

AFAM491
Intro to Hip Hop Studies
Spring 2014

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Course Description

Introduction to Hip Hop Studies is a critical analysis of Hip Hop. The course surveys the original four elements of Hip Hop—DJing, MCing, breakdancing, and graffiti and dissects the evolution of Hip Hop and the new elements such as fashion, magazines/media, videos, entrepreneurship, etc. To understand the cultural production of Hip Hop, we must first understand the history of the people who created it. The course will examine the conditions, history, and culture of African Americans that birth the art and lifestyle. Hip Hop evolution was fueled by the regions it touched—East, West, and South making distinct regional and local Hip Hop. We will examine the Third Coast—the South and understand southerners’ impact and domination of Hip Hop. Finally, Hip Hop produces messages that are interpreted in variety of ways. In this course, we will examine the messages African American girls and women received from Hip Hop. The course is reading, writing, and discussion intensive.

Learning Objectives

1. The students will learn the original elements of Hip Hop and their evolution based on regions.
2. The students will learn the factors that gave birth to Hip Hop.
3. The students will synthesize theories to analyze Hip Hop as a political movement, generation, performance, gender, and body politics.
4. The student will outline the major movements, figures, ideals, and scholarship on Hip Hop. The Student will understand the critiques and drawbacks of Hip Hop culture and generation.
5. The students will establish connections between disciplines and pursue knowledge through a variety of sources.
6. The students will analyze print and non-print materials, make comparisons of particulars, draw and support conclusions.

Required Text

The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture by Bakari Kitwana

Hip Hop’s Li’l Sistas Speak: Negotiating Hip Hop Identities and Politics in the New South by Bettina Love

That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader, 2nd Edition, Edited by Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal

Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere by Gwendolyn Pough

The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk about when We Talk about Hip Hop –and Why it Matters by Tricia Rose

Grading Scale

A 100-90 **B** 89-80 **C** 79-70 **D** 69-60 **F** Below 60

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
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Participation	50%	Daily
Textual Analysis	25%	See Description
Hip Hop Story	25%	See Schedule

Requirements:

Participation

Each student is expected to contribute to the dialogue/discourse/discussion of the class. The student accomplishes this by responding to the readings by critiquing the readings, analyzing the readings, and/or synthesizing the readings.

You may participate by:

1. Asking poignant questions about the readings, lectures, and/or discussions.
2. Responding to a question asked by the professor, faculty, guest speakers, or other class members.
3. Making an analytical comment or observation.
4. Bring in newspaper/magazine/media that deals with an aspect of class that we are currently discussing or have discussed.

It is necessary and important for you to read the assigned readings prior to coming to class to be able to fully participate and contribute to class. I would advise you to follow my example on how to discuss the material in class—integrating readings, discussions, and outside materials from other courses. What is not expected is for the student to summarize the readings, tell how the readings made the student feel, tell the fact that the student did not know about a particular idea(s), or discuss only one or two of the assignments.

These class discussions and posts are worth 50% of your grade and show the importance I believe these are to your education on Hip Hop. Please put in the appropriate amount of time and due diligence. It is necessary and important for you to read the assigned readings prior to class and to understand what you have read. Exams, quizzes, and in class assignments fall under

participation and these assignments will be given throughout the semester to test proficiency and understanding of the readings and lectures. As a class, we will figure out the best way to test proficiencies but the ultimate decision lies with the professor.

Textual Analysis

Each student will produce a Hip Hop WordPress website and post her/his textual analysis and Hip Hop story. The website design must have a static homepage, about me page, textual analysis page, and hip hop story page (the student can be creative in naming the pages). The home page must describe the theme for your website for example if the student wants to focus on Hip Hop fashion, rap music, Hip Hop dance, graffiti, etc. The about me section is about the student and Hip Hop. The textual analysis page is a dynamic webpage where the student will post four critiques on at least two different elements of Hip Hop.

The elements may be from the original four—Djing, Mcing (rap), Graffiti, or Breakdancing but may include Hip Hop movies, Hip Hop magazines/media, videos, fashion, gender, political movement/message, or other elements we explore in the course. Narrow down your topic and couple it to a theory like Black masculinity, Black Feminism, cipher, and other theoretical frameworks introduced in the class or from African American Studies. Apply the theories to the primary source to make an analysis about Hip Hop. Primary sources include movies, TV shows, lyrics, magazines, speeches, newspapers, clothing, music videos, etc. The analysis must have a thesis, a theory, an explanation of the theory, ample examples of the primary sources, ample evidence and proof for the thesis. The unique thing about the website is that the student may embed videos, photos, and other media directly into the analysis. For instance, if the student is analyzing a music video then embed the video for your audience to be able to watch and still have in text reference to the video.

