Explore bluegrasslyrics.com/duets</td>
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<td>Monday, February 15</td>
<td>OLD TIME MUSIC</td>
<td>The Carter Family of Southwestern Virginia&lt;br&gt;Explore <a href="http://www.southernmusic.net/carterfamily.htm">www.southernmusic.net/carterfamily.htm</a></td>
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<td>Thursday, February 18</td>
<td>PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION</td>
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<td>Monday, February 22</td>
<td>SINGING COWBOYS</td>
<td>Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and others&lt;br&gt;See <a href="http://www.royrogers.com">www.royrogers.com</a> and <a href="http://www.cowboypal.com">www.cowboypal.com</a></td>
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<td>Thursday, February 25</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO GOSPEL MUSIC</td>
<td>Preview of the Highway QC’s</td>
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<td>Event Description</td>
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| Friday, February 26| **SPECIAL EVENT: LIVE PERFORMANCE**  
Workshop on Urban Contemporary Gospel  
Featuring the Highway QC’s of Chicago  
With career advice for musicians in any genre  
Assembly Room, Winants Hall, 1:00 to 2:00 pm  
7 College Avenue, College Avenue Campus  
Extra Credit Opportunity for Those in Attendance |
| Saturday, February 27| **AN EVENING OF GOSPEL CHOIRS**  
Voorhees Chapel, Douglass College, 7:00 pm  
Featuring the Lumzy Sisters of Mississippi & The Highway QC’s  
This event will constitute an extra-credit opportunity. |
| Monday, March 1    | **FOLK ROOTS OF POPULAR MUSIC**  
Rhythm and Blues, Rockabilly, Early Rock n' Roll, Country Music: Read Lornell, Ch 11 Folk Roots of Popular Music |
| Thursday, March 4  | **“PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION” (2006)**  
See this film on reserve on your own prior to coming to class.  
A film about a radio variety show performed live in front of an audience in a theater in St. Paul, Minnesota, with Garrison Keillor. |
| Monday, March 8    | **BALLAD AS NARRATIVE FOLKSONG**  
"The Wife of Usher's Well,"  
"Edward, Edward," & "Barbara Allen"  
Read Lornell, Ch 1 Start Here! |
| Thursday, March 11 | **BALLAD AS NARRATIVE FOLKSONG**  
"The House Carpenter,"  
"The Farmer's Curst Wife,"  
"Gypsy Davy," "Barbara Allen,"  
and "The Devil's Nine Questions."  
Read Lornell, Ch 2 Mass Media |
| Monday, March 22   | **BALLAD AS NARRATIVE FOLKSONG**  
"Fair Flower of Northumberland"  
Read Lornell, Ch 3 Fieldwork in 21st-Century America |
| Thursday, March 25 | **REVIEW FOR MIDTERM**  
Sample Questions Distributed.  
In-Class Video: "All Day & All Night"  
Memories of Beale Street Musicians  
Center for Southern Folklore, Memphis, TN |
| Monday, March 29   | **MIDTERM EXAM**  
No makeups; no exceptions  
Bring soft lead # 2 pencils for objective. |
Deadline to decide on optional term paper topic

Thursday, April 1

**VARIATION AND CHANGE**
"The Unfortunate Rake"
Read Lornell, “Broadsides” pp. 73-77

Monday, April 5

**AMERICAN ROOTS MUSIC**
Read Benjamin Filene's *Romancing the Folk*
What constitutes our true musical traditions?

Thursday, April 8

**BLUES LEGEND**
In-Class Screening of “The Search for Robert Johnson”
King of the Mississippi Delta Country Blues
Narrated by John Hammond

Monday, April 12

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN SECULAR FOLK MUSIC**
Selected examples
Read Lornell, Ch 7 African-Am Secular Folk Music

Thursday, April 15

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELIGIOUS FOLK MUSIC**
Selected examples
Read Lornell, Ch 6 African-Am Religious Folk Music

Monday, April 19

**THE FOLK REVIVALS**
The New Lost City Ramblers
Read Lornell, Ch 10 The Folk Revivals

Thursday, April 22

**SPECIAL EVENT: ATZILUT LIVE**
A lecture and performance in class by Atzilut, a high-energy
Middle Eastern ensemble that features Arab and Jewish musicians
In concert together to make a statement for peace through music

Friday, April 23

**SPECIAL EVENT: FOLKLORE SYMPOSIUM**
Public Sector Folklore: Promoting Folk Culture at a Research
University, a panel with nationally recognized folklorists.
Assembly Room, Winants Hall, College Avenue, 1:00 to 2:00 pm
This event will constitute an extra-credit opportunity.

Saturday, April 24

**NEW JERSEY FOLK FESTIVAL,** 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
Woodlawn at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, George Street and
Ryders Lane, Douglass Campus. Four stages of live music plus 80
craft vendors and 20 food vendors. Featuring the folk culture of the
Andean nations: Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.
Volunteering here will constitute an extra-credit opportunity.

