

# MUS 8: MUSIC OF AMERICAN CULTURES

## Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	5
Hours:	4 lecture, 3 laboratory per week (84 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Not open to students with credit in MUS 8H.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

## Student Learning Outcomes

- A successful student will identify the key elements that shaped the historical context and assimilation experience of five broad constituent groups: Native Americans, European Americans, African Americans, Chicano/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans.
- A successful student will identify how various American music genres (e.g., spirituals, Urban Folk Revival, gospel, blues, jazz, Cajun, zydeco, Tejano, Salsa, hip-hop, rap, rock n' roll, and so forth) reflect the root music traditions of the constituent group and the historical context in which the genre developed.
- A successful student will define the following music genres (blues, jazz, gospel, Cajun, zydeco, Country music, Urban Folk Revival, Rock and Roll, Soul, Motown, Funk, Salsa, Reggae, Tejano, Banda, Hip-Hop and Rap) in terms of structural characteristics (rhythm, melody, harmony, texture, instrumentation and form).

## Description

A comparative and integrative study of American music, this course explores the music traditions and styles of Native Americans, European Americans, African Americans, Chicano/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans, from their historical roots to the present. It includes a wide variety of genres, such as folk, spirituals, gospel, soul, blues, jazz, Cajun, zydeco, salsa, Tejano, hip-hop, and rap. Students will look at these musical traditions from a technical and a cultural perspective as they develop listening and descriptive skills.

## Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge regarding the structural characteristics, stylistic categories, key musicians, and historical and social context of a variety of American music genres. This includes being able to:
  - a. Recall the key elements that shaped the historical and assimilation experience of five broad constituent groups: Native Americans, European Americans, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans.

- b. Identify how American music genres reflect the "root" music traditions of the constituent group and the historical context in which the genre developed.
  - c. Recognize American music genres in terms of their structural characteristics, stylistic categories, and key musicians.
2. Distinguish between American music genres by applying knowledge of structural characteristics, stylistic traits, and performance attributes.
  3. Discuss, with insight and understanding, social and personal implications of American music genres, such as how each ethnic group's musical traditions mirror the various patterns of that group's assimilation or isolation in relation to mainstream American culture.
  4. Demonstrate self-managed learning in a comprehensive journal, in which they reflect upon, evaluate, and describe their own learning process.

## Course Content

1. Preparing for the trip: Students acquire the tools to understand and remember what they will learn in this course
  - a. Learning how to learn: Key concepts about learning, including the cognitive basis of active learning, the role of transfer and memory in active learning, and how to learn "actively"
  - b. Music in multicultural America: Key concepts regarding ethnicity, race, and culture; acculturation and assimilation into American society; American multiculturalism and American music
  - c. Developing a basic music vocabulary: Categorizing music; music's structural characteristics (sound, rhythm, melody, harmony, instrumentation, texture, form)
2. The journeys begin: Introduces the five broad constituent groups that have been essential in shaping American culture: Native Americans, European Americans, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans, providing an overview of when and how these groups arrived here, the music traditions that they brought with them, and the initial ways in which these traditions were adapted to meet the needs of the new environment
  - a. Native Americans: Historical and social context; stylistic categories (music for powwows, sacred music, social consciousness music, Native American-influenced new-age music, contemporary Native American music); structural characteristics; key Native American musicians
  - b. European Americans: Historical and social context; stylistic categories (religious music, folk music of the early settlers, dance music, patriotic music); structural characteristics; key musicians
  - c. African Americans: Historical and social context (including slavery and challenges to retaining African culture); stylistic categories (work songs; calls, cries and hollers; spirituals); structural characteristics of traditional African music; key "roots" African American musicians
  - d. Hispanic/Latinos: Historical and social context (including pre-conquest and arrival of the Europeans, the colonial period, the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican American War, and the first Mexican-Americans); stylistic categories (indigenous music, mestizo music traditions, including sones, mariachi, canciones, and corridos); structural characteristics; key musicians
  - e. Asian Americans: Historical and social context (including issues in discussion of Asian Americans, the three periods of Asian immigration, current Asian communities in the United States, the development of an Asian American music tradition); stylistic categories (focus on Chinese with both traditional and post

- cultural-revolution Beijing opera, Cantopop, Mandopop, Chinese rock 'n' roll); structural characteristics; key musicians
3. Encounters at the crossroads: Although music traditions had been hybridizing due to contact between ethnic groups from the earliest years in America, changes accelerated after the Civil War. This section explores some of the most important and influential musics that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries due to this interaction
    - a. The Blues: Historical and social context (origins to 1900, spread of the blues from 1900-1920, expansion of blues styles); stylistic categories (country/rural blues, city/classic blues, piano blues, urban/modern/contemporary blues, rhythm 'n' blues, British blues); structural characteristics (including 12-bar blues form); key musicians
    - b. Jazz: Historical and social context (precursors, the "birth" of jazz in New Orleans, migration out of New Orleans, evolution of stylistic categories); stylistic categories (ragtime, New Orleans style and Dixieland, swing, bebop, cool jazz, Brazilian jazz and bossa nova, hard bop, soul jazz, Afro-Cuban and Latin jazz, fusion, smooth jazz); structural characteristics (including "swing"); key musicians
    - c. Gospel: Historical and social context (foundations in slave traditions, "birth" of gospel in 1930s and 40s, recording and popularizing of gospel); stylistic categories (traditional gospel, southern gospel, contemporary urban gospel, white gospel); key musicians
    - d. Cajun and zydeco: Historical and social context (Acadian migration, Cajun and Creole music roots and development in the early 20th century, first recordings, zydeco as a hybridization of Cajun and African-American traditions); stylistic categories (Cajun, zydeco, swamp pop); structural characteristics; key musicians
    - e. Country music: Historical and social context (1920s and "birth" of country music, emergence of country western, creation of Nashville sound, the impact of television, country music's inherent traditionalism); stylistic categories (old-time/traditional, cowboy songs, bluegrass, honky tonk, Western swing, Nashville sound and country pop, Bakersfield and Texas sound, contemporary country, alternative country); structural characteristics; key musicians
    - f. Urban folk revival: Historical and social context (foundations, early developments in the 1940s-50s, the 1960s and the Civil Rights movement, end of the revival); stylistic categories (singer/songwriter and folksinging ensemble); key musicians
  4. Excursions in new directions: Demographics in the United States changed drastically after World War II. The egalitarian political climate that was created by the 1960s Civil Rights movement also led to more cultural interaction between ethnic and racial groups. Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1965 abolished discriminatory national origins quotas, leading to substantial increases in Asian and Hispanic immigrants. With refinements of recording technology and the rapid growth of the music industry, the sharing of different musical styles was accelerated. This section explores some of the new genres of American music that developed in this radically changed context
    - a. Rock 'n' roll: Historical and social context (changes in American society in the 1940s and 50s, the "birth" of rock 'n' roll, conflicting reactions to rock 'n' roll, status at the end of the 1950s); stylistic categories (rockabilly, doo-wop, folk rock, acid and psychedelic rock, metal, punk, grunge and post-rock); structural characteristics; key "roots of rock" musicians
    - b. Motown, soul, and funk: Historical and social context (African-American fight for civil rights, development of "Black Pride," Motown's goals of developing crossover music, funk as an expression of African American identity); structural characteristics; key musicians
    - c. Caribbean and salsa: Historical and social context (the historical factors that shaped "The Caribbean;" focus on Puerto Rico's conquest, colonial period, and acquisition as an American territory; migration to the mainland and assimilation issues in the 1960s); structural categories (son, danza, plena, bomba, the development of salsa, reggae, ragga, merengue, cumbia, rumba, conga, mambo); structural characteristics; key musicians
    - d. Contemporary Mexican American music: Historical and social context (including immigration and identity issues throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries); stylistic categories (Norteño and conjunto, Tex-Mex, Tejano, rock español, banda, nortec); structural characteristics; key musicians
    - e. Hip-hop and rap: Historical and social context (roots of rap in African and African American traditions, the context for the rise of popularity in rap, how hip-hop and rap became more mainstream); stylistic categories (old-school, turntablist/DJ, independent or underground rap, hardcore/gangsta rap, pop rap, East Coast rap, West Coast rap, bass and Southern hip-hop, women rappers, rap and other racial/ethnic groups); structural characteristics; key musicians

## Lab Content

Topic-level laboratory worksheets for students to practice and apply theoretical knowledge regarding each topic area's structural characteristics (rhythm, melody, form, instrumentation, and harmony), stylistic categories, and key musicians to examples of music. Students assessed through their answers to the questions on the worksheets. A sample of the Part 2/Topic 1 (Native American) and Part 2/Topic 3 (African American) music listening examples illustrate quantity and quality.