There is no word count requirement however the quality must be present with a thorough analysis of the element. In the analysis, the student must use in text citations when quoting and paraphrasing. Although it is being produced for the web, the analysis must adhere to conventional written norms and expectations of academic papers. At the end of the critique, the student must include a bibliography and it is different than a work cited page. The bibliography must adhere to Chicago Manual Style. The conventions of blogging should be used as well and the paragraphs should be shorter no more than five lines per paragraph and a space between each paragraph. You may use linking to take the reader to other websites but you cannot use personal pronouns or contractions. At the end of the syllabus, the student will find a rubric that outlines how I will grade these critiques. I will add some in class instruction on the website, critiques, and design during the semester. Please ask any questions or concerns about this format to the professor in a timely manner.

The due date for the critiques is as follow: Critique 1 January 31, Critique 2 February 28, Critique 3 March 31, and Critique 4 April 20.

Hip Hop Story

The analogy of Hip Hop as a lover has been used by artist such as Common and in movies such as Brown Sugar and I will continue the analogy for the course. The student will create a digital story about her/his relationship with Hip Hop. The first part of the story will detail when, how,

where, and what attracted the student to Hip Hop. The next stage is telling the ups and downs, disappointments, critiques, breakup with Hip Hop. The last part of the video is the student and Hip Hop future as well as the future of Hip Hop. The video needs to be at least 10 minutes long and incorporate still photography, music, voiceover, and/or video. William “Bud” Deihl from the Center for Teaching Excellence will come to class to walk us through digital storytelling and the free tools at your disposal.

Alternative Story

If you do not have a relationship with Hip hop or want to explore a more critical theme in Hip Hop, the student can produce a three part story—beginning, middle, future. If you choose this option, please write a formal proposal and submit it to me in the first two weeks of class.

Attendance

Attendance is vital during the semester and I will be taking attendance daily. The student will receive two days for an unexcused absence before her/his attendance adversely affects her/his grade. After the 2nd absence, the course grade will be dropped one letter grade per occurrence. For example, if you missed 4 days and had an A in the class, the new grade would be a C for the two extra days. Of course, emergencies happen and will be considered only with written documentation (doctor's note, funeral program, traffic accident, ticket, etc). Also, tardies will be counted. Tardy constitutes being ten to fifteen minutes late and being more than 15 minutes late will count as absence. Leaving more than 10 minutes before the end of the class session constitutes an absence and/or if the student was tardy and leaves more than 10 minutes early. Two tardies will count as one absence, so please come to class on time.

Excused Absences for Students Representing the University

Students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes should provide their schedule to the instructor at the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council strongly encourages faculty to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges faculty to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

All work is due when specified and late materials will not be accepted unless accompanied with written documentation (e.g. doctor’s note, funeral program). If you have an emergency please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss how to handle the assignment.

E-mail Policy

Electronic mail or "e-mail" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking e-mail daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student e-mail account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU e-mail address may include notification of

university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety:
<http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html>

VCU Honor System: Upholding Academic Integrity

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases."

[View the Honor System](#) in its entirety. More information can also be found on the [Division of Student Affairs](#) website.

Students with Disabilities

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended require that VCU provides "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). More information is available at [Disability Support Services](#) or the [Division for Academic Success](#).

Any student who has a disability that requires an academic accommodation should schedule a meeting with the instructor at the student's earliest convenience. Additionally, if coursework requires the student to work in a lab environment, the student should advise the instructor or a department chairperson of any concerns that the student may have regarding safety issues related to a disability. Students should follow this procedure for all courses in the academic semester.

Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment

If military students receive orders for short-term training or deployment, they should inform and present their orders to Military Student Services and to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the [corresponding policies](#).

Student Conduct in the Classroom

According to the [Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings](#), "The university is a community of learners. Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members

(including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." **Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom.** Also, the university Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having "in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..." For more information, visit the [VCU Insider online](#).

Eating in class is acceptable if it is a snack e.g. potato chips, candy bar, or a drink. Please do not bring a full course meal to class and expect to eat it. **I do not allow the use of laptops, iPads, or any other computing device to be used during class unless absolutely necessary.** However, if you are caught using it for Facebook, surf the internet, play games, anything that is not dealing with the class then you will lose the privilege of having the ability to use the device in the class for the rest of the semester.

