

American Studies 101: The music of 1971

MW, 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.
Anthropology and Art Practice Building 115

Dr. David H. Miller
Morrison Hall 226

Office hours: Mondays 12:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m., Tuesdays and 3:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m.,
or by appointment

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Course description:

The music of 1971 was uncommonly good and uncommonly inventive, and it was inextricably linked to the ups and downs of a turbulent period in American history. Marvin Gaye tackled drug abuse, environmental destruction, and the Vietnam War on *What's Going On*, often considered the greatest album of all time, while Sly and the Family Stone incorporated elements of the Black Power movement into their music. Carole King and Joni Mitchell told stories about love, sexuality, and (in)dependence in the modern world on *Tapestry* and *Blue*, two pinnacles of the singer-songwriter genre. In February, Aretha Franklin recorded one of the most iconic live albums ever in San Francisco (*Aretha Live at Fillmore West*); in April, Dolly Parton recorded her favorite original song ("Coat of Many Colors.") Miles Davis continued his quest to expand the boundaries of what jazz could be, while experimentalists Morton Feldman and Pauline Oliveros did the same for classical music. In this course we will become intimately familiar with all of this music and more, as we consider both what the music reveals about the United States in 1971 and why it reverberates so powerfully over a half-century later. Students will have the opportunity to pursue research projects on the music of their choosing, and specialized musical knowledge is not required.

Texts:

You are not required to purchase any texts for this course. Several excerpts from Thomas Borstelmann's *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* will be assigned over the course of the semester; you can pick up a used copy for less than \$10 or read online for free through the Berkeley library website (simply plug in the title to a UC Library search and click the "Available Online" link). Other readings will be available in the "Files" section of the course website, or online via the links posted below. Finally, audio and video recordings for the semester can be found on the course YouTube playlist:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCjLxVmAF7FaWpc1RHhCA8PjqOgkTgIRP>.

Course outline:

August 24: Introductions + course overview

- The Beach Boys—“Student Demonstration Time”
- Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young—“Ohio”
- Don McLean—“American Pie”

August 29–31: The greatest album ever?

- Marvin Gaye—*What's Going On*

September 7–21: Idealism and discontent

- George Harrison & Friends—*The Concert for Bangladesh*
- Gil-Scott Heron—“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”
- Edwin Starr—“Ball of Confusion (That’s What the World Is Today)”
- Cat Stevens—“Peace Train”
- Sly and the Family Stone—*There’s a Riot Goin’ On*

September 26: NO CLASS

September 28–October 5: Love, loss, and (in)dependence

- Carole King—*Tapestry*
- Joni Mitchell—*Blue*

October 10–12: Working-class manifestoes

- Loretta Lynn—“Coal Miner’s Daughter,” “One’s On the Way,” “The Pill”
- Dolly Parton—*Coat of Many Colors*

October 17–26: Modern spirituality

- Alice Coltrane—*Universal Consciousness*
- Pauline Oliveros—*Sonic Meditations*
- Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice—*Jesus Christ Superstar*

October 31–November 1: Fusions, part I

- Miles Davis—*Jack Johnson*

November 7–9: NO CLASS— I will be available for individual Zoom meetings to discuss paper topics during this week.

November 14: Max Jefferson guest lecture

November 16–21: Fusions, part II

- Janis Joplin—*Pearl*

November 28–30: Fusions, part III; or, Three nights in San Francisco

- Aretha Franklin—*Aretha Live at Fillmore West*

Course requirements and grading:

1. **Attendance, participation, and engagement: 25%** — See below for details of my attendance policy, and for a note on participation and engagement.
2. **Critical Writing Assignments (2): 20%** — Due *by the beginning of class* on Wednesday, September 21 and Wednesday, October 12
3. **Term paper prospectus and annotated bibliography: 10%** — Due by the end of the day on Wednesday, November 1
4. **First draft of term paper: 20%** — Due by the end of the day on Tuesday, November 22.
5. **Second draft of term paper: 25%** — Due by the end of the day on Wednesday, December 14

There will also be regular reading and listening assignments throughout the semester; see the end of this syllabus for full details. There are no exams or quizzes in this course.

