

THE POLITICS OF HIP HOP
PAS 496S – Fall 2004
M/W/F 10:00-10:50

Professor: Dr. Karin Stanford

Office Hours: M/W 11:00 – 12:30 and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This upper division course is a critical examination of the political and cultural dynamics of Hip-Hop. Using standards of evaluation set forth by scholars of cultural studies, African American politics and Hip-Hop activists, students will explore the inter-relationship between African-American youth and society through the medium of Hip-Hop. In particular, we will examine the connection between the Hip-Hop community and the various political, corporate and institutional actors that influence society both locally and globally. We will also explore the real and perceived political, social and marketing power of Hip-Hop and its political consequences. Those consequences will be considered in the realm of public policy.

Students will research and analyze contemporary texts, commentary, music and other relevant cultural idioms related to this worldwide phenomenon. We will begin by tracing the foundation, development and manifestations of Hip-Hop over its 35-year history. Then, students will grapple with questions related to the role and responsibility of African-American youth in our world. We will also interrogate Hip Hop's representation as an oppositional culture. By extension, we will analyze whether or not Hip-Hop practitioners have succumbed to national and international corporate interests. Additional concerns include whether or not Hip Hop contributes to the prevailing notion of Black life as pathological, or does it simply provide a line of demarcation between traditional and contemporary cultural expectations. What are the representations of Black women in Hip-Hop; is Hip-Hop an empowering expression of Black youth discontent, or is it just a creation of Wall Street and Madison Avenues executives. How has Hip-Hop influenced new forms of youth identity throughout the world? These and other questions will serve to provide a rigorous intellectual environment.

TEXTBOOKS

William Eric Perkins, ed. Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

Bakari Kitwana. The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003

Articles on Reserve (Oviatt Library)

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

FORMAT AND ATTENDANCE

This class will be taught in discussion format with a minimum of lecturing. Groups of 4-5 students will work together to complete group projects that will be assigned periodically throughout the semester. Groups will be called upon to discuss important issues, answer questions or lead discussions related to Hip Hop. Although students work within groups, grading is done on individual performance. Students should also expect several in-class written, media and other interactive assignments. Therefore attendance is required.

READING REACTION PAPERS

Students are required to provide a typed-written response to 3 film, recording or hip hop related assignments. The reaction should incorporate information from the week's readings as well as the cultural production. The paper should be no more than 1-2 double-space pages and is due at the beginning of the class session. **LATE READING REACTION PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

EXAMS

Examinations will test your knowledge and comprehension of information from your class lectures and reading assignments. There will be two examinations for this class—a mid-term and a final. Exams comprise of short answer and essay questions. The mid-term will be given in-class on October 7. The date of the final exam will be announced.

Make up exams will not be given without a valid, written excuse **from a physician**. Do not send an email regarding absences. Believe me, I will not respond. Make-ups must be completed within one week of missing an exam or quiz. Make-up exams will be in essay format.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS

The group project is an oral presentation developed in collaboration with all members of your group. The group will assemble a 30-40 minute presentation on the topic assigned for that week's session. The presentation should reflect an understanding of the key concepts proposed by the readings. It should build on those concepts in consent or dissent, with additional musical or visual materials. Your creativity is welcomed! The most successful presentations will include critical analysis and supporting materials. Using PowerPoint, creating websites or posters are examples of acceptable visuals. Your presentation should also contain questions that the class will answer and incorporate into further discussion of the topic. **An Outline is Required One Week Before Your Presentation.**

RESEARCH PAPER

One research paper is required for this class. The paper can be related to any of the topics discussed in class or your group presentation. The length of your research paper should range from 7-10 pages. Students are required to turn in a research paper topic by November 1. Please refer to your research paper guide for additional information on the format and content of the assignment. The paper must be an original piece of work written by the student for this class. Plagiarism is taken very seriously. For the university policies on plagiarism go to Student Affairs/Academic Integrity on the CSUN website.

OPTIONAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Oral Presentations of Research Topics are optional. Student presenters will receive extra-credit of 3 additional points. I must receive notice of your intent to present by November 1.

POLICIES

- **TARDINESS:** Class will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. Tardiness is disruptive and will be frowned upon. After a student has been late two (2) times, they will no longer receive credit for attendance after 10:10 a.m.
- **CELLULAR PHONES AND PAGERS:** UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD STUDENTS RECEIVE CALLS OR PAGES DURING CLASS.
- **EATING IN CLASS-WITHOUT EXCEPTION, STUDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO EAT IN CLASS.** This includes snacks of any kind, donuts, sandwiches, French fries, etc.

DATES/REQUIREMENTS TO COMMIT TO MEMORY

Midterm Examination—Oct. 1
Research Paper Topic—Nov. 1
Research Paper —Nov. 19
Final Examination—To Be Announced

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Reading Reaction Papers 15%
Midterm Examination--20%
Group Presentation—15%
Research paper--20%
Final examination--20%
Class Participation--10%
Optional Oral Presentation—3%

GRADING METHOD

Grades will NOT be curved, but based on a straight scale:

90-100	= A
80-90	= B
70-80	= C
60 -70	= D
50-	= F

TOPIC AND READING OUTLINE

Week 1: August 23-27: Introduction

Roster Verification; Classroom Protocols; Syllabus Review
Diagnostic Tool
Definitions
Boundaries for Discussion

Reading Assignment:

Bakari Kitwana: The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation, Chapter 1

Week 2: August 30-Sept 3: The Roots and Evolution of Hip Hop: Social-Political and Cultural Contexts

Social, Political and Cultural Connections to Africa
African American Cultural Forerunners: Signifying and Toasting, Playing the Dozens
Capoeira Angola-Hip Hop Dance
Black Arts and Black Power Movements
The Geography of Hip Hop
Hip Hop's Early Years

Reading Assignment

William Perkins, "The Rap Attack: An Introduction," Droppin' Science Chapter 1
Robert Farris Thompson, "Hip Hop 101," Droppin' Science Chapter 8
Katrina Hazzard-Donald, "Dance in Hip Hop Culture," Droppin' Science Chapter 9
Alim Kamat, "The Evolution and Impact of Hip Hop," Student Voices
Film: The Freshest Kids

Week 3: Sept 6 (No Class) Sept 8-10: The Roots Cont.

