

NCLC 275 – 007 Beats, Rhyme, and Culture: Trends in Black Musical Expression (Spring 2003)

Professor: Andrew J. Ryan

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

Meeting Times: Enterprise 279, Monday 7.20 to 10.00PM

Teacher's Assistant: Drew Huttner <nhuttner@gmu.edu>

Course Web-site: http://classweb.gmu.edu/ajryan/nclc275_s03

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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 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 (2 - 5/10) 15%
- . Mid-term Examination 25%
- . Final Paper 25%
- . Participation/Quiz(es) 10%

Attendance will be taken (or at least witnessed) at the **beginning** of every class. 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 may cause your final grade to be lowered.

Late work will not be accepted. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due, via e-mail <nhuttner@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:

- *Hip Hop America* Nelson George
- *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture* William E. Perkins (ed.)
- *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* Tricia Rose (ed.)

Optional Text:

- *Vibe History of Hip-hop* Alan Light (ed.)

[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 the weekend **trip to New York** or **accumulate 10 points** by attending pre-approved events listed on the web-site.

Participation: You will be assigned to groups and are expected to work with group members on group projects and 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. I reserve the right to use quizzes to judge the efficacy of your efforts in the course as it pertains to weekly reading assignments.

I feel no obligation to accept or respond to work turned in late. Quality of work, not just completing it, determines the grade you earn.

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.