Representative listening examples for Part 2/Topic 1: Native American Music:

1. Old Style Native American Peyote Songs (Antonio Woody)
2. My Country 'tis of Thy People You're Dying (Buffy Sainte Marie)
3. Plight of the Redman (Original XIT)
4. Closer to Far Away (Douglas Spotted Eagle)
5. Homage to the Ancient Ones (R. Carlos Nakai)
6. A Song for My People (R. Carlos Nakai with William Eaton, Nawang Khechog, and Will Clipman)
7. Stomp Dance: Unity (Robbie Robertson)
8. Spanish Renaissance Lute Gagliarde (Andrei Krylov) and Hark, All Ye Lovely Saints (The Tallis Scholars) - to contrast European and Native American aesthetics
9. The Original 2 Step (Chase Manhattan)
10. Geronimo's Cadillac (Bill Miller)
11. Native Wisdom (Native Flutes and Drums with Nature/Native American Flute)

Representative listening examples for Part 2/Topic 3: Roots of African-American Music:

1. Ghana - African Drums Conga Drums and Bongos (African Drums Music)

2. Nation (Recorded by Barbara Pilgrim)
3. Amen/Siakudumisa (James Abbingtion)
4. African Dances Djembe (African Drums Music)
5. Rosie (Prison Song recorded by Alan Lomax)
6. Follow the Drinking Gourd (Kim and Reggie Harris)
7. Swing Low, Chariot (Sister O.M. Terrell)
8. Steal Away (Fisk Jubilee Singers)
9. Wade in the Water (Ella Jenkins)
10. Midnight Special (Leadbelly)
11. Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child (Paul Robeson)
12. Our Roots Began in Africa (Pharoah Sanders)

## Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Classroom with piano, computer, and audio/video equipment.
2. Access to comprehensive digital music library for representative listening examples.
3. When taught via Foothill Global Access: ongoing access to computer with email software and capabilities, email address.

## Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

The student will demonstrate detailed knowledge regarding the structural characteristics, stylistic categories, key musicians, and historical and social context of a variety of American music genres, in module/chapter-level quizzes and a comprehensive examination

The student will demonstrate proficiency in distinguishing between American music genres by applying knowledge of structural characteristics, stylistic traits, and performance attributes through completion of topic-level laboratory worksheets

The student will demonstrate proficiency in discussing, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of American music genres by thoughtful, substantive participation in on-campus and/or online discussions in response to topic-level content prompts

The student will demonstrate self-managed learning in a comprehensive journal, in which they reflect upon, evaluate, and describe their own learning process by writing two reflections on each topic area: a pre-reflection that includes what the student already knows about the topic and a post-reflection in which students summarize what they learned and want to remember, clarify, or pursue in more depth

## Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

The student will listen (on-campus) or read (online) lecture information  
The student will listen to representative examples of music that illustrate concepts related to the historical/social context, stylistic categories, structural characteristics, and important composers for the varied topic areas

The student will participate in discussion (on-campus and/or online)  
The student will complete laboratory worksheets that provide additional information, as well as ask application questions correlated with listening examples

The student will learn from feedback on quizzes, examinations, discussion postings, and comprehensive journal writing delivered via email or Canvas

## Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Barkley, Elizabeth. *Crossroads: The Music of American Cultures*. 2018.

Although its publication year is older than five years, this digital textbook includes robust listening labs that are updated throughout the year. It is a fully integrated digital learning environment.

## Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Reading assignments: One textbook chapter for each of the topics (e.g., Part 1, Chapter 1: Learning How to Learn; Chapter 2: Music in Multicultural America; Chapter 3: Developing a Basic Music Vocabulary).
2. Writing assignments: Comprehensive journal, in which students first reflect upon what they already know about the topic, and then after they have completed all the learning activities associated with that topic, summarize what they have learned, what they need to clarify, and what they wish to pursue in more depth.
3. Participation in formal threaded discussion, that includes written responses to prompts for each topic.
  - a. Example, for Native American music: The controversial Native American Music Grammy Award was recently eliminated. Do you think the issues regarding tradition and innovation that were at the base of the controversy affect all musicians? Why or why not? In what ways are you innovative in your own life? In what ways do you adhere to tradition?
  - b. Example, for roots of African music: Traditional West African music performance is very different from European music performance practice. Compare the idea of "masterpiece" with "master" improvisation. What skills do you think are important for each one? If you had to choose between becoming a renowned composer/songwriter or a renowned improvisator/performer, which one would you choose and why?
  - c. Discussion postings are assessed on the following criteria:
    - i. Appropriateness: Did the student "answer" the question and address all components of the question?
    - ii. Thoughtfulness and accuracy: Does the posting include correct information and demonstrate that the student is thinking about and understanding the material?
    - iii. Overall organization: Does the student's posting form a coherent paragraph with main statements, support statements, conclusion, and so forth?
    - iv. "ESWE" (edited standard written English): Does the student's posting contain correct grammar and spelling?

## Discipline(s)

Music