

## **Course Title: Me and My Playlist or If I Were A Beat**

### **Course Description**

Listening to music - what we listen to, where we listen, how we listen, who we listen with, and how we purchase and consume music - represents who we are, what is our past, and how we are moving toward the future. These choices are a reflection of how we want to live our life, what are our values are and dreams for the future. This has tremendous implications for the pursuit of Asian American identity and if one is so inclined, the pursuit of community.

In this class we will take the form of the **playlist** as the way that we guide our listening and how it provides us with a focused experience in reflection, whether or not we are listening intently or just “cruising”. We will reflect on our playlists by writing short commentary on why we made our choices and how we wish to share our listening. The culmination of the process will be a collection of our playlists and reflections into a sonic journal.

We will also to learn how to inform our reflections on music through engaging with the work of musicians and ethnomusicologists who reflect and interpret music-making by Asian Americans in the context of communities including the influence of the Asian American Consciousness Movement. A particular subfocus is looking at the influence of African American culture on Asian American music making.

### **Required Texts**

Wong, Deborah *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (Routledge 2004)  
Wang, Oliver *Legions of Boom: Filipino American Mobile DJ Crews in the San Francisco Bay Area* Duke University Press 2015  
Omatsu, Glenn and Louie, Steve ed. *Asian Americans: The Movement in the Moment* UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press 2001  
Thompson, Ahmir “Questlove” Greenman, Ben *Mo' Meta Blues: The World According to Questlove* Grand Central Publishing; 1st edition (June 18, 2013)

### **Guiding questions**

1. How do playlists provide insight into not only our listening habits but our individual and shared identities?
2. How can playlists or that matter listening in general be a vehicle for building relationships and community?
3. How will I pursue my own listening path beyond this course?

### **Course Objectives**

1. Students will reflect on their own and each other’s choices as a means to uncover/discover layers of individual and shared identity

2. Students will be exposed to examples of how Asian Americans use music to make communities and to form identities.
3. Students will learn how to program musical choices and create commentary to background said choices as a means to develop critical writing and research skills.

ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TYPED, PROOFREAD, AND POLISHED. I WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS.

### Grading breakdown

#### 30% Participation in class

**5% ATTENDANCE** is mandatory and tardiness is not permitted. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. However, emergencies happen. If you cannot attend class for an emergency, you **MUST** contact me. Absences do not excuse late assignments. **10% PARTICIPATION** is expected from each student and will be part of the final grade. No passive participation, everyone is expected to verbally and creatively contribute during each class session! Keep current on course changes, announcements, and emails. Be prepared to come to class having critically and closely read, watched, viewed, and listened to all course materials.

**15% CLASS ACTIVITIES** will consist of group projects, verbal presentations, debates, and other elements to pursue multiple ways of learning.

#### 50% WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

There will be seven two-page writing assignments:

Three audio (Spotify, I-tunes, Amazon Music) and one video (youtube)

ANNOTATED playlists. Each playlist will include:

- A list of ten songs
- 140 character explanation for each song of why you are choosing this song/track.
- A one page commentary addressing how the list relates to themes in the lectures, reading, and listening assignments.

Three response papers to listening assignments. Each paper should:

- Document your reaction to each track assigned
- Connect your reaction to the lectures and/readings

#### 20% CULMINATING PROJECT

Listening Portfolio: Write a 15 page essay weaving in your Audio and Video Playlists and addressing this prompt:

How do my listening choices:

- Express my identity?
- Reflect and impact my relationships?
- Shape my world and others'?
- Make my future?

**Course Outline (topics and guest speakers may change):**

Date	Topic/Readings/Listening Assignments	Activities	Assignments Due
Week 1	<p>What do I sound like right now?</p> <p>Themes:            Musical Style            Time periods            Personality            Cultural Sources            Attitude            Other associations: food, fashion, sports</p> <p>In class exercise in small groups            Large group briefing and discussion from small groups            Introduction to playlist assignment format, in class practice</p>	<p>In class exercise: Find a link for a song you want to share and write a tweet to go with the link and share within small group</p>	
Week 2	<p>The Act/Art of Listening            In this session we will reflect upon how we experience music individually and how this impacts us.</p> <p>Themes:            How does this song make me feel?            What thoughts go through my mind when listening?</p> <p>Sharing with partners the Audio Playlist #1            Large group briefing from sharing            Discussion of “listening and personal identity” referencing each other’s playlists and the readings.</p> <p>Readings:            Questlove: Chapter 1-7            Wong, D. Ch 14            Assignment Due: Audio Playlist #1: Build your personal 10 song playlist with 140 character statements for each song on the list</p>	<p>Sharing of Audio Playlist #1 in small groups</p>	<p>Audio Playlist #1 due</p>
Week	<p>Who do I listen with and where?</p>		

3	<p>In this unit we will examine instances of when we experience listening in a group.</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Who do we listen to music with in groups?</li><li>- Where we listen to the music?</li><li>- How we listen including whether it is live, from DJ's?</li><li>- If we think about it, what do observe about the experience?</li></ul> <p>Lecture and Small Group Discussion</p> <p>From this examination we will analyze the listening experience as a shared collective expression and connect our own experiences with those described in the readings.</p> <p>Readings Questlove MBB Ch 8-14 Wang LOB Prologue and Ch 1</p>		
Week 4	<p>To groove is human In this unit we will examine the impact and role of beats in our daily life.</p> <p>Themes:</p> <p>Physical reaction to music Movement and gesture as symbolic language.</p> <p>Readings Questlove MBB Ch 15-21 Wang LOB Ch 2-3</p>	<p>We will have a guest instructor (Lenora Lee, dancer choreographer ) who will facilitate a movement jam and in class writing exercise.</p>	<p>Video Playlist:</p>
Week 5	<p>Source of the flow – Roots Integration</p> <p>In this unit, we will experience and examine the “roots music” in homeland cultures as practiced by Asian American immigrant artists. These particular practitioners/culture bearers are also involved in hybrid collaborations with contemporary artists.</p> <p>Themes:</p> <p>Tradition Innovation Cultural Arts</p>		<p>Audio response paper #1</p>

