Duke Ellington School of the Arts
Music Department
Course Syllabus and Outline

African-American Music History

Instructor: Steven M. Allen, DMA
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Period: 4
Room: 308

Text:
"By the Rivers of Babylon: The History of African American Music from Civil War to Civil Rights" – Steven M. Allen

DESCRIPTION
This course is designed to explore the historical depth, stylistic richness, and generic variety of African American music in the United States. It uses the methodological and analytic tools of musical anthropology and history to develop a socially and culturally grounded understanding of black music in America, past and present. Beginning with a broad consideration of black music as a modern cultural formation – that is, as a privileged expression of contemporary black culture in America – this course charts a historical course from the resonances of African music cultures under slavery, through nationalist and racist appropriations of black music in post-bellum America and the creative resistances and innovations under Jim Crow, to the complex matrix of African American sound, text, and local and global culture in the hip-hop era. Reading and listening closely and critically into black music history, we will explore connections between sacred and secular, popular and classical, and folk and commercial music, through many genres and styles, including: spirituals, blues, jazz and soul.

OBJECTIVES
• To present a general history of African American music and its emergent significance as a socio-cultural practice.
• To develop a deeper understanding of these musical traditions within the broader American and African American cultural landscape.
• To create an awareness of styles and forms that characterize major periods in African-American music history.
• To develop an understanding of how the music was and is performed through a study of the various performers, composers, and their practices and audiences.
Materials:
• Pencil
• Binder

Grading:
Weekly Assignments – 15%
Class Participation – 10%
Quizzes – 10%
Exams – 15%
Mid-term Project – 20%
Final Project – 30%

Unit I
I. Introduction:
   A. African Cultural Practices
      1. Dance, Drum, and Song
         a. Characteristics
            1. Call and Response
      2. Rhythmic Complexity
         a. Poly-rhythm
         b. Syncopation

II. The African Diaspora (1619-1730)
   A. Birth of the Spiritual
      1. Ring Shout Ritual
      2. Types of Spirituals
         a. Sorrow Songs
         b. Jubilees
         c. Double Entendre
         d. Work Songs
   B. The Blues
      1. Characteristics
         a. Trope/ Metaphor/ Similie
         b. The Signifying Monkey

Required Reading:


**Unit II**

III. Post-Slavery America (40 acres and the Blues)
   A. Ragtime
   B. Nationalism
   C. Concertized Spiritual
   D. The Black Church (Come Sunday)
      1. Hymnody
         a. The Colored Sacred Harp
      2. Religious Practices
         a. Lined-Out
         b. Shaped-Note
   E. Black Colleges
      1. Fraternity and Sorority Life

**Required Reading:**


Unit III

III. Harlem Renaissance
   A. Big Band Jazz
   B. Art-Songs
   C. Musical Theater

IV. The Birth of Gospel Music
   A. Male / Female Quartets
   B. Church Music
      1. Hymns and Anthems
      2. The Rural Church Experience
      3. Denominational Practices
      4. Regional Variants

Unit IV.

V. Rhythm and Blues
   A. 12-bar
      1. Rhyme and Meter
      2. Harmonic Progressions

VI. Bebop Jazz
   A. Freestyle / Form

VII. Struggle for Civil Rights (Move on Up a Little Higher)

Composers
Harry T. Burleigh
Florence Price
Scott Joplin
R. Nathaniel Dett
Harry Lawrence Freeman
William Grant Still
Margaret Bonds
W. C. Handy
Thomas Dorsey
Ulysses Kay
Hale Smith
William Dawson
Thomas Kerr
Duke Ellington
George Walker
Miles Davis
Charlie Parker
James Weldon and J. Rosman Johnson

Anthology
Troubled Water - Bonds
Sonata Eb - Price
Afro-American Symphony - Still
Ordering of Moses - Dett

Bibliography


1984.


