

Syllabus

Course Information

Course title: **Musics of the African Diaspora**

Course number: MUHL4300/MUHL5320

Course discipline: Music

Course description: **MUHL4300/MUHL5320 Musics of the African Diaspora** (UG and grad sections meeting concurrently) is a one-semester, topics-oriented historical survey of the history, styles, dissemination, and cultures of music in the African Diaspora, including Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas. We will pay particular attention to cross-cultural influences, the interaction of tradition and improvisation and of pedagogy and transmission, and the impact of the African Diaspora on music and culture worldwide.

Computer access: Since this course relies heavily on web-based activities, particularly for the delivery of additional multi-media (viewing and listening) material, it is essential that students gain access to a reliable computer with Internet capabilities. If your computer is slow, doesn't support media applications, or if your Internet connection is prone to busy signals or disconnects, please schedule your day so that you can use a computer in the library. Technical problems do arise, but do yourself a favor and get acquainted with a good computer.

Please note: *you the student* are responsible for identifying, articulating, and seeking solutions for any computer problems you may encounter; most commonly, you can do this via the Academic Teaching and Learning Center, in the basement of the Main Library.

Location: M248

Meeting day(s): TR

Meeting time(s): 12:30-1:50

Prerequisite(s): MUHL2301/2302/2303 or equivalent; permission of instructor

Instructor Information

Name: Dr Christopher Smith

Email: For MUHL4300/5320 issues, please use WebCT email (see "Communications - Mail" in the left menu)

Office location: M203

Office hours: By appointment

Phone: 806/742-2270 x249

Biography: Find a Chris Smith [Biography](#)

Teaching assistants: N/A

Course Goals

- Course goals:
- Develop familiarity with a range of African Diasporic genres, from the great African kingdoms of the 16th century, through the slave trade/Middle Passage, the foundation of syncretic music cultures in the Caribbean and South/Central America, the impact of African Diasporic musics in North America, and finally the return of these musical influences to Africa.
 - Develop expertise in recognizing, analyzing, and comparing Diasporic genres, with an awareness of the significance of cultural contexts, improvisation, orality, and pedagogy in these traditions.

Outcomes and Assessments

Outcomes and Assessments: What you will be expected to learn and to do

: *Upon completion of this course, students should have the following skills:*

1. You should have a framework for looking at the histories, genres, artists, and functions of music in the African Diaspora, and tools for recognizing these idioms and their cultural roles.
2. You will be able to summarize the major African Diasporic musical traditions and idioms, be able to distinguish them from one another, and show how individual styles reflect specific cultural and historical contexts.
3. You will be expected throughout the term to be able to summarize the texts we study, up to a reasonable level of proficiency, and to speak comparatively and analytically about each. You should also be able to identify genres, pieces, and other important names and terms we encounter as they are referenced in these texts, to summarize the cultural concerns of those traditions, and to show ways in which specific historical/musical situations reflect these concerns
4. You will be expected to be able to relate dispersal and style to patterns in social, political, and cultural history.
5. You will be expected to be familiar with some basic tools for analyzing (i.e., taking apart and describing) performances in these idioms. This would certainly include, but would not be limited to: musical and textual transcription, historical and primary source readings, various approaches to “framing” and interpreting both visual and sonic elements of performances,

specifics of performance practice, and methods for relating social behavior to musical behavior. Much of our analysis will need to accommodate terminology and ways of hearing indigenous to the various musical cultures. The use of Western notation and terminology, which are alien to most of these musics, will often be de-emphasized.

Textbooks

Required reading: *African Rhythm, African Sensibility:* , John Miller Chernoff, University of Chicago, 1981, 0226103455

Required reading: *Course Readings, MUHL4300/MUHL5320*, Christopher Smith, ed., Available at Copy-Tech, 2007

Course Requirements

Introduction: This course will include lecture, listening, discussion, extensive readings, a mid-term essay exam, and a semester-long research project culminating in a formal research presentation.

Requirements: **Reading and listening**
For each class meeting, one or more readings and one or more recordings will be assigned. Readings will be found in the Chernoff text, in the Course Readings packet, or via online sources; listening material will available other via online sources or as additional listening available as mp3 files via this WebCT site. It will be essential that students complete the reading and listening assignments *prior* to the meeting in which they will be discussed.

Examinations

Both mid-term and final examinations will be administered as qualifying-exam style essay tests. Prior to the test date, a list of 8-10 essay topics to be prepared will be distributed. On the test day, a subset of these topics will be distributed to students, who will then select 3-5 topics from that sub-set upon which to write essays. Essays will be expected to refer to readings, listening, and in-class discussion.

