First Year Research Seminar
How Music Works (?)

Instructor: Dr. Scott Whiddon
Office: Across from Writing Center/ACE
Contact: swhiddon@transy.edu
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1:30-3pm and Wed 10:30-3:30 (by appointment only)
Class location: TBA
Class time: 11-12:15, T/R

Required Texts:
Various texts (essays, lyrics, MP3s, etc) available via Moodle. You are required to bring a copy of whatever text we're working with to class that day.

Course Description:
This course will explore – rather than definitively answer – a number of questions about music, and popular music in particular. How is music treated as physical property, as commodity, as consumed text, and as a source of joy and even mystery? How has music influenced or been influenced by film? How might lyrics (or music videos) transmit arguments? What roles do album art, music criticism, interviews, photography, etc. play in how we think about music? How does physical space affect performance and recording? How might popular music inform us about issues of race, class, and gender? What kinds of audiences have popular music included/excluded over the years? Is writing about pop music like, as the great Elvis Costello once posited, “dancing about architecture?”

Along the way, we’ll develop some skills that are crucial to the university experience, such as drafting a thesis, finding and evaluating source materials, explaining multi-sided issues, crafting arguments, and presenting ideas in a public forum (such as formal presentations and group discussions)

So: this course involves close reading/listening, engaged discussions, and sustained research; we will do a lot more than just sit around and talk about how great (insert band or solo artist) is or how a particular album is terrible (although interesting research topics can and often do stem from such discussions – and if you’re going to spend numerous hours reading and writing, it might as well be on a topic that you love...¹). Please note that this course does not replace MUS 3774 (History of Rock and Jazz) and is not designed as a chronologically based discussion of popular music. Rather, this course uses some selected readings, mostly grouped by theme, to help introduce students to some of the interesting conversations happening about music in a variety of disciplines and to help spur research topics if possible.

¹ So, I encourage you to follow the maxim of George “Dr. Funkenstein” Clinton, who urged us to “Think! Think! It ain’t illegal yet!”
Research Projects:
Each student in FYRS undertakes a substantial, independent research project based on the theme of the FYRS section. The project progresses through five stages: a topic/issue analysis, an annotated bibliography, a proposal, a conference style presentation, and the final research-based argumentative essay of approximately fifteen pages. By consistently working on the project in stages, with the help and guidance of the instructor, the library staff, the Writing Center, and peers from class, all participants should be able to complete this process smoothly and successfully.

(For some ideas for research projects, see “20 Questions” handout. You are not limited to these topics – consider them as templates or starting points.)

Class participants will work on individual projects at the same time they are reading materials assigned for class. I expect the core materials for the class to be read carefully and thoroughly before the designated class period (even though we might not explicitly discuss each reading separately. In many cases, we’ll be looking at several different pieces at the same time).

Guest Speakers/“Presentation on Presentations”:
If all goes well (snow; schedules), we will have 2-3 guest speakers come visit our class. In the past, our guests have included recording engineers, touring musicians, professional music writers/critics, event organizers from festivals such as SXSW, etc. Furthermore, Prof. Gary Deaton (Chair, WRC) will be offering a lecture on how to improve your oral presentation skills. Attendance is required at all of these events. I expect participants to be attentive, respectful, and professional. Be ready to take notes and ask good questions!

Peer Workshops: In order for this class to be effective, it is important that every member of the class participate in peer workshops – we’ll have sessions for each formal assignment, but we’ll also often exchange daily writing tasks. This participation involves reading and responding in an honest, engaged, and serious manner to your peers’ writings. With that in mind, I will assess workshop participation based on your interaction with your peers’ drafts as well as your preparedness. Missing one or more peer workshops for formal writing tasks will seriously affect the participation portion of your grade.

Late Work:
If you know that you will not be in class on a day when a major writing is due, you need to make arrangements with me before the class period you will be absent. I do not appreciate late work, though I do understand that occasionally problems occur. You have the option of turning ONE major piece (topic/issue analysis, annotated bibliography, or proposal – note that the final paper is not included in this list) and ONE SWA in late, if you contact me via email before the start of class on the day the assignment is due. Simply note: “Dr. Whiddon: I am choosing to use my late option for (assignment type/date).” That’s it. Easy.
Once you’ve exhausted this option, I will accept late work with substantial penalties to the overall grade (usually a letter). If your work is more than two class periods late, you will receive a zero. Here’s the trick: every assignment in this class is geared toward helping you develop your final research project (and, in a larger sense, to help you develop skills for other classes in a liberal arts curriculum). You’ll get the most out of this experience if you keep up with (or, stay ahead of) the schedule.

**Participation:** There are many different ways to be active in a discussion-oriented class. Our section will use full-class discussions, small group activities, and discussions in conferences to help allow for different modes of engagement. Please consider the rubric below.

