MU247 FALL 2016
HISTORY OF ROCK

MEETING TIME & PLACE: 12:15-1:20 p.m. MWF, 221 McCarthy Arts Center

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. William L. Ellis, 203 McCarthy Arts Center (office); contacts: wellis@smcvt.edu (email); 654-2993 (office), 901-288-3146 (cell)

COURSE: This course examines the historical, social, cultural, and musical forces that contributed to the emergence and subsequent development and impact of rock and roll as an enduring form of popular music. Students will come away with a firm understanding of historical trends, change, and innovation in rock, and they will be able to better identify and analyze rock music based on performer, genre, era, and influence. Lectures, videos, readings, presentations, guest speakers, and a comprehensive selection of several hundred songs will take the student from the birth of rock through the British Invasion and the psychedelic Sixties to punk, grunge, and more.

TEXT: Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, American Popular Music: The Rock Years (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). There are also eighteen supplementary readings posted online in Canvas. Reading assignments should be completed on the dates listed below. Note: Course items as outlined in the syllabus are subject to change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: This course meets the requirements for the Historical Studies LSC. To that end, learning outcomes for students in MU249 include:

1) The ability to think critically about rock as a musical, cultural, and historical experience, recognize its paradigms and pivotal moments, and be able to distinguish between artists, repertoire, genres, regional styles, and stylistic periods.

2) The ability to write critically about rock via presentations, threads, essays, and papers.

3) Familiarity with primary source materials in rock, including various readings, classic rock films, in-class and Internet talks with popular music figures, and historical recordings.

GRADE: Your grade will be a composite average of attendance (5%), participation including five discussion threads (10%) and prepared questions based on readings (5%), one small-group presentation (15%), ten quizzes (20%), a choice of two short term papers or one longer paper (15%), a midterm (15%), and a final exam (15%) though some upward consideration may be given for notable improvement in the final project and/or term paper. Further extra credit may be submitted pending my approval. Academic dishonesty in its myriad forms will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade.

Grading scale: A (100-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-88), B (87-83), B- (82-80), C (79-70), D (69-60, and F (59-0).

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required since most of what you will be expected to know is based on weekly lectures, readings, and listening. More than five absences over the course of the semester will result in a letter-grade drop.

THREAD: To receive full credit for thread participation, you should respond to both the initial prompt and at least two other student responses.

PAPER: You will be responsible for either two short term papers, approximately five-six pages each, or one longer paper at least ten pages in length (not including bibliography), due the day of the final exam. For the shorter papers: a) pick a local/regional rock-related artist and/or band and write about their sound and style making sure to incorporate where relevant historical perspectives and trends as presented
in class; b) write an in-depth analysis of a historically significant rock song per Starr/Waterman’s analysis of “Maybellene” as found in your textbook, pp. 71-75. For the longer paper, research a more comprehensive cultural, social, political, and/or musical issue through the historical lens of rock such as African American participation and innovation in 1950s rock and roll; technology and objectification in popular music; novelty, subversion, and iconoclastic behavior; gender and identity in rock; or music and protest. Consult either Turabian or the MLA Handbook for proper citation style. All topics must be approved by the professor.

PRESENTATIONS (peer assessed): 1) Working in small groups of 3-4 students, you will give a short (15-20 min.) presentation on a broader issue in rock, outlining a short history of its development, illustrating key artists/music, and addressing overall significance. Some example topics: development of amplification and guitar distortion; guitar innovations, e.g., the whammy bar and tapping; drug culture and rock scenes; rock in the ‘aughts.’

WORK OUTSIDE CLASS: Students are expected to devote a minimum of 10 hours per week on average to each 4-credit course during the 15-week semester. In traditional classroom-based courses, just over 3 of these hours (190-195 minutes) are spent in class. Consequently, that leaves 7 hours of effort per week for readings, deeper listening and viewing of musical examples, study for quizzes and exams, research and writing for term papers, and preparation for presentations.

FINAL EXAM DAY: 1-3:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 16, in MAC 134.

COURTESY: Participation and opinions are highly encouraged but please, no talking outside of topics relevant to the class. The same goes for the use of laptops (i.e., no gaming or chatting if you decide to use a computer to take notes). Also, please keep cell phones turned off during class.

QUESTIONABLE MATERIAL: Since this is a survey of the history of rock and roll, there will be times when content will include controversial, potentially offensive material. Any such examples will be kept to a minimum but may be necessary at times to illustrate certain points. Please see me if you are sensitive to such matters (any unwillingness to participate on such days will not reflect in your grade).

History of Rock & Roll – Class Outline:

Aug 29: Introductions + Syllabus
31: Rock and Roll: Toward a Definition

Sept 2: Roots of Rock, pt. 1 + Reading #1: Starr/Waterman 18-52 + Supp. 1
5: Roots of Rock, pt. 2
7: Roots of Rock, pt. 3 + Reading #2: Supp. 2, 3
9: Blackboard Jungle

12: Quiz 1 + Sun Records, pt. 1 + Reading #3: Starr/Waterman 53-91 + Supp. 4
14: Sun Records, pt. 2
16: Elvis Presley on Ed Sullivan + Reading #4: Supp. 5 + assign Thread 1

19: Quiz 2 + 1950s, pt. 1 + Reading #5: Supp. 6
21: 1950s, pt. 2
23: Chuck Berry in Rock, Rock, Rock!
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Quiz 3 + Early 1960s, pt. 1 + Reading #6: Starr/Waterman 92-106, 126-39</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Early 1960s, pt. 2 + Reading #7: Supp. 7</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Stax/Volt Revue + WattStax + Presentation 1</td>
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Oct
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<td>3</td>
<td>Quiz 4 + Bob Dylan + Reading #8: Starr/Waterman 106-10, 139-49 + Supp. 8</td>
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<td>Beach Boys</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>No Direction Home + assign Thread 2 + Presentation 2</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Making of Sergeant Pepper + Presentation 3</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Beatles + Reading #9: Starr/Waterman 110-22 + Supp. 9 + Quiz 5</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Rolling Stones + British Invasion + Presentation 4</td>
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24: British Invasion cont.
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<td>26</td>
<td>Quiz 6 + Garage Rock</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Rock in 1960s, pt. 1 + Reading #10: Supp. 10 + assign Thread 3 + Presentation 5</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Quiz 7 + Rock in 1960s, pt. 2 + Reading #11: Starr/Waterman 123-25, 149-66</td>
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<td>Monterey Pop Festival + Woodstock</td>
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<td>Gimme Shelter + Reading #12: Supp. 11 + Presentation 6</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1970s, pt. 2</td>
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<td>1970s, pt. 3 + Presentation 7</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Quiz 9 + Reading #14: Supp. 13</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>1970s, pt. 4 + assign Thread 4 + Presentation 8</td>
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<td>1970s, pt. 5</td>
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28: Punk: Attitude + Reading #15: Supp. 14 |
| 30  | Punk: Attitude, cont. |
| 2   | Quiz 10 + 1980s, pt. 1 + Reading #16: Starr/Waterman 231-67 + Supp. 15, 16 + Presentation 9 |

Dec
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<td>1990s, pt. 1 + Reading #17: Starr/Waterman 268-313 + Supp. 17, 18</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>1990s, pt. 2 + assign Thread 5 + Presentation 10</td>
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16: 1-3:30 p.m. **Final Exam + papers due**

**Supplementary Readings (posted on Canvas):**


**Select Bibliography**


Ford, Larry R. “Geographic Factors in the Origin, Evolution, and Diffusion of Rock and Roll Music.” In *The Sounds of People & Places: A Geography of American Folk and