Please no hats, caps, sunglasses, or any other headgear unless you need them for religious purposes ("bad hair days" are not a reason that I accept and this policy is for men and women). **Remove these items prior to entering the classroom even if you are early.** Please as much as possible—ladies do not wear revealing clothing that is either too short, too loose, too tight, etc. and gentlemen refrain from sagging your pants to show undergarments, wearing revealing clothing that is also too tight, too short, too loose, etc.

My professor often said, "The law of common courtesy has not yet been repealed." I hope that we will engage in many debates over the semester. I expect that we will all treat each other and each other's ideas with respect.

Schedule

Date	Topics & Activities	Readings Due	Lecture	Assignments Due
01/14	Introductions & What is Hip Hop		4 elements of Hip Hop	
01/16	Introductions & What is Hip Hop Continues	Kitwana Introduction	4 elements of Hip Hop	
01/21	The Hip Hop Generation Emerges	Kitwana Chapter 1 & 2	Civil Rights to Black Power to Hip Hop	
01/23	Growing Pains	Kitwana Chapter 3 & 4	William "Bud" Deihl	Digital Storytelling
01/28 & 01/31	Hip Hop Messages?	Forman & Neal Chapters 30-34		
02/04 &	Authentic Blackness & Hip Hop	Forman & Neal Part II &	What is Blackness	Hip Hop Story Benchmark I

02/06		Chapters 9, 11, & 13	and Hip Hop?	
02/11 & 02/13	Rep Your City & Hood	Forman & Neal Part III & Chapters 16, 17, 18, & 19	Third Coast: Hip Hop and the South	
02/18 & 02/20	Gendered Hip Hop	Forman & Neal Part IV & Chapters 22-23 & 25-28	Black Masculinity and Femininity at a Crossroad?	
02/25	Gendered Hip Hop Continued	Forman & Neal Part IV & Chapters 22-23 & 25-28	Black Masculinity and Femininity at a Crossroad?	
02/27		Kitwana Chapter 5		
03/04	African American Women, Blues, & Hip Hop	Pough 3-102	Blues Legacies	Hip Hop Story Benchmark II
03/11	Spring Break			
03/18	African American Women, Blues, & Hip Hop	Pough 103-222	Blues Legacies	
03/25	African American Girls are watching	Love Chapters 1-8		
04/01	Hip Hop Wars	Rose Introduction to Chapter 5		Hip Hop Story Benchmark III
04/08	Hip Hop Wars	Rose Chapter 6-10		
04/15	Hip Hop's Future	Kitwana Chapter 6-8 Rose Chapter 11-13		
04/22	Bring it all together + Future	Kitwana Chapter 6-8 Rose Chapter 11-13		
04/29	Reflection			
05/06	8-10:50 am			Project Day

Deviations from the syllabus may occur by adding, subtracting, or adjusting the schedule, the readings, and/or assignment

Rubric for Textual Analysis

Thesis: 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It is a clear, concise, developed and viable thesis statement that outlines the theory, analysis, and argument for the critique. It is located at the end of the introduction.

Content: 30%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Facts and ideas developed to prove the thesis, relevance to Hip Hop, analyzes the element using a theory with evidence

Blogging 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Multimedia content—photos, video, linking,

Logic & Argument: 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Do the facts, ideas, and/or proof offer a clear and logical argument? Do you prove your argument?

Audience, Tone, Point of View: 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Clear discernment of distinctive audience; tone and point of view appropriate to the assignment

Organization: 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is the paper organized logically—introduction, body, and conclusion? Does the paper follow the structure dictated by the thesis?

Structure: 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Sentence structured effectively, powerfully; rich, well-chosen variety of sentence styles and length. Vocabulary has a range, accuracy, and correct and effective word usage

Technical Writing Quality: 10%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Chicago Manual Style, spelling, grammar

Comments _____

Rubric for Hip Hop Story

Purpose of the Story: **15%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It is a clear and developed purpose of the story. Does the student establish a purpose early on and maintain a clear focus throughout. Like the thesis of a paper

Content: **30%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Contents create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story. The images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors. Is the point of view well developed and contributes to the overall meaning of the story? Was there a meaningful and dramatic question being asked and answered within the content of the story?

Multimedia **10%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Multimedia content—photos, video, voiceover, soundtrack, audio quality

Pacing of Narrative: **10%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story line and helps the audience really “get into” the story.

Videography: **10%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strong use of quality videography, including camera angles, framing, lighting, transitions, effects, all used to add to the impact of the presentation, the presentation flow, and does not distract from the video

Creativity: **15%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Compete originality in composition and delivery, strong evidence of critical thinking skills

Grammar and Language Usage **10%**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Vocabulary has a range, accuracy, and correct and effective word usage and contributed to clarity, style, and character development

Comments _____