Additional single-essay tests may be assigned over the course of the semester, at the discretion of the instructor, and will be expected to refer to readings, listening, and in-class discussion.

The Mid-Term examination is scheduled for Tuesday March 4, during the regular class meeting time.

Prior to the final exam, which will focus on both lecture and listening materials, a list of readings and essay topics to be prepared will be distributed. On the test day, students will be expected to write short

essays addressing selected topics.

The Final Exam is scheduled for Thursday May 11:30-4:00 p.m.

The Blog

This course will make use of a shared class journal (e.g., a Weblog or “blog”), maintained online at <http://muhl5320-afr.blogspot.com>. The course blog will be employed for a variety of purposes: for example, you will be provided guidelines and "seed questions" to prompt your own personal responses to the material, perspectives, and insights gleaned during the semester. Additional points will be assigned on the basis of number of entries, quality of data and expression, and range of integrated ideas.

Research project:

Over the course of the semester, each student will develop a thesis, construct a bibliography, create a detailed outline, and finally write a reading text on a research topic in the world of African Diasporic musics. Each student will share this research with the class in two ways:

(a) via construction and regular maintenance of a "Research Home Page" on the seminar's wiki site (<http://muhl5320-aa.wikispaces.com>), where each student will maintain her/his own research, notes, bibliography, free-writing, and to comment on one another's work as well. Students will be graded on BOTH their own individual research progress, and on the progress of seminar colleagues, as it is developed and presented in the wiki;

(b) in a formal conference-panel presentation, in the final few weeks of class. Students will be expected to develop and deliver a formal reading text, which may make use of all multi-media resources, as well as the wiki.

Grading:

- Exams: 35%
- Attendance, preparation, and participation: 30%
- Research: 35%

Policies

Introduction:

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The following policies are required for this class by the professor and/or by the University.

Additional information:

Attendance and participation: Because our time together in class is very limited, it is essential that we make the most efficient and constructive use of that time. Therefore, attendance is mandatory and

any unexcused absence will be penalized, with immediate adverse effect on final grades.

Course content issues: This course will observe the university's guidelines for avoiding sexual harassment. However, because the arts often imitate and represent human living and because sexuality, politics, religion, and personal ethics are all part of life, some materials in this course may deal with sexual, political, religious, or ethical behaviors, situations, or language. People offended by such subjects may want to reconsider taking this course.

Conduct: Students participating in MUHL classes are expected to maintain a respectful and professional level of conduct. In the event of student misconduct, it is MUHL policy that teaching staff may exercise any or all of the following:

- Ejection from class
- Grade of F for class session
- Report of student misconduct to upper-administration, faculty colleagues, and/or studio teacher
- Grade of F for course

Computer and technology usage: Students are encouraged, when possible, to employ modern technology during class-time, including laptops, iPods, etc.

Students employing technology during lectures are required to sit in the front row of the classroom, nearest the instructor.

Technology usage is expected to be relevant to class work, and is strictly prohibited in any testing situation.

Playing video games, text-messaging, and so on are likewise strictly prohibited. Any such activities are grounds for ejection from class.

ADA Compliance: any student who because of a disability may require special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary accommodations. Student should present appropriate verification from AccessTECH. No requirement exists that accommodations be made prior to completion of this approved university procedure.

Class Attendance: Absence due to religious observance: The Texas Tech University Catalog states that a student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day will be allowed to

take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

Absence due to officially approved trips: ~ The Texas Tech University Catalog states that the person responsible for a student missing class due to a trip should notify the instructors of the departure and return schedule in advance of the trip. The student may not be penalized and is responsible for the material missed.

CHANGE IN TTU OPERATING POLICIES The 45th day of class is the *last* day to drop a class. After that day, all students must complete the course and receive a grade. The grade of WF will no longer be given.

Please note: It is essential that any student missing a class, for an excused or unexcused absence, should promptly contact classmates and visit the course website to get class notes and catch up with missed work.

It is our experience that students who frequently miss class do poorly or fail. Any day you are late or absent, please get class notes from one or more classmates. You are responsible for knowing what is said in class, including announcements. Instructors cannot take responsibility for filling you in on what you missed.

Academic integrity: It is the student's responsibility to know and understand Texas Tech University's policies, procedures, and penalties regarding academic integrity, as discussed in the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct. Negligence or ignorance of the policy will rarely be accepted as an excuse for violation of the policy. Cheating on examinations or plagiarism or falsification on the research project is likely to result in an F for the course.