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**A Rubric for Participation Grade**

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<tr>
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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actively engages and listens to professor and peers, including careful note-taking</td>
<td>Makes a sincere effort to engage professor &amp; peers</td>
<td>Limited interaction with professor &amp; peers</td>
<td>Almost no interaction with professor &amp; peers</td>
<td>No interaction with professor or peers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arrives fully prepared to every class session</td>
<td>Arrives mostly prepared to most class sessions</td>
<td>Arrives prepared inconsistently</td>
<td>Arrives unprepared frequently</td>
<td>Arrives unprepared to most classes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completes all assignments</td>
<td>Completes all assignments</td>
<td>Completes most assignments</td>
<td>Completes few assignments</td>
<td>Completes no assignments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plays an active role in full-class/group discussions</td>
<td>Participates frequently in full-class/group discussions</td>
<td>Participates in full-class/group discussions occasionally</td>
<td>Rarely participates in full-class/group discussions</td>
<td>Does not participate in full-class/group discussions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Class comments advance the level and depth of discussion</td>
<td>Makes relevant class comments</td>
<td>Rarely makes relevant class comments</td>
<td>Never makes relevant class comments</td>
<td>Demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest in the material</td>
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<td>Level of class or group discussion is</td>
<td>Level of class or group discussion is</td>
<td>Level of class or group discussion is not affected by</td>
<td>Level of class or group discussion is</td>
<td>Level of class or group discussion is harmed by</td>
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2 Thanks to Dr. Kerri Hauman for this rubric, as well as her thoughtful advice in developing this course/syllabus.
often better because of student’s presence

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<th>better because of student’s presence</th>
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<th>student’s presence</th>
<th>not affected by student’s presence</th>
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Requirements/Percentages:
Topic Analysis: 10%
Annotated Bibliography: 10%
Proposal: 10%
Presentation: 10%
Research Paper: 20%
Participation: 20%
Shorter writing assignments (aka, SWAs): 20%

Americans with Disabilities Act
The Disability Services Office at Transylvania University serves students who have a disability that qualifies under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the Amendments Act of 2009. Disabilities covered by ADA may include physical disabilities, learning differences, and psychiatric conditions. Disability Services also coordinates accommodations for those who receive an injury that temporarily impairs their ability to function in an otherwise normal capacity. Students who wish to utilize accommodations are encouraged to view the Disability Services webpage and contact the office for a confidential appointment.

Please note that professors are not required to provide accommodations to students who have not registered with Disability Services and submitted proper documentation of a disability.

Contact Information:
Amber D. Morgan – Coordinator of Disability Services
Old Morrison, 111
admorgan@transy.edu or disabilityservices@transy.edu
(859) 233-8502

Title IX
Transylvania University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive learning environment for all students. In compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the

I recognize the fact that not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of large audiences. There are many ways that one can “participate” in class – asking a well informed question, offering a solid summary, contributing to the small group exercises that are part of our weekly work, actively listening, etc. Still, you need to come to class each day with a grounded understanding of the materials and be ready to offer a thoughtful question, a comment, etc. Those who simply “warm a seat” and fail to participate on a regular basis will earn no more than a “C” for this portion of the final grade.
University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual misconduct shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Exceptions are situations where the students are unlikely to expect that a disclosure would trigger reporting options (i.e. required class writing assignment, University-approved research project, and/or class discussions). For more information about Title IX, please refer to the Title IX Policy or contact Amber Morgan.

A person who experiences sexual misconduct may respond to the experience in many different ways, including feeling confused, vulnerable, out of control, embarrassed, angry, or depressed. The University and community provide a variety of resources to assist individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct; both to address the effects of the incident, and to help them identify the options available to them for making a complaint about the incident and offer assistance if requested.

As your professor and fellow TU community member, I'll do everything I can to help during this transition into college life and learning.

**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY**
Transylvania University is dedicated to creating and maintaining an environment that encourages civil academic discourse and scholarly growth. As stated in our mission, our campus community values independent thinking, open-mindedness, and creative expression. Therefore, we aim to foster a climate of respect which is vital to ensuring that all members are treated with courtesy, dignity, and compassion. Creating a community built on these ideals is a responsibility shared by all campus members. We value a willingness to listen to those whose opinions may be different than our own and showing respect to those with differing viewpoints. Our community benefits when its members engage in discussions and activities that acknowledge the value, diverse perspectives, and unique contributions each person brings to our campus. In our conversations and through our actions, we endeavor to treat our community members with the dignity and respect to which all Pioneers are entitled.

**On Academic Integrity:**
Academic integrity is central to the mission of this institution. Without honest effort, a learning community has no substance or validity. All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. No excuses will be accepted for plagiarism, cheating, or any other act that suggests that students have not fulfilled their academic responsibilities in this course. For all full statement of Transylvania’s policy, please see the TU Home page online.

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As noted by Morrissey, vocalist of the seminal 80’s British pop band The Smiths, “If you must write prose or poems, the words you use should be your own / Don’t plagiarize or take on loan / For there’s always someone, somewhere, with a big nose who knows / who will trip you up and laugh when you fall…” (“Cemetery Gates,” *The Queen is Dead*). We won’t be reading about The Smiths, but I really wish we were. The manner and method of how they incorporated “high culture” (poets such as Yeats and Wilde, for example), or gendered elements, or animal rights concerns into their lyrics would make for a fun research topic.
A final note: to quote the inimitable Lexington, KY noise band Hair Police, “let’s see who’s here and who’s not.”

We’ve got an exciting yet daunting task ahead of us – lots of shared readings, lots of drafting/revising, collaborative presentation work, plus individual tasks for your own major projects. I urge you to set aside 60-90 minutes a day, every day, for the reading and writing tasks required for this course. If we all commit, then I am convinced that we will have an amazing experience these 13 weeks.