

BLACK MUSIC/BLACK TEXTS	Instructor: J. G. Williams (jgwillia@ucsd.edu)
ETHN 176/ MUS 154/LTEN 187	Fall 2010
CPMC 127 Tuesday and Thursdays 2:00-3:20	

Office Hours **By Appointment:** Wednesdays from **12-4 PM** Location: Café Roma near Price Center

Description:

Black Music/Black Texts is a course designed to foster critical analysis of black music, film, and literature. African Mythological figure Esu Elegbara, widely known by his American ancestor and counterpoint, The Trickster, provides the hermeneutical, or interpretive lens, for our analysis of these signifyin (g) black texts. The central question of this course: How does black music, representations of black bodies in film, and black literature, become signifyin (g) or “speakerly” texts of racial resistance, gender, agency, and other constructions that impact our daily lives? Evaluating the semiotics of these key black texts, students will develop a deeper understanding of these black texts in their various manifestations. Students will gain knowledge of Cultural Studies, Critical Race Literary Theory, and New Musicology scholarship as those fields pertain to black musical texts.

Required Readings are posted at <http://reserves.ucsd.edu>. You can search either by course number or by my last name (Williams). Readings should be completed prior to the class session for which they are listed on the attached reading list. **ALL READINGS SHOULD BE READ BY THE FIRST CLASS OF EACH WEEK.**

Academic Integrity:

Please be aware that plagiarizing (or other forms of academic dishonesty) can result in an “F” for the course and can lead to further disciplinary action by the University. (For more information see the section entitled “UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship” in the UCSD General Catalogue.)

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requiring accommodations should discuss their needs with the Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD). After registering with the OSD, students should meet with the professor during office hours to discuss accommodations within the first week of class so that timely arrangements can be made. It is especially important that arrangements are made early because of the listening component of the exams.

Reflection Papers:

Reflection papers are due every Tuesday at the beginning of the period. Each student will submit ten reflections papers that are no less than 1page (double spaced, 12. Font) and no more that 1 page long. Reflection papers are opportunities for students to raise questions about the readings and to make connections between the readings. Students should incorporate at least two readings in each reflection paper. Make sure your full name and the reflection assignment number is written on top of the page. Reflection papers will only be accepted in class and should never be emailed or put in my mailbox.

Presentations:

All Student presentations will be held on Tuesdays and will cover all reading material assigned that week. Students will pick a topic from one of the ten weeks and are responsible for presenting and facilitating discussion during one class meeting. Groups will be assigned in class. Presentations should offer interpretations of the readings bringing ideas into conversation from different class meetings. Focusing on black texts, students should incorporate videos, images, music, sculpture, dance, etc.) in their presentations. Objects might reflect, complicate, interpret or interrogate the ideas raised in the reading ideally putting the object into conversation with the reading. Each student will be evaluated by their group participation in terms of how well they articulate the essential arguments of the reading assignments.

Analytical Papers (50 % of grade)

Each student will submit a total of two analytical papers. The first analytical 5-7-page paper will cover the first half of the quarter and equal 20% and the second 10-12-page paper will cover the second half of the quarter and equal 30% of the final grade. Analytical papers must be submitted at the beginning of lecture on the due date.

<u>Grading</u>	
• Reflection Papers	20%
• Analytical Paper #1	20 %
• Analytical Paper #2	30 %
• Presentations	20 %
• Attendance and Participation	10 %

September 23rd

Course Intro and Syllabus Review

Trickster in Black Culture

Week 1

September 28th

Introduction: "Slavery and the Circle of Culture"

by Sterling Stuckey from "Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America "

September 30th

"Introduction"

by George P. Rawick from "From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community"

"Master and Slave Resistance"

by George P. Rawick from "From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community"

The Trickster & Signifyin(g) Theory

Week 2

October 5th

The Signifying Monkey and the Language of Signifying; Rhetorical Difference and the Orders of Meaning

by Henry Louis Gates from The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism

October 7th

Figures of Signification

by Henry Louis Gates Jr. from The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism

(Recommended) A Myth of Origins: Esu Elegbara and the Signifying Monkey

by Henry Louis Gates Jr. from *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*
Presentation 1

Signifyin(g) Theory and The Power of Black Music

Week 3

October 12th

Introduction

by Samuel Floyd from *The Power of Black Music*

African-American Modernism, Signifyin (g) and Black Music

by Samuel Floyd from *The Power of Black Music*

Troping The Blues: From Spirituals to the Concert Hall

by Samuel Floyd from *The Power of Black Music*

October 14th

Music Language and Cultural Styles: Improvisation as Conversation

by Ingrid Monson from *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*

Semiotics of Tricksterism in Afrofuturist Texts

Week 4

October 19th

Of Aliens and Angels: Mythic Identity

by Graham Lock from *Blutopia: visions of the future and revisions of the past in the work of Sun Ra, Duke Ellington, and Anthony Braxton*

October 21

Mixedelic Universe

By Kodwo Eshun from *More Brilliant Than The Sun*

Presentation 3

The Trickster in Blues Women

Week 5

October 26th

Blues Criticism and the Signifying Trickster

by Ayana Smith from *Popular Music (2005) Volume 24, Cambridge University Press, pp. 179-191*

October 28th

I Used to Be Your Sweet Mama

by Angela Y. Davis from *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*

Preaching The Blues: Spirituality and Self-Consciousness

by Angela Y. Davis from *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*

Presentation 4

Analytical Paper 1 Due

The Trickster in Hip Hop

Week 6

November 2

Soul Sonic Forces: Technology, Orality and Black Cultural Practice in Rap Music

by Tricia Rose from *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*

November 4

Rap Music and the Politics of Black Cultural Expression

by Tricia Rose from *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*
Presentation 5

The Trickster in Representations of the Black Voice and Body

Week 7

November 9

Blackface Minstrelsy and Black Resistance

by Cedric Robinson from *Forgeries of memory and meaning: Blacks and the regimes of race in American theater and film before World War II*

(Veterans Day No Class) November 11

Feenin: Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular Music

by Alexander Weheliye from *Afrofuturism* / [guest edited and introduced by Alondra Nelson] *Social Text* 71

Afrocentricity and the Digital Public Sphere

by Anna Everett from *Afrofuturism* / [guest edited and introduced by Alondra Nelson] *Social Text* 71
Presentation 6

Week 8

November 16th

Techno? The Hidden History of Automation

By George Lipsitz from *Footsteps in the dark: the hidden histories of popular music*

November 18th

The Souls of Cyberfolk: Performativity, Virtual Embodiment, and Racial Histories

by Thomas Foster from *The Souls of Cyberfolk: Posthumanism as Vernacular Theory*
Presentation 7

Trickster and Hip Hop

Week 9

November 23rd

Critical Pedagogy Comes at Half Time: NAS as Black Public Intellectual
By Mark Lamont Hill from *Born To Use Mics: Reading Nas's Illmatic*

November 25th (Thanksgiving)

"Its Your's": Hip-Hop Worldviews In The Lyrics of NAS
By James Braxton Peterson from *Born To Use Mics: Reading Nas's Illmatic*

Presentation 8

The Trickster In AfroPop

Week 10

November 30th

African Message (1970-1974)

by Michael E. Veal from *Fela: The Life and Times of An African Musical Icon*

December 2nd (Last Class)

Dissident tunes: The Political Afrobeat

by Olaniyan, Tejumola from *Arrest the music! Fela and his rebel art and politics*

(Recommended) The Invention of African Rhythm

by Kofi Agawu, from *The Journal of the American Musicological Society (1995)*

Presentation 9 / Analytical Paper 2 Due