	<p>Culture and Community</p> <p>Listening/Viewing Assignment:          Melody of China Shanghai Stories          Danny Kalanduyan Youtube clip          Melody Takata Work Sample video          Dohee Lee Youtube clip</p>		
<p>Week 6</p>	<p>The heart of the matter: romance and the blues</p> <p>This unit delves into the engagement of Japanese Americans with American popular music in the mid-20th Century, particular that music rooted in African American culture.</p> <p>Themes:</p> <p>Impact of African American musical culture          Do you know what love is? Romance and tragedy.          Swing music in America's concentration camps          Making Music and Making Community</p> <p>Readings          Billie Holiday Lady Sings The Blues          Yoshida, George Reminiscing in Swingtime</p>		
<p>Week 7</p>	<p>#BlackLivesMatter</p> <p>In this unit we will explore the role of music as social protest.</p> <p>Themes:          Why social protest?          Black Arts Movement          Asian American Movement          #BlackLivesMatter and Music</p> <p>Readings          Malcolm X, excerpt from Autobiography          Baraka, Amiri Black Music          Omatsu/Louie pp. 2 - 117</p> <p>Listening:          Billie Holiday Strange Fruit          Gil Scott Heron The Revolution Will Not Be Televised</p>		<p>Audio Playlist          #2: Pick songs          which express          the theme of          #blacklivesmatter</p>

	<p>Public Enemy: Fight the Power</p>		
<p>Week 8</p>	<p>Down with the community</p> <p>In this unit we will delve further into the Asian American movement and how Asian American musicians can be voices for change.</p> <p>Themes:          Asian American Identity and the Asian American Movement          Sound and Social Identity          Politics of representation</p> <p>Readings          Omatsu/Louie pp. 118 - 205          Wong, D. Musicians as Public Intellectuals pp 306 - 316</p>		
<p>Week 9</p>	<p>Issei Spirit</p> <p>We will experience the music of Glenn Horiuchi (1955-2000), a composer and Asian American Movement activist whose work emerged from the movement for Redress and Reparations for the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans.</p> <p>Themes:          Cultural trauma          Music as a healing force          Music and spirituality          Tradition and innovation</p> <p>Readings          Kajikawa, Loren "Issei Spirit: The Shamisen and Japanese American Identity in the Music of Glenn Horiuchi" 2006          Omatsu/Louie pp. 206-318</p> <p>Listening Assignment: Poston Sonata, by Glenn Horiuchi          Assignment due: Audio Response Paper #2 Write 100 word responses to each of the four movements of Poston Sonata</p>		<p>Audio Response Paper #2</p>
<p>Week 10</p>	<p>Sounding together</p> <p>Themes:          Message in the music          Agency of the musician          Narrative and hegemony</p>		

	<p>Readings        Ling, Amy, ed. Yellow Light: The Flowering of Asian American Arts Sections on Fred Ho pp 347 - 354, Jon Jang pp 339 – 346, Nobuko Miyamoto pp 324 - 333        Wong, D. Racializing the Rapping Body pp 180 – 189</p> <p>Listening Assignment: Elephant Tracks Hip Hop compilation CD by Asian Improv Records</p>		
<p>Week        11</p>	<p>Music Worlds</p> <p>Musical forms often exist within a social formation(s) that can be referred to a music world. These “music worlds” refer to a complex of social, cultural, and economic relationships that together are responsible for the continued existence and vitality of the art form. North American Taiko (Japanese drumming) and the music of the DJ mobile crews of Wang’s Legions of Boom both represent such social formations.</p> <p>Themes:        Who comes together to make the music possible?        What activities make it possible for the music to sustain itself?        How do relationships sustain music and how does music sustain relationships?</p> <p>Readings        Wong, D. Ch 9 Taiko in Asian America        Wang, LOB Ch 4-5 and Conclusion</p>		<p>Audio Response        Paper #3:        Elephant Tracks</p>
<p>Week        12</p>	<p>Breaking Down the Walls</p> <p>In this unit we will explore how the work of Asian American musicians is “silenced” by our society and how musicians and their communities resists this.</p> <p>Themes:        How does our society “silence” the contributions of Asian Americans, particularly in music?        What strategies do Asian Americans musicians pursue in resisting this “silencing”?        What is the role of the listener in this process of “silencing” or making “audible” the work of Asian American musicians?</p>		<p>Audio Playlist        #3: Theme –        Asian        Americans        Making Music</p>

	<p>Readings Fellesz, Kevin. "Silenced but Not Silent: Asian Americans and Jazz" Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America Duke University Press 2007</p>		
<p>Week 13</p>	<p>In this session we will discuss the role that listening can have in pursuing one's own development and the development of one's community.</p> <p>Themes: How has my listening changed as a result of this class? How do my playlists reflect my identity? How can my listening shape my future identity and community?</p>		
<p>Week 14</p>	<p>Writing Workshop</p>	<p>The class will break up into small groups and provide feedback to each other's drafts for final project</p>	<p>Draft of Final Paper</p>
<p>Week 15</p>	<p>All Day Music Listening session/Potluck/Sharing of culminating projects</p>		<p>Final Assignment Due</p>