Monday, April 26

**ANGLO-AMERICAN: SECULAR & SACRED**
Selected examples
Read Lornell, Ch 4 Anglo-Am Secular Folk Music
Read Lornell, Ch 5 Anglo-Am Sacred Folk Music

Thursday, April 29

ETHNIC AND NATIVE AMERICAN TRADITIONS
Cajun, Zydeco, Conjunto Norteño
Read Lornell, Ch 8 Ethnic and Native American Traditions

Monday, May 3

REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM
Sample Questions Distributed
Class Evaluation Distributed and Collected
In-Class Video: Bruce Springsteen
“We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions”

Friday, May 7

FINAL EXAMINATION, 9:00 to 11:00 am
No makeups; no exceptions
Don't bother to ask if you can take this exam early.

The Optional Paper

This is a fieldwork assignment. The choice of topic is up to you, but it must be based on YOUR OWN fresh first-hand observations and interviews. What we have in mind is an essay of 1250 to 1500 pages (5 to 6 typed double-spaced pages). Develop a particular thesis. It would probably be useful to take a particular theoretical perspective. You should NOT need to do library research. The information obtained through class readings and lectures should have provided you with everything you need to know to complete this project. What is fieldwork?
For a detailed answer, see the Kip Lornell textbook, Chapter 3.

If you choose to do the optional paper, keep in mind two deadlines. In mid-semester as indicated in our calendar of assignments, a one-page project proposal, in duplicate, will be due in class. Late proposals will not be accepted for any reason. The proposal should give a specific tentative thesis about your subject--what, exactly, is American about this particular song or singer? NO VAGUE STATEMENTS. In addition to the thesis, give your tentative supporting arguments for the thesis and mention sources (interviews or books or articles) by name that you have already found useful. I will return one copy of the proposal to you with my approval or disapproval.

This paper will be due in class late in the semester as indicated in our calendar of assignments. Since the assignment is entirely optional, there will be no need for extensions. If you do not have the paper, you will not be penalized in any way. Writing this paper can only help your final grade and cannot harm you at all.

Papers will be evaluated on their merit--extra credit is not given merely because papers were completed. Papers must be typewritten. No cover sheet please. Simply type your name, the course name, the instructor's name, and the date, each item on its own line, single-spaced, in the upper right hand corner of page 1. Double space down to the paper's title. Double space thereafter. Follow either the MLA (Modern Language Association) or Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for the manuscript, citations, and works cited (bibliography). Grading will be based
on content, organization, development, style, and correctness. Carefully proofread for spelling, typography, punctuation, and grammar.

Successful papers will earn bonus points to be applied to the score on the final exam, after the regular grades are computed. "A" papers get 9 points; "B" papers get 7 points; and "C" papers get 5 points. When bonus points are applied to the final exam, it can make a difference of an entire letter grade. Remember, it is up to you. No one has to do the assignment. However, those who carry it out should find the experience rewarding.

From time to time in class we shall suggest concerts and festivals that are possible starting points for research. You should come and discuss your proposed topic with me. Such conversations are best during office hours rather than squeezed in just before or just after class.

Advising
I will do my best to keep an eye on you and to call you out if I think you look like you need help, but there are a lot of you and just one of me. It is therefore really up to you to come to me if you need help--on anything. I come to class early not just to take attendance but to be available to talk. I have office hours on Monday and Thursday afternoons. If you have course conflicts, I can arrange alternate meeting times, just ask. And don't be shy.

Advising is part of my job! I am happy to help you with course materials, paper and exam preparation, with planning your future, internships, picking a graduate school, and with navigating the Rutgers bureaucracy. Perhaps, most important, I'm a fairly good listener if you need someone safe to talk to, and I can help you find help if you need it.

Recommended Radio Programs

Listen in to these programs for announcements of upcoming performances suitable to cover for your optional paper...

"Homemade Music" WRSU-FM 88.7
   Sunday Mornings 10 to 12 with Mark Corso

"Low Budget Blues" WRSU-FM 88.7
   Thursday Nights 8 to 10 with Richard Skelly

"Music You Can't Hear on the Radio" WPRB-FM 103.3
   Sunday Nights 6 to 10 with John Weingart

Recommended Recording Companies

Flying Fish Records
   1304 W. Schubert
   Chicago, IL 60614

Sugar Hill Records
   Post Office Box 4040
   Duke Station
   Durham, NC 27706
Recommended Folk Phones

Call these numbers for weekly updates on performance venues...

New Jersey    (201) 822-1313
New York      (212) 674-2508
Philadelphia  (215) 732-9992
Blues         (215) 668-4371

Performance Space Directory

Hurdy Gurdy Folk Music Club, Central Unitarian Church
156 Forest Avenue, Paramus (201) 871-7949

Mine Street Coffee House, First Reformed Church.
Nielson and Bayard, New Brunswick (732) 699-0570

Outpost in the Burbs, First Congregational Church
40 South Fullerton Avenue, Montclair (201) 744-6560

Outta Sights and Sounds, Hightstown High School
Hightstown, NJ. Call John Bates (609) 259-5764

Recommended Organization

Sing Out! Corporation
P.O. Box 5253
Bethlehem, PA 19015-0253
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Subscribing Member $22 per year
You receive quarterly issue of Sing Out! Magazine
With articles, songs, columns, festivals, reviews, and news.