Reaction paper due, Sept. 10

Week 4: Sept. 13-17: Theoretical Frameworks, Theoreticians and Critiques of Hip Hop

Progressive, Conservative and Nationalist Views; Hip Hop Challengers;
Capitalist/Business Justifications (Sean Combs, Tupac, Chuck D, Queen Latifah, Afrika Bambaata and others)

Reading Assignment:

Yvonne Bynoe, "How Ya Like Me Now," Stand and Deliver, Chapter 11 (On Reserve)
Kimberly Glanville, "Born To Speak Free," Student Voices
Pearl Celious, "Hip Hop Culture: From the Perspective of A Member of the Civil Rights Generation," Student Voices
Cornel West, "Nihilism in Black America," Race Matters Chapter 1 (On Reserve)

Week 5: Sept. 27-Oct. Hip Hop Genre 1: Message Rap and Concepts of Black Nationalism

Hip Hop as Oppositional Culture
Socially Conscious Hip Hop
Black Nationalist Organizational Influences on Hip Hop
Nation of Islam, Five Percenters and Others

Reading Assignment:

Ernest Allen Jr. "Making the Strong Survive: The Contours and Contradictions of Message Rap," Droppin' Science Chapter 6

Week 6: Oct. 4-8 Hip Hop Genre 2: Gangsta Rap and Pseudo-Authenticity

Social Roots of Gangsta Rap
West Coast/East Coast Gangsta and Feuds
Influence of Gangsta Rap on Hip Hop Culture

Reading Assignment:

Robin Kelly, "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Post-Industrial Los Angeles," Droppin' Science Chapter 4
Alex Tutt, "Gangsta Rap and the Style of Hip Hop," Student Voices

Midterm Exam-October 7

Week 7: Oct. 11-15 Role and Representation of Women in Hip Hop

Women as Subject and as Object
The Role of Women in Hip Hop
Feminist Responses to Misogyny in Hip Hop Culture

Reading Assignment:

Bakari Kitwana, “Where Did Our Love Go” The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation, Chapter 4
Leslie Hatch, “Rejection, Revision, Subversion: Discourse Redirected by the Women of Hip Hop,” Student Voices
Vernesha Thomas, “Is it Worth the Money, Power and Fame?” Student Voices
Shareipha Myvett, “That’s Just My Baby’s Daddy,” Student Voices

Week: 8 Oct. 18-22 The Policing of Hip Hop

First Amendment and Censorship
Violence at Rap Concerts
Institutions of Control: Government and the Media
The Courts and Hip Hop - Important Legal Cases

Reading Assignment:

Tricia Rose, “Hidden Politics: Discursive and Institutional Policing of Rap Music,” Droppin’ Science, Chapter 7
Kitwana, Bakari, “Race War,” The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation, Chapter 3

Week 9 Oct. 25-29 The Commodification of Hip Hop

The Dominance of Bling, Bling
Music Business and Control of Black Cultural Production
Black Agents of Change
Black Hip Hop Moguls, Whose Really In Control of Hip Hop

Reading Assignment:

Clarence Lusane “Thug Life: The Rap on Capitalism” Race In The Global Era, Chapter 6 (On Reserve)
Jarrett Harris, “The Funeral: The Birth and Death of Hip Hop,” Student Voices
Jocelyn Christman, “Blinded by the Media,” Student Voices

Week 11: Nov. 1-5 Hip Hop in Global Spaces

More Flavors Than Ever

Hip Hop as World Wide Phenomenon

White, Latino, Asian and Pan African Expressions of Hip Hop

Reading Assignment:

Armond White, “Who Wants to See Ten Niggers Play Basketball?” Droppin’ Science Chapter 10

William Eric Perkins, “Youth’s Global Village,” Droppin’ Science Chapter 5

Mandalit Del Barco, ‘Raps, Latin Sabor,’ Droppin’ Science Chapter 3

Juan Flores, “Puerto Rocks: New York Ricans Stake Their Claim,” Droppin’ Science Chapter 4

Week 13: Nov. 8-12 The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation: Activism and Agenda Building

Activism in the Hip Hop Community

Representing Hip Hop Politics

Redefining Social Responsibility

Identifying a Hip Hop Political Agenda

The Ideology and Impact of the Hip Hop Summits

Reading Assignment:

Bakari Kitwana, The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation Chapters 6 and 7

Earvin Baker, “Russell Simmons and the Hip Hop Summit,” Student Voices

Yvonne Bynoe, “Hip Hop Politics: Deconstructing the Myth,” Stand & Deliver Chapter 1

Week 14: Nov. 15-19 The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation: The Challenge

Rap Music and Black Cultural Integrity

The Challenge of Rap Music: From Cultural Movement to Political Power

Reading Assignment:

Bakari Kitwana, The Politics of the Hip Hop Generation Chapter 8

Research Papers Due, Nov. 19

Week 15 Nov. 22-24 (Nov. 26-Holiday)

Oral Presentations

Week 16: Nov. 29-Dec. 3 Last Day of Class

Oral Presentations

Final Exam Review

FINAL EXAMINATION: To Be Announced