

NCLC 375 001-- SPRING 2004 BLACK VOICES IN HIP-HOP: THE FIRST 10 YEARS OF HIP-HOP CULTURE

Professor: Andrew J. Ryan

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

Meeting Times: Enterprise Hall Room 275, Tuesday 7.20 to 10.00PM

Course Web-site: http://classweb.gmu.edu/ajryan/nclc375_s04

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Course Description and goals: *Black Voices in Hip-hop* will examine the first ten years (1968-1978) of the movement which has become known as Hip-hop culture. While rap music has become the dominant aspect of Hip-hop culture, it was graffiti and breakdancing which provided the foundation. Both of these areas will be examined, not only for their entertainment value, but for their contribution to the struggle for equality and recognition for the underprivileged minorities (despite the title of the course, contributions from other groups, especially Hispanic Americans will also be covered) whose collective voice had otherwise been muted and buried in the impoverished neighborhoods of urban America. Specifically, the grassroots movement which took place in the South Bronx as a direct response to the lack of political power and overt alienation of the working/underclass of the Bronx will be scrutinized. Issues such as urban education, urban housing, political activism (as well as the governments response), media coverage, Black film, Black literature, and television will be covered. By the end of this course, students will be able to view the early years of Hip-hop not only for its entertainment value, but in context with the political, social, and even global events which affected its maturation.

Grading Policy:

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| • Response Papers (3 - 10/10/15) | 35% |
| • On-line discussion | 20% |
| • Field Project | 20% |
| • Class Participation | 15% |
| • Class 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**.

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 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:

- Fricke, Jim and Charlie Ahearn. *Yes Yes Y'all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip-hop's First Decade*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2002.
- Austin, Joe. *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Recommended Text:

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

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

Experiential Learning: This course has a **required [experiential learning](#)** component. To satisfy this requirement, you will be asked to spend 45 hours performing activities related to this class. Many of these hours will be subsumed by the research needed to actively participate in on-line discussions. However, your writing assignments will also require collaboration which takes place outside of the classroom. All assignments will explicitly detail the requirements needed to fulfill the experiential learning component (points) offered.

Online Participation: This course will make substantial use of the Internet to allow students the opportunity learn at their own pace and share their experiences with class mates. Online discussions will focus on assigned readings, selected movies/documentaries, or music. Two weeks prior notice will be given for students to view material prior to the discussion. Guidelines for online participation will be passed out by Week 3. **On-line Class Dates: Feb 17, March 2, March 23, April 20**

Class Participation: Participation in class is not measured by attendance. Rather, students will be responsible for prior readings and scholarly contribution to in class discussions. There is a separate grade for online discussion. If you are morbidly afraid of talking in public forums, this class is your chance to overcome that phobia.

In Class Discussion: Each group will be required to do a 45 minute presentation on an agreed upon subject during class. This involves educating the class on the topic, facilitating discussion, and assigning any pre-reading. There will be 5 presentations spread across the last 5 in class meetings.

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. If no contract is drawn up, the group grade will be distributed equally among all members.



Art by Kolongi Gallery via www.art.com

(PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED IN THE CLASS . . .)