

Songs for Survival: Music and Religion

RAHS 8260

3 Units

Summer 2021

Starr King School for the Ministry – Graduate Theological Union

Instructor Information:

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Office Hours: TBA

Meeting Dates and Times: Thu 10-12 AM Synchronous

Course Description:

This course explores the relationship between music and religion in human experience. In order to do this, we will start with a broad look at the development of written music in the worship setting, as well as music as a component of thought and a vehicle for ideas. We will turn to the role music plays in social movements by looking closely at the 20th century in the United States with special attention to the role of songs in the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Liberation Movement. We will also explore popular music that arises out of African American traditions of resistance and the ways it functions in society today. We will explore the religious dimensions of popular music as well as the importance of music for social movements.

This course will have one two-hour session a week of lecture and guest presentations. It will include another hour-long section supplementing the lecture material. There will be weekly online discussions as well as 3 short papers. We will also be exploring films and musical pieces.

There will be the option of a final project or research paper depending on the level and interest of the students. This class is intended for MDIV and MA students, but can be modified for any students who are interested in the topic.

Learning Objectives:

We will explore and demonstrate the relationship of music to religion, music as religion, religious music, the religious dimensions of music, and the transformative potential of music as a force for social transformation. The students will take away a deeper understanding of music as a *concept* and be more aware of what music's *potential* is.

During this course, students will:

- Explore music history as a component of religious history
- Examine religion, religious activity, and the relationship of worship to music
- *Experience* and explore musical pieces as potential vehicles for ideas, beliefs and identity
- Gain a deeper understanding of the power of music on our emotions, our thoughts, and our social understandings.

- Encounter specific historical case studies where songs impacted social movements
- Explore the spiritual power and creative potential of each participant and allow them to more freely discuss and explore their own creativity,
- Practice a creative and engaged educational model, including and empowering students in their journey

Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Critically engage with examples of the creative act in terms of the conditions in which they arose, how they were received and what they can be said to mean
- Demonstrate an understanding of art practices, meaning, values, and methods within historical and cultural contexts.
- Participate in discussions around music, artists, religion and entertainment
- Experience a wide range of thinkers, intellectuals and artists and their works
- Encounter and articulate the transformative potential of the creative act

Course Policies:

- Academic Conduct <https://www.sksm.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integrity-misconduct/>
- Plagiarism <https://www.sksm.edu/plagiarism/>
- Notice to Students About Your Privacy (FERPA) <https://www.sksm.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act/>
- Disability Policy: <https://www.sksm.edu/resources/student-handbook/starr-king-policies/students-with-disabilities-policy/>

Format

Each week has two parts. There will be an asynchronous presentation, usually a video of a lecture or presentation that can be viewed each week on the student's own time. This will comprise one "part" of the week's material. There will be a two-hour synchronous class meeting which will be taken up with short lectures, including breakout rooms, questions, and general class discussion.

Requirements

Participation.

Participation and presence are the major components of this course. If you try, you cannot fail, and the responsibility for this is ultimately in your hands. We will learn primarily from engaging the material and interacting with one another as we explore that material. As the students strive to articulate their understanding and interpretation, so the professor will strive to incorporate our shared experience with what has gone before. It is essential that students come to class and participate while you are here.

The reading is an important component in the framing of the class and is designed to be manageable, and hopefully enjoyable.

The “writing assignments” are important to demonstrate the engagement of the student. Creative alternatives are encouraged.

All assignments are to be submitted through Moodle.

Three Short Papers. Due weeks 2, 4, and 6.

These 1-2 page papers are designed to strengthen student understanding of the course by focusing on a prompt. These prompts will allow students to combine autobiographical and interpretive approaches to the course content.

Online Discussion Board. Due weeks 1, 3, and 5.

Think of this as a chance to learn more about who we are as a group. This will build our discussion and keep us accountable to one another. Each member of the class must address the week’s question drawing on the material. They must also respond to at least one other post. Keep posts around 350 words.

I recommend setting up a meeting with me at some point during the course to discuss your ideas.

Final Take Home Paper/ Creative Project. Due week 8.

Students can choose between writing a final 12-15-page research paper and preparing a ‘creative project’ to illustrate their experiences and understandings of the relationship of Music and Religion which is the focus of the course. The creative project will be accompanied by a 4-page description/interpretation of the presentation. If you are interested in this angle, the second paper, due week 4 will be a prospectus outlining your final project including a bibliography.

Evaluation: The goal of this course is learning and growth. Starr King uses an evaluative grading process, which does not render a “letter” grade. This is considered Pass/Fail by the wider GTU, but it is not really Pass/Fail. It is a growing story of what you learn, or unlearn, and a picture of your engagement with creativity.

If a student is taking a course for a grade, they must notify the instructor. In that event, this is the framework under which I will be considering grades.

Grade Breakdown

Presence and Participation	30%
Online Discussion board	15%
Short Papers	15%
Final	40%
TOTAL	100%

Required Texts:

The reading for this course will be made available via PDF.

Read Josh Kun’s “Strangers among Sounds” and Carrasco’s “Music, the Religious Experience, and the Historical Record” prior to our first meeting.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: June 3 Origins: Music and Religion

Film: Latcho Drom

Part 1: Introduction and Orientation

Part 2: What is Religion? What is Music?

Required Reading:

Berdayev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*

Muow, *Wonderful Words of Life*

Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*

Long, "Popular Religion." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*

Post to the discussion board

Week 2: June 10 The Awesome

Film: Amadeus

Part 1: The Sublime

Part 2: Music and/as religion

Required Reading:

Ogasapian, *Church Music in America, 1620-2000.*

Bonds, *Music as Thought Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven.*

Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art.*

First Short Paper due

Week 3: June 17 Who Will Save Your Soul?

Film: The Yellow Submarine

Part 1: Music does....

Part 2: Music is *seen* to do...

Required Reading:

Allen, "More Subversion Than Meets the Ear."

Huck, "The Great Kid-Con."

Marcus, "A New Awakening."

Oakley, