

POPULAR CULTURE: HIP HOP

Instructor: Professor Rod Labrador
 Office hours: George Hall 341, Tuesday, 2-3pm, or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we critically explore the dynamics of Hip Hop culture, examining its historical foundations, political and economic significance, and social influence. Initially a U.S. black urban expressive culture, Hip Hop is now a global cultural phenomenon. In its globalizing processes, Hip Hop has taken the specific despair, hope, social and political conditions of North American urban life to the world stage. We will study the development, history, communication style, dance form, moral framework, and processes of Hip Hop's globalization. We will also examine how Hip Hop exemplifies a type of cross- or inter-cultural hybridization within not only Black communities nationally and internationally, but also among Indigenous, Latino/a, and Asian peoples in the United States and beyond. We will use hip hop in Hawai'i to focus on the ways people come to see, know, enact, and practice their individual and collective senses of self that are both structurally and culturally (self)defined usually along the axes of race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, sexuality, history, and religion. More specifically, we will explore how space and place figure into these identity constructions and politics.

In this class, we also focus on the ways Hip Hop has become an oppositional culture resistance, creating its own brand of communication, dress styles, and promoting a culture of resistance to institutional domination, class exploitation, and (middle and) upper class values. We begin by asking what is Hip Hop, what are the constituent elements, and who are the key figures of this global movement. Then we localize Hip Hop, with a focus on O'ahu. In recreating the growth and key moments of this art form, we will examine the various dimensions of this culture, through its music, lyrics, poetry, videos, dance, films, and politics.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the historical, political, economic, social, cultural, and artistic foundations of Hip Hop.
2. Increase understanding of the histories, experiences and perspectives on various social and political issues among hip hop communities in Hawai'i, the broader Pacific and elsewhere.
3. Show an appreciation for cultural production and creative expression among Hip Hop artists.
4. Make explicit connections between race and ethnicity and other important aspects of social life, including the political economy, class, culture, gender, and sexuality.
5. Critically reflect on personal identities, artistic and creative expression, and political action.
6. Show an understanding of the connections between art, culture, politics, and identity-making.
7. Demonstrate critical through oral presentations and discussion.

* The class meets on Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00-1:15pm, in Webster 115.

* Students with special needs should make an appointment to see me within the first week of class to insure your full involvement in the course.

REQUIRED READINGS

* McFarland, Pancho. 2013. *The Chican@ Hip Hop Nation: Politics Of A New Millennial Mestizaje*. Michigan State University Press. **[CHHN]**

* Villegas, Mark, Kuttin' Kandi, and R. Labrador (Eds.). *Empire of Funk: Hip Hop and Representation in Filipina/o America* (available through the Cognella Academic Publishing website or the bookstore). **[EoF]**

* There is also a course reader for this class. **[CR]**

* Any additional readings will be distributed in class or available via the class website.

* Listening assignments will be available through my YouTube channel.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course has an oral communication (O) focus designation. It teaches knowledge of and appreciation for the arts, and encourages creative expression and effective personal expression in the oral mode. Class presentations will contribute to improving students' public speaking skills and allow student to better engage course content by effectively organizing arguments and providing supporting evidence. Individual consultations with the instructor before and after class presentations will help students improve their oral presentation skills - recognizing strengths and identifying areas of needed improvement for the future - while addressing any concerns. Active participation in oral discussion of readings, music videos, song lyrics and performance analysis, and art production is worth 50% of the final grade. At least fifty-percent of this course is based on oral presentations and evaluation of speaking and creative styles.

Class Participation: Please come to class on time and plan on staying for the duration. Failure to prepare for class and persistent (and unexplained) failure to attend will result in a reduction of the overall grade. Please call or email the instructor before missing class, if possible. Your absences will be reflected in the grade you receive for participation. Participation involves speaking and active listening in class. Your participation grade will depend on a) contributing to class discussions and group discussions on a regular basis, and b) in-class writing assignments. You must also come to class having done the assigned reading(s). You cannot participate in the class discussions if you have not completed the readings and you are not in class.

Presentation of a Reading: Students must select a reading to summarize. For the presentation, each student must identify the reading's central argument, supporting evidence, and key concepts. The instructor will distribute a presentation schedule during the second week of class and presentations will begin in the third week. One-on-one meetings with the instructor prior to the presentation of the reading will be scheduled to go over content and oral presentation of the material to insure effectiveness of conveying main ideas. The presentation must be at least 5-10 minutes long.

Song Lyrics Critique and Presentation: Students will choose a Hawai'i Hip Hop song to critique to treat as a primary document. For the presentation, students should answer a number of questions including: 1) When was the song created and produced? 2) Who is the performer and what is their genre? (include background information); 3) Who was the author's primary audience; 4) Why was the song written, that is, what was the author's motivation? 5) What is the song's historical significance, why is it important? 6) What does the document suggest about the historical period in which it was written. This presentation should reflect course materials *and* information gathered from outside sources. The presentation must be at least 5-10 minutes long.

Performance Analysis and Presentation: Students will need to attend at least one "hip hop" performance this semester, on campus, in Honolulu, or elsewhere. For the presentation, students will need to consider at least two of the topics addressed in this course. When assessing/analyzing the performance, students should take into consideration the context, content, and audience. The analysis and presentation should directly refer to course materials (lectures, readings, films, and music). The presentation must be at least 5-10 minutes long.

Exams (2): There will be two short exams that assess students' understanding of course materials. The quizzes will draw directly from lectures, readings, guest speakers, films, and class discussion.

Final Project and Presentation: There are two options to choose from for their project.

Option 1: Critical Creative Work (individual/group project and individual paper) – This project, done individually or in a group of no more than 3 people, can be a rap song and/or video or spoken word performance and/or video. If you do a film or video, it should be 3-5 minutes long. Your project must address at least two of the main themes we discuss in the course. You must also include a 4-6 page, typed and double-spaced paper that describes your project and why you chose to do it. You must incorporate at least a minimum of four (4) reputable critical sources, which can be academic journal articles, books, and/or book chapters used in the course, not WIKIPEDIA. Each individual or group must also make at least a ten (10) minute presentation on their project to the class during weeks 16 and 17.

Option 2: Hawai'i Hip Hop Oral History Project (individual/group project and individual paper) – For this project, done individually or in a group of no more than 4 people, you are asked to document the history of a local Hip Hop personality, artist, organization, or crew: for example, Lightsleepers, Flip The Bird, Direct Descendants, Aloha Family, Mo Illa Pillaz, 808Urban, Beat Rock Krew, Track Baby Camp, Diverse Arts Center, Angry Locals, Got Rice Show, Workhouse, and

Nocturnal Sound Krew. Your project must address at least two of the main themes we discuss in the course and the project can be in a textual or filmic format. You must also include a 4-6 page, typed and double-spaced paper that describes your project and how it address the main themes discussed in the course. Each individual or group must make at least a ten (10) minute presentation on their project to the class during weeks 16 and 17.

Grade Distribution:

Attendance and Participation (10% discussion and 5% writing)	15%
Presentation of a Reading	10%
Song Lyrics Critique and Presentation	10%
Performance Analysis and Presentation	10%
Exams (2)	30%
Final Project and Presentation	25%

POLICIES:

Late Papers: All assignments are due at the beginning of the class. The dates on which the papers are due are firm deadlines. Late papers will lose 1/3 of a grade for every day it is late (this means if you turn in a A- paper a day late, the grade will be scaled down to a B+).

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Hawai'i at Manoa Student Conduct Code. Any work submitted by a student will be the student's own work. Copying or submitting other people's work, and/or not properly attributing ideas that are not original to you are considered plagiarism. Any infraction of the Student Conduct Code will lead to sanctions from the instructor (ranging from receiving a zero on an assignment to failure of the course and University disciplinary action).

Classroom Discussion Ground Rules: Throughout the course, we will be examining complex issues about which most students have passionate feelings. We must be respectful and intellectually open to perspectives that may differ from our own. It is vital that we treat each other's comments and opinions with respect and courtesy even when they may conflict with yours. We must be careful not to personalize attacks to discredit or invalidate others' perspectives and positions. We must create a classroom environment that allows for productive and constructive discussion, where perspectives have the right to be argued, challenged, and defended in intellectual ways.

Offensive Materials Disclaimer: Every effort is made to limit explicit or potentially offensive content in this class without ignoring essential issues in the history of rap music. This is not always possible when the title of a song or recording, video, or the lyric within that song or recording may include explicit or culturally sensitive language. In this course, you will be required to listen to, view, and analyze obscene and offensive materials, including language and imagery that is obscene, sexist, homophobic, or racist, and descriptions of sexual conduct and violence. I do not intend in any way to offend, nor do we as the Department of Ethnic Studies, College of Social Sciences or University of Hawai'i at Mānoa share in the opinions of the musicians and their songs that may offend. Nonetheless, because these materials speak to issues and controversies in the history of rap music that are essential to this course, no suitable substitutions are available for them, and none will be provided. By continuing with this course, you are agreeing to be held academically accountable for all required materials in the syllabus, regardless of their offensive nature. Students who are unwilling either to hear or think critically about such material are encouraged to drop this course at their discretion.

COURSE OUTLINE

****NOTE:** The syllabus is subject to change at instructors' discretion**

I. The Historical Origins of Hip Hop

Week 1

- Aug 23 Introduction to class. Objectives, expectations, and rules. Definition of terms. Hip Hop and Culture: What is Hip Hop and how is it distinguished from rap? What is Hip Hop's significance in American culture?
- Aug 25 Historical and Social Context, The South Bronx: What were the social, economic and political circumstances that gave birth to Hip Hop culture?
Reading: Jeff Chang, "Necropolis: The Bronx and the Politics of Abandonment" [CR]
Films: excerpts from *Wild Style* (1983) *Flashdance* (1983), *Breakin'* (1984), *Beat Street* (1984), *Krush Groove* (1985)

II. The Four Elements: Dance, Writing/Graffiti Art, DJing, Rap (MCing)

Week 2

- Aug 30 *Reading:* S.H. Fernando, Jr., "Back in the Day: 1975-1979" [CR]
Sep 1 *Reading:* Tricia Rose, "Prophets of Rage: Rap Music and the Politics of Black Cultural Expression" [CR]

III. Place, Politics, Power, (Self)Representation

Week 3

- Sep 6 *Reading:* "Quién es más macho? Quién es más Mexicano: Chican@ and Mexican@ Identities in Rap" [CHHN]
"For The Moment" (Jeff Chang); "Feel the Funk" (Mark Villegas); "Identity and Resistance" (Stephen Bischoff); Can Hip Hop Be Political? (poem by Lily Prijoles) [EoF]
- Sep 8 "Barrio Logos: The Sacred and Profane Word of Chicano Emcees" [CHHN]; "My Hip Hop Creation Story" (poem by Janice Sapigao); "We're up there performing a character" (DJ QBert); "In a Strange Land" (Mark Villegas) [EoF]

Week 4

- Sep 13 *Reading:* "Sonido Indígena: Mexica Hip-Hop and Masculine Identity" [CHHN] "Hip Hop Pinayism Front and Center: Claiming Space, Existence, and the Soundtracks of Our Lives" (DJ Kuttin Kandi); "Rap Out Loud" (Rocky Rivera); "Writing Wrongs" (Hopie); "the queen is dead..." (Bambu) [EoF]
- Sep 15 *Reading:* "Paisas, Compas, Inmigrantes Mexicanidad in Hip-Hop" [CHHN]; "Traveling Man..." (Mario "Nomi" De Mira); "The Way of the B-boy: Immigrant Dreams, International Success" (Jerome "Jeromeskee" Aparis) [EoF]

Week 5

- Sep 20 *Reading:* "Barrio Locos: Street Hop and Amerikan Identity" [CHHN]; "'Y'all Want This Party Started Right?' Fil-Ams Getting Down in Jacksonville, Florida" (Leo Esclamado); "Building Hip Hop from the Bay to the World" (Rawb Nasty); "All The World's a Stage...And All of Us Merely Soldiers" (Brian Buño) [EoF]
- Sep 22 *Reading:* "Multiracial Macho: Kemo the Blaxican's Hip-Hop Masculinity" [CHHN]

Week 6

- Sep 27 *Reading:* "Resistance and Struggle Are Sisters" (Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales and Dawn Mabalon); "Performing to Survive: Accepting Truths and Finding Purpose" (DJ Kuttin' Kandi) [EoF]
- Sep 29 *Reading:* "The Rap on Chicano/Mexicano and Black Masculinity: Gender and Cross-Cultural Exchange" [CHHN]

Week 7

- Oct 4 *Reading:* Booty Pop Madness: The Negotiation of Space for Gay Pilipino American Males and Choreographed Hip Hop (Joseph Ramirez); Milan Empress [EoF]
- Oct 6 *Reading:* "'Soy la Kalle': Radio, Reggaetón, and Latin@ Identity" [CHHN]

Week 8

- Oct 11 *Reading:* "Tunnel to Jersey: Guerrilla Words and the Hip Hop Crossover in the Northeast" (Jason "Encite" Hortillas); DJ Neil Armstrong; DJ Ikey Ice; "Something out of Nothing" (Michael "Suitkace" Capito); "Soul in the Whole: The Successes and Challenges of Representation from Kaba Modern and Beyond" (Arnel Calvario) [EoF]
- Oct 13 *Reading:* "Teaching Hip-Hop: A Pedagogy for Social Justice" [CHHN]

Week 9

- Oct 18 *Reading:* “Class Is in Session: Hip Hop in the Classroom” (Nate Nevado); “Towards Praxis-Oriented Filipin@ American Hip Hop” (Roderick N. Labrador); “Upset the Set-Up”: A Path Towards Self-Determination Rooted in Conscious Hip-Hop, Pin@y, and Panethnic Communities (Benji Chang) [EoF]
- Oct 20 *Reading:* “Hip-Hop and Freedom-Dreaming in the Mexican Diaspora” [CHHN]

Week 10

- Oct 25 *Reading:* “Critical Pedagogy and Filipino American Hip Hop: Analyzing and Honoring the Mixtape—A *Song for Ourselves*” (Michael Viola); “Love and Justice: How Hip Hop Saved Me” (Kiwi Illafonte); “Knowledge of Self: From Islam through Hip-Hop to Freedom” (Freedom Allah Siyam) [EoF]
- Oct 27 **Exam 1**

IV. A Hawai‘i Hip Hop Aesthetic?

Week 11

- Nov 1 *Reading:* Halifu Osumare, “Beat Streets in the Global Hood: Hip Hop’s Connective Marginalities”[CR]; “Put your hand up if you’ve never seen a Filipino dude rap” (Geo Quibuyen aka Prometheus Brown) [EoF]
- Nov 3 *Reading:* Adria Imada, “Head Rush: Hip Hop and a Hawaiian Nation ‘On the Rise’” [CR]

Week 12

- Nov 8 *Holiday:* Election Day
- Nov 10 *Reading:* Halifu Osumare, “Props to the Local Boyz: Hip Hop Culture in Hawai‘i” [CR]

Week 13

- Nov 15 *Reading:* Rohan Kalyan, “Paradise Lost and Found: Hip Hop in Hawaii” [CR]; “A Diverse Melting Pot of Styles” (Creed Chameleon); humming.bird.in.paradise.livingARTfully (Malaya LP); Jah Light and Love (Seph1) [EoF]
- Nov 17 *Reading:* Nohelani Teves, “‘Bloodline Is All I Need’: Defiant Indigeneity and Hawaiian Hip-Hop”[CR]; Krystilez, “Homesteady” [EoF]

Week 14

- Nov 22 **Exam 2**
- Nov 24 *Holiday:* Thanksgiving

V. FINAL PROJECTS

Week 15

- Nov 29 Project Presentations
- Dec 1 Project Presentations

Week 16

- Dec 6 Project Presentations
- Dec 8 Project Presentations
- FINAL PROJECTS DUE!**