Important dates and deadlines:

- Wednesday, August 24: First day of class
- Monday, September 5: NO CLASS (Labor Day)
- Wednesday, September 21: Critical Writing Assignment #1 due
- Monday, September 26: NO CLASS (Dr. Miller out of town)
- Wednesday, October 12: Critical Writing Assignment #2 due
- Monday, October 24 at 4:00 p.m.: *Jesus Christ Superstar* screening + dinner (optional)
- Wednesday, November 2: Term paper prospectus and annotated bibliography due
- Monday, November 7 and Wednesday, November 9: NO CLASS (Dr. Miller out of town) — *I will be available for individual Zoom meetings to discuss paper topics during this week.*
- Tuesday, November 22: First draft of term paper due
- Wednesday, December 14: Second draft of term paper due

Attendance, extension, and late work policies:

Each student is permitted 2 unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Further unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final grade. That being said, I tend to be generous with excused absences, especially when given advance notice. *If there is a legitimate reason you cannot attend class (including but not limited to illness, mental health challenges, family commitments, job interviews, and travel for work or sports), please let me know at least a few days in advance. I will very likely grant you an excused absence, and your grade will not suffer as a result.*

Along similar lines, *I am very happy to grant extensions when given appropriate notice.* If an extension of a day or two would make your life significantly easier (for example, if you have an exam in another class on the same day an assignment for our class is due), please do not hesitate to contact me. Assignments submitted late without an extension will result in a lowered grade, with assignments submitted more than a few days late resulting in a zero unless a prior arrangement has been made.

Participation and engagement:

It is crucial that all of us are fully present and engaged during our time together. As such, “participation and engagement” refers not only to participating in class discussions, but also to your general level of attention during class, your communication with me outside of class (e.g. emails, office hours, etc.), and your level of preparation with regards to the assigned reading and/or listening.

How to listen to music for this course:

This course will introduce you to a lot of great music, but you can’t get to know it if you don’t listen to it! Here are some tips for making the most out of your listening:

1. Strive to listen to each assigned album a minimum of three times, and on at least two different days.
2. Engage in “active” listening, setting aside time to listen without distractions. Follow along with the lyrics or score as appropriate to focus your listening.
3. While I generally recommend “active” listening, “passive” listening (that is, having the music on in the background) can also be helpful, so consider listening to the class playlist as you cook, exercise, or drive your car.

A note on writing, proofreading, and citations:

Please make every effort to ensure that your writing is clearly organized and free of typos. Before handing in any piece of writing, take a few moments to proofread what you have written. In addition, note that we will be using the Chicago Manual of Style in this course to format citations and references to musical works. For further details on this, please take a few moments to read “Music Writing Style Guide” (posted in the “Files” section of the course website) prior to completing your first writing assignment.

Technology policy:

Laptops and tablets are permitted in class, and you should plan to bring one of these devices with you to every class so that you can refer to the assigned readings. Please do your best to use your device only for this purpose and for note-taking during class.

Disability accommodations:

Students with disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to notify me so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. Further information is available from the Disabled Students’ Program website at <http://dsp.berkeley.edu>.

Academic misconduct and plagiarism:

Any instance of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct. According to the Berkeley Campus Code of Conduct, “Plagiarism includes use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source.” Furthermore, “All persons engaged in research at the University are responsible for adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in research. This statement is available at the website on official campus policies and procedures at <http://campuspol.chance.berkeley.edu/index.cfm>, under the keyword “plagiarism.”

Homework assignments:

A few things to note:

- Assignments are subject to change and probably *will* change during some weeks; I will notify you if that is the case, but otherwise you can assume that the assignments will follow what is listed here.
- Readings are listed in the order in which I recommend reading them.
- Readings without links are posted on bCourses, with the exception of the Borstelmann book (discussed in “Texts,” above).
- Album titles are italicized, song titles are in quotation marks; if an album is assigned for listening, be sure to listen to all of it! Album tracks appear as separate entries on the course YouTube playlist.

The greatest album ever?

August 29

Listen:

- Marvin Gaye—*What’s Going On*

Read:

- Thomas Borstelmann—Introduction (pp. 1–18), from *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*
- Tyina Steptoe—“Marvin Gaye’s ‘What’s Going On’ Is as Relevant Today as It Was in 1971” (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/marvin-gayes-whats-going-relevant-today-it-was-1971-180977750/>)

August 31

Listen:

- Marvin Gaye—*What’s Going On*

Read:

- Borstelmann—“The Environmentalist Challenge” (pp. 231–247), from *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*

Idealism and discontent

September 7

Listen:

- Plastic Ono Band—“Give Peace a Chance”
- John Lennon—“Imagine”
- Cat Stevens—“Peace Train”
- Edwin Starr—“Ball of Confusion (That’s What the World Is Today)”
- Gil-Scott Heron—“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”

