



## **MUSC 3101: MUSIC IN GLOBAL AMERICA**

Professor M. Agustina Checa

Spring 2020, Tuesdays and Thursdays 09.30 to 10.45 | 401 Whitehead Hall, Brooklyn College

Office Hours: by email appointment.

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### **Class Overview**

This course focuses on the transnational nature of American vernacular music. It addresses music as a social practice rich in its unique way of intersecting culture-making with individual and group identity. By listening to music and analyzing the practices surrounding it, this course frames music across complex social processes such as colonization, immigration and globalization. The notion of diaspora is a key idea in our class; it conveys the displacement and/or relocation of people and their cultural practices. Problems regarding the ways music travels and is transmitted and shared among individuals and communities frame our study of different folk and popular music diasporas. The survival, transformation, and hybridization of those musical practices in diverse U.S. ethnic and cultural communities will be analyzed through historical conflicts and different social processes. Among the explored diasporic movements (from Africa, Europe, Latin America and Asia, mostly), we examine several musical genres (gospel, blues, jazz, soca, bachata, calypso, klezmer, merengue, salsa, hip-hop, etc.) for the importance they hold within their communities and America, focusing mostly on their major representatives, transformation and their influence for other genres. The class discussions emphasize the role of music-making in community life and identity formation, and the interlocking dynamics shaping those processes across race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, and generation. In this course music is understood within its political complexities and its interactions with other major social and cultural institutions. Overall, this class surveys the ways that culture travels around the globe, and across time and throughout mass media, and nowadays over the internet mostly.

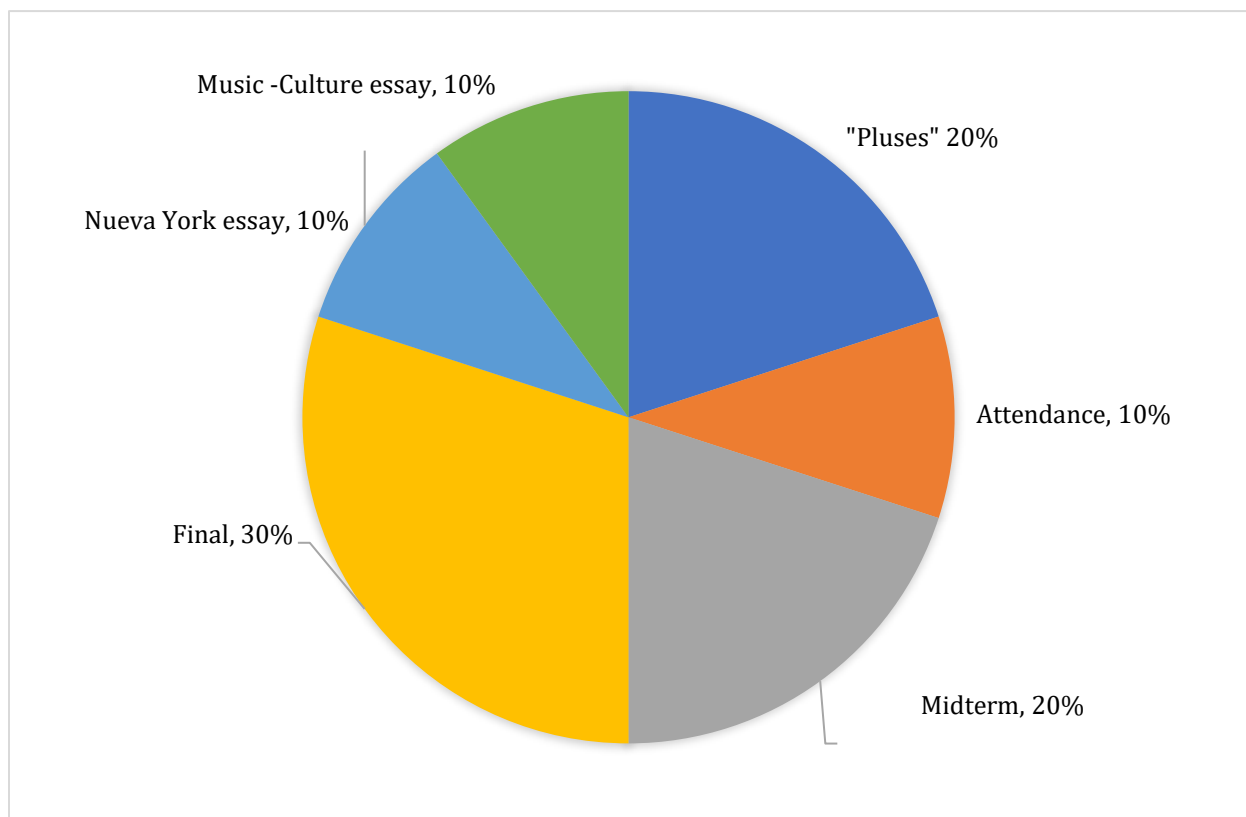
Music in Global America draws on the growing body of contemporary ethnomusicology and anthropological literature. Working close with the assigned readings and encouraging discussion on their strengths and weaknesses, this class invites students to reflect on how music mediates our reality. It also seeks to help students formulate and pursue new questions, learning skills to investigate possible answers. In this course, we make a commitment to engage in respectful dialogue, always being mindful of the complexities of our different viewpoints and the social and cultural processes at hand. Music in Global America invites you to embrace the transnational nature of the United States through the lens of its music.



