

MUSC 1900 AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC (3 credit hours)

Elmira College

SPRING 2025

Required Text:

Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, eds., *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MP3*, 5th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Pre-requisites: None.

Course Description

This course examines the evolution of American popular music, exploring its role in reflecting and shaping American culture, identity, and politics. Students will engage in critical discussions of genres such as blues, jazz, country, musical theatre, rock, and hip-hop, analyzing their significance as both artistic expressions and historical texts. The course will highlight the ways in which music has served as a marker of cultural identity, political protest, and social change across various time periods in American history.

Course Objectives and Goals

- Identify and describe the key genres, artists, and movements in American popular music.
- Analyze the social, cultural, and political contexts in which different genres of popular music emerged and evolved.
- Critically assess the role of popular music as a form of cultural and political expression in American history.
- Understand the influence of technological advancements on the production, dissemination, and consumption of popular music.
- Evaluate how specific songs and artists contributed to societal change and reflected the values of their time.

Evaluation of Performance

Your grade will be based upon your performance on exams, assignments, and participation.

4 Assignments	20%
2 Quizzes	20%
Final Paper	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A 93% and above	B- 80 - 82%	D+ 67 - 69%
A- 90 - 92%	C+ 77 - 79%	D 63 - 66%
B+ 87 - 89%	C 73 - 76%	D- 60 - 62%
B 83 - 86%	C- 70 - 72%	F 59% or below

Withdrawal Policy: Please see Elmira College Bulletin for information on this policy.

Academic Honesty: Please read the section on Academic Honesty in the [Code of Conduct](#). Briefly, academic dishonesty includes: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. Ask if you have any questions on whether something constitutes as academic dishonesty. All work must be original and new. Past assignments from current or other courses will not be accepted. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. It will result in zero on the assignment, and a report will be filed with the school. Continued practice will result in failure of the class. Institutional penalties may also apply with repeated acts of academic honesty.

Student Responsibility:

- It is your responsibility to keep track of assignments and due dates.
- You should ask questions concerning assignments and lectures, if you need any clarifications.
- If you are struggling in class, have concerns, and/or unsure about expectations, please stop by during office hours or make an appointment for another time.

Tentative Schedule of Topics

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Materials</u>	<u>Tasks & Evaluations</u>
Streams of Tradition: The Sources of Popular Music	Chapter 1	
Popular Music of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries	Chapter 2	
An Early Pop Songwriter: Stephen Foster	Chapter 2	Assignment 1
Popular Jazz and Swing: America's Original Art Form	Chapter 3	
Tin Pan Alley: Creating “Musical Standards”	Chapter 4	Quiz 1
Early Music of the American South: “Race Records” and “Hillbilly Music”	Chapter 5	
Rhythm & Blues: From Jump Blues to Doo-Wop	Chapter 6	Assignment 2
Big Mama Thornton	Chapter 6	
James Brown and Aretha Franklin	Chapter 6	Midterm Exam
Country Music: Songs of Tradition and Change	Chapter 7	
Hank Williams	Chapter 7	Assignment 3
Rock 'n'roll : A Generation's Identity	Chapter 8	
Bob Dylan	Chapter 8	Quiz 2
Music: The Business	Chapter 9	Assignment 4
Music Technology: Innovation and Controversies	Chapter 10	
Hip-Hop: The “Rapper’s Delight”	Chapter 11	Final Paper
World Music Collaborations: Crossing Cultural Boundaries	Chapter 12	Final Exam