Read:

- Marcus Baram—Essay on “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”
- Borstelmann—Chapter, 1 “Crosscurrents of Crisis in 1970s America” (pp. 19–72), from *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*

September 12

Listen:

- George Harrison & Friends—*The Concert for Bangladesh*—*Note that this album is the one bit of music this semester not found on the course YouTube playlist. I will share details on how to access it the prior to this class.*

Read:

- Mohammad Delwar Hossain and James Aucoin—“George Harrison and the Concert for Bangladesh: When Rock Music Forever Fused with Politics on a World Stage”

September 14

Listen:

- George Harrison & Friends—*The Concert for Bangladesh*

Read:

- Samantha Christiansen—“From “Help!” to “Helping out a Friend”: Imagining South Asia through the Beatles and the Concert for Bangladesh”—*Read pp. 132–134 and 140–146; the rest of the article is optional.*

September 19

Listen:

- Sly and the Family Stone—*There’s a Riot Goin’ On*

Read:

- Greil Marcus—“Sly Stone: The Myth of Staggerlee,” from *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock ‘n’ Roll Music*

September 21

Listen:

- Sly and the Family Stone—*There's a Riot Goin' On*

Read:

- Dave Simpson—“‘A nation’s fabric unravelling’: stars on Sly Stone’s *There’s a Riot Goin’ On* at 50” (<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/dec/02/a-nations-fabric-unravelling-stars-on-sly-stones-theres-a-riot-goin-on-at-50>)

Write:

- Critical Writing Assignment #1 due *by the beginning of class*.

Instructions for Critical Writing Assignment #1

So far this semester, we have listened to a lot of music that responds in different ways to the tumultuous historical moment that was the United States in 1971. Some of that music is idealistic and/or hopeful (e.g. “Imagine,” “Peace Train,” and certain tracks on *What’s Going On*), while some of it is critical and/or frustrated (e.g. “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” and *There’s a Riot Goin’ On*).

In 700–1000 words, choose one song that we have listened to and discuss how it responds to what was happening in the United States in 1971. Then, compare that song to a contemporary song (let’s say something released in the last 20 years or so) that relates to American society in a similar way, either in its expression of hope or in its expression of frustration. Incorporate citations of assigned readings as you see fit.

Love, loss, and (in)dependence

September 28

Listen:

- Carole King—*Tapestry*

Read:

- Borstelmann—Excerpt (pp. 73–96) from Chapter 2, “The Rising Tide of Equality and Democratic Reform,” from *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*
- Loren Glass—“Introduction: The Mother of Us All,” from *33 1/3: Tapestry*

October 3

Listen:

- Joni Mitchell—*Blue*

Read:

- *New York Times*—“50 Reasons to Love Joni Mitchell’s ‘Blue’” (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/06/20/arts/music/joni-mitchell-blue.html>)—
Note that Berkeley students get free access to the New York Times. For details, see: <https://grad.berkeley.edu/news/announcements/opportunities/access-the-new-york-times-and-wall-street-journal-for-free/>.

October 5

Listen:

- Joni Mitchell—*Blue*
- Carole King—*Tapestry*—*Just listen enough to refresh your memory, as we’ll be doing some comparing and contrasting of Mitchell and King’s albums today.*

Read:

- David H. Miller—“Celebrating—and Interrogating—Joni Mitchell’s Legacy as Her Masterpiece ‘Blue’ Turns 45” (<https://albumism.com/features/celebrating-and-interrogating-joni-mitchell-legacy-as-blue-turns-45>)

Working-class manifestoes

October 10

Listen:

- Loretta Lynn—“Coal Miner’s Daughter”
- Dolly Parton—“Coat of Many Colors” and “Here I Am”
- Dolly Parton and Sia—“Here I Am”—*Be sure to watch the video for this one!*

Read:

- Lydia Hamessley—Essay on “Coat of Many Colors”
- Stacy Morford—“How Dolly Parton’s Coat of Many Colors became an LGBTQ+ anthem” (<https://theconversation.com/how-dolly-partons-coat-of-many-colors-became-an-lgbtq-anthem-168226>)
- Tressie McMillan Cottom—“The Dolly Moment” (https://tressie.substack.com/p/the-dolly-moment?r=ewry&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&utm_source=copy)

October 12

Listen:

- Loretta Lynn—“One’s On the Way” and “The Pill”

Read:

- Mark Allan Jackson—“Stand Up to Your Man: The Working-Class Feminism of Loretta Lynn”

Write:

- Critical Writing Assignment #2 due *by the beginning of class.*

Instructions for Critical Writing Assignment #2

The last several weeks of our course have featured music by female artists that deals with love and relationships, often (though not always) from an implicitly or explicitly feminist perspective. In 700–1000 words, discuss one song from this part of the course (that is, a song we have listened to by either Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Dolly Parton, or Loretta Lynn). Make an argument for why your chosen song is evidence of changes between 1971 and today in the way that American society views romantic relationships, in particular the role of women in romantic relationships; alternatively, make an argument for why your chosen song is evidence of continuities between 1971 and today in the way that American society views these topics. Argue one side or the other, not both, and incorporate citations of assigned readings as you see fit.

Modern spirituality

October 17

Listen:

- Alice Coltrane—*Universal Consciousness*

Read:

- Borstelmann—“Religious Resurgence at Home” (pp. 247–258), from *The 1970s: A New Global History from Civil Rights to Economic Inequality*
- Coltrane—Liner notes to *Universal Consciousness*
- Britt Robson—“Universal Consciousness: The Spiritual Awakening of Alice Coltrane” (<https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2016/05/universal-consciousness>)

October 19

Read:

- Pauline Oliveros—“And Don’t Call Them ‘Lady’ Composers”
- Oliveros—“Introduction I” and “Introduction II,” from *Sonic Meditations*
- Kerry O’Brien—“Listening as Activism: The ‘Sonic Meditations’ of Pauline Oliveros” (<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/listening-as-activism-the-sonic-meditations-of-pauline-oliveros>)

Do:

- Find one of Oliveros’ *Sonic Meditations* (the text of which is posted on bCourses) that interests you and give it a try! Some are easier than others, and some require multiple people; if you’re doing this solo, I recommend trying “Native,” “One Word” (either version), “Tumbling Song,” “XIX,” or “Your Voice.” Come to class ready to discuss your experience.

October 24–26

Listen:

- Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice—*Jesus Christ Superstar*—*Since this is an especially long album, feel free to skip around a bit and not necessarily listen to the entire thing. Find some songs you like, and listen to songs mentioned in the Bial chapter as you see fit.*

Read:

- Henry Carl Bial—Chapter 6, “Jesus Christ, Broadway Star,” from *Playing God: The Bible on the Broadway Stage*—*Read pp. 141–157; the rest of the article, which focuses on Godspell (which also premiered in 1971!) and Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, is optional.*

Fusions, part I

October 31–November 2

Listen:

- Miles Davis—*Jack Johnson*

Read:

- Eric W. Jentsch—“Jack Johnson, the First Black Heavyweight Boxing Champion” (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-history/2022/02/22/jack-johnson-boxing-champion/>)
- Davis—Liner notes to *Jack Johnson* (<http://milestones-a-miles-davis-archive.tumblr.com/post/142405763483/milesdavis-jack-johnson-original-soundtrack-aka>)
- Dean Biron—“My favourite album: Miles Davis’s A Tribute to Jack Johnson” (<https://theconversation.com/my-favourite-album-miles-daviss-a-tribute-to-jack-johnson-85248>)

Term paper prospectus and annotated bibliography due by the end of the day on Wednesday, November 2.

Fusions, part II

November 16–21

Listen:

- Janis Joplin—*Pearl*

Read:

- Ana Leorne—“The Paradox of Janis Joplin’s *Pearl*” (<https://beatsperminute.com/the-paradox-of-janis-joplins-pearl/>)
- Marc Myers—“The Story Behind Janis Joplin’s ‘Mercedes Benz’” (<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-story-behind-janis-joplins-mercedes-benz-1436282817>)— *Note that Berkeley students get free access to the Wall Street Journal. For details, see: <https://grad.berkeley.edu/news/announcements/opportunities/access-the-new-york-times-and-wall-street-journal-for-free/>.*

First draft of term paper due by the end of the day on Tuesday, November 22.

Fusions, part III; or, Three nights in San Francisco

November 28–30

Listen:

- Aretha Franklin—*Aretha Live at Fillmore West*

Read:

- Michael Lydon—“Aretha Franklin at the Fillmore West,” from *Flashbacks: Eyewitness Accounts of the Rock Revolution, 1964–1974*

Second draft of term paper due by the end of the day on Wednesday, December 14.