### Learning Goals:

- 1) To critically understand the role of cultural practices in shaping identity formation and community bonding.
- 2) To recognize that, at the individual and community levels, music intersects with cultural, political and social institutions.
- 3) To examine the transmission, preservation and transformation of music as an expression of ever-changing human conditions, their conflicts, hierarchies, and struggles.
- 4) To get acquainted with different musical genres, drawing connections between sound structure, performance and socio/cultural organizations.
- 5) To develop a vocabulary that concerns music as a socio-cultural practice.
- 6) To apply concepts learned in this class to the examination of music and its intersection with other realms of the social life.
- 7) To embrace diversity in social and cultural realms through the world of Music in Global America.

### Course Requirements:





### **“Pluses” -> Class participation and reading notes: 20%**

Most of each class period will be devoted to discussion of the readings or individual and group activities about the readings. **It is vital that you are acquainted with the material beforehand in order to enrich discussion.** Participation in class is the best way in which I can evaluate your engagement with the readings. I encourage you to read critically but also to address how the materials do or do not relate to your own reality and diverse lived experiences. In addition to recognizing the strengths of the readings assigned, this class encourages you to challenge whatever aspects you may find problematic. **If speaking in public is not your preferred means for expressing your thoughts, you are required to hand in reading notes at the beginning of each class.** Reading notes are not notes that you take in class (!), but notes you took beforehand, while getting acquainted with the materials. These may be informal in style, (no essay formatting, citations, etc), and may be either typed or handwritten (please keep a copy for yourself!).

From a total of 25 available points you can work towards the following grades:

<b>A+</b>	<b>24 to 25</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>21 to 23</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>18 to 20</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>16 to 17</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>14 to 15</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>12 to 13</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>10 to 11</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>8 to 9</b>
<b>C-</b>	<b>6 to 7</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>4 or below</b>

### **Attendance: 10%**

It is your obligation to attend class in a timely manner. This percentage of grade dedicated to attendance is intended to: a) boost your grade, if you attend class regularly and on time or b) lower your grade, if you miss classes, you are often late or you are often disrupting (using your phone). Please note:

**-----Your grade will be lowered for missing class or for repetitive tardiness-----**

**----- You will immediately fail this class if you miss more than 7 classes-----**



**Two-page Music-Culture writing exercise: 10%**

After learning about Mark Slobin and Jeff Tilton's "Music-Culture" model (during the 1<sup>st</sup> Week) you will be asked to hand in a two-page writing assignment about a musical event of your choice. You may choose between a musical event that you attend in person (suggestions will be made during class) and one accessed virtually (via Youtube, for instance).

**DUE (TH) FEBRUARY 13<sup>TH</sup>**

**In-class Midterm exam: 20%**

Your Midterm exam asks: a) that you identify musical genres by listening to representative examples; b) that you historically trace and critically assess some of the musical genres, social processes and concepts covered in class; c) that you elaborate a short essay in order to provide in-depth information on a topic randomly assigned to you. You will be evaluated on your proficiency when providing critical explanations and your use of vocabulary while doing so.

**(T) MARCH 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Nueva York assignment: 10%**

As we go over Latin American diasporas you will be asked to listen to Tony Schwartz's: *Nueva York: A Tape Documentary of Puerto Rican New Yorkers* (1955), an audio-documentary that presents the culture and conflict surrounding the influx of Puerto Rican immigrants to New York City in the 1950s. The recording, and the theoretical lens through which you will be expected to analyze it (articles we will discuss in class), will be made available to you. You are expected to present a two-page long written assessment that conveys a reflexive interpretation of the audio-documentary.

**(TH) APRIL 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**\*\*\*If your performance in the above requirements weights a total of more than 88% (or the equivalent of an A-) you can choose to do a group research project instead of sitting for the final examination\*\*\***



## Are you skipping your final exam?

By Monday April 21st you must be on the A track:

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Have at least 14 “pluses”
- ☐ Accumulate an average of at least 88 between your:
  - Music-culture essay
  - Midterm exam
  - Nueva York assignment
- ☐ Have a good standing in matters of attendance (not missing classes or being often late)

**By completing this checklist you can *choose* to do skip the Final Examination and do instead a Final Group Project due Tuesday December 19<sup>th</sup>.**

### Final Group Project -> 3 Phases = 30%

If you (are eligible to) and **choose** to do a research project for the completion of this course, you will be teamed up in groups of 3 to 4 members. Together you must come up with a project that demands a critical and reflexive approach to a musical universe of your interest. When researching this particular project, you must provide relevant information regarding your choice of subject, historical background, cultural agents, elements of music-making or performance that interest you the most, important representatives, etc. More importantly, you are asked to find questions within this musical scene and provide a possible way of reaching answers (even if they remain unanswered by the completion of the project). You will also be evaluated on the resources that you consult for such investigation (articles read, documentaries watched) and on the way you present the results (you may use different formats, suggestions are welcome). Creativity and innovation will be much appreciated. You may use a subject that was already covered in class, but you will be expected to deepen your understanding of it by researching more sources. It will be completed in 3 instances:

- 1) Draft/Outline of group project (due **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup>**) → 5%
- 2) In class presentation of group project (**May 12-14**) → 10%
- 3) Final presentation, hand in of project (due **May 19<sup>TH</sup>**) → 15%



**If you do not meet the requirements of the “A track” (or meet them but still prefer to) you will sit for the:**

### **Final Examination: 30%**

This exam covers most of the material covered in our classes this semester and has a similar structure than that of the midterm exam (listening exercises, true/false questions, multiple choice and essay questions). You will be evaluated on your proficiency when providing critical explanations, your familiarity with different musical genres, and your use of specific vocabulary.

**(TH) DECEMBER 21<sup>TH</sup>**

**[This date is an estimate that is subject to change according to the department’s schedule of examination]**

### **Brooklyn College Integrity Policy:**

Academic dishonesty of any type, including cheating and plagiarism, is unacceptable at Brooklyn College. Cheating is misrepresentation in academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another person’s work, words, or ideas as your own. Students should consult the Brooklyn College Student Handbook for a fuller, more specific discussion of related academic integrity standards. **Academic dishonesty is punishable by failure of the “test, examination, term paper, or other assignment on which cheating occurred”** (Faculty Council, May 18, 1954). In addition, disciplinary proceedings in cases of academic dishonesty may result in penalties of admonition, warning, censure, disciplinary probation, restitution, suspension, expulsion, complaint to civil authorities, or ejection (Adopted by Policy Council, May 8, 1991).

**Late assignments policy:** assignments delivered past due date are subtracted 10% from their achieved grade. This policy excludes the final research project, where late delivery equals failure.

**Contacting Professor Checa:** You may contact me at the email address above this syllabus with questions about our class. Emails will be answered within 48 hours, but not after 9pm EST on any given night nor during weekends (Friday after 6 to Sunday) unless email subject reads URGENT. Please try to contact your peers first using Blackboard’s open FAQ thread in our Discussion Board. That space is there for student discussions and connections about the course and will not be strictly monitored by the Professor.

## MUSIC IN GLOBAL AMERICA CALENDAR – SPRING 2020

January	T 28	Introductions + presentation musical experience exercise
January	TH 30	Slobin + Titon “music culture” + bring musical experience (two copies)
February	T 04	Feld: “Sound as Symbolic System”
February	TH 06	Globalization: (choose your reading)
February	T 11	African Diaspora I: Southern - African Legacy
February	TH 13	African Diaspora I: Slave songs/ Spirituals + <b>Bring music culture exercise</b>
February	T 18	African Diaspora I: Martin - “The Musical Heritage of Slavery”
February	TH 25	Europe: Miller- “Irish Traditional Music in New York”
February	T 27	Group presentations: African American popular music
February	TH 25	Group presentations: African American popular music
March	T 03	Europe: Italian music, selections from Rotolla – “Amore”
March	TH 05	Europe: Balkan music + camp
March	T 10	<b>****MIDTERM EXAM ****</b>
March	TH 12	The Latin Tinge: Manuel – “The Caribbean Crucible”
March	T 17	Diasporic Realities: Sonic Color Line + Flores “Que assimilated brother”?
March	TH 19	Salsa, Reggaeton and Beyond
March	T 24	Dominican Republic: “el regreso de los cadenuces”
March	TH 26	Caribbean and West Indian diasporas in Brooklyn’s J’ouvert.
March	T 31	Multiculturalism. Diasporas from the Middle east.
April	W 01	<b>***Last day to withdraw from courses with a W grade ***</b>
April	TH 02	TBD – Guest teacher. <b>**** Nueva York essay DUE*** *</b>
April	T 07	<b>No class. BC follows Wednesday schedule.</b>
April	09-16	<b>No class. Spring Break.</b>
April	T 21	Gendered dynamics: Pacini-Hernandez, “Cantando la cama vacía”
April	TH 23	Gendered dynamics: Female agency in Popular music
April	T 28	Borders: Madrid, transnationalism. <b>Fun Quiz! + First Phase Research Proj.</b>
April	TH 30	Chinese American music: selections from Zheng – “Claiming diaspora”
May	T 05	Korean American Music: Jung – “Transnational Migrations, Youtube Sensations”
May	TH 07	Japanese-American music (choose your reading)
May	T 12	Presentations group Projects
May	TH 14	Presentations group Projects
May	T 19	<b>****SUBMISSION FINAL RESEARCH PROJECTS****</b>
May	TH 21	<b>***** FINAL EXAMINATION *****</b>

