

NCLC 275 001

Beats, Rhyme, and Culture

FALL 2003

Professor: Andrew J. Ryan

Office Hours: ENT 4th Floor Conference Room, Monday 6.00 to 7.00 PM or by appointment

Meeting Times: Innovation Hall 336, Monday 7.20 to 10.00PM

Course Web-site: http://classweb.gmu.edu/ajryan/nclc275_f03

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Course Description and goals: BEATS, RHYME AND CULTURE will examine the history of Hip-hop and the effect it has had on our society. The primary focus of this four-credit course is to engage Hip-hop not as a mode of entertainment, but as a medium of communication which impacts, represents, and misrepresents the life experiences of youth (especially inner-city youth) in the United States. The historical, socio-economic, and musical/aesthetic contexts from which Hip-hop emerged will be analyzed. Distinct themes and phenomena that define Hip-hop will be presented and discussed as well. The goal of this course is to have you critically think, write, and discuss the origins, themes, and direction of Hip-hop in the context of contemporary American culture and abroad.

Grading Policy:

- . Experiential Learning 25%
- . Response Papers (3 - 5/10/10) 25%
- . Weekly Online Quizzes (2 pts each) 20%
- . Final Project (group or individual) 20%
- . Group Discussion 10%

Much of what we do in class is interactive and depends upon your regular attendance and enthusiastic participation. Your being absent not only diminishes your learning, but it keeps the class from benefiting from your experiences and ideas. Arriving late, leaving early, and being absent will hurt your participation grade.

Late work will not be accepted. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due, via e-mail <ajryan@gmu.edu>, at the beginning of class. Any exceptions are permissible, but require **prior permission of instructor.**

Mid-term grades will be tabulated as of Fall 2001. GMU has instituted a new policy requiring all 100 and 200 level classes to submit mid-term grade reports. These reports will be available during the eighth week of class.

Final grades will be calculated using the University grading system. **No curve** will be used -- this is to your advantage!

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any project or paper suspected not be the original work of the author will be forwarded to the **George Mason University Honor Council**. When in doubt, please consult me *before* handing your work in.

Required Texts:

- Forman, Murray. The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-hop. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002.
- George, Nelson. Hip-Hop America. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Rose, Tricia. Black Noise. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

Recommended Text:

- Light, Alan, ed. The Vibe History of Hip-Hop. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999.

[There will also be handouts and on-line readings.]

Experiential Learning: This course has a **required** [experiential learning](#) component, for which you and your group members will assess some aspect of Hip-hop culture. You will be required to attend 4 events, each involving a different aspect of Hip-hop, and record your findings. You must complete the EL component of this course to receive credit for the class.

Participation: You will be assigned to groups and are expected to work with group members on group projects and to help each other as you are learning. If a student does not actively participate in the group projects, that student's individual project grade may be downgraded accordingly. You will evaluate each other's group performance at the end of the semester. Participation in in-class and electronic class discussion is included in your participation grade. You are expected to come to class having read the material for the class and have ready any course work due for that class.

Quizzes: In reinforcing the aforementioned category, online quizzes will be given 10 times throughout the year. These quizzes will be 5-8 questions, multiple choice. Depending on the first few weeks, I reserve the right to time the quiz, but for now it is not timed and open book. The questions will be drawn at random and each person may only take the quiz once. I will track login's via your login and each login will generate a count in the database (my Computer Science degree peaking through). This is not meant to be tedious, I am open to feedback here.

About Group Work: During the course of the semester, you will be required to work in groups. In the past, this has been a very rewarding experience for students. However, there have been occasions where inequity in workload has been a problem. You are encouraged to write a group contract, to be signed by all members, which outlines the penalties involved for not fulfilling group duties. At the end of the project, I will collect these contracts and incorporate them into the final grade for the project. I will hold the group responsible for resolving any issues that may arise throughout the semester. As a last resort, I will mediate in the matter, **if** all group members agree to abide by my decision.



TML Breakers family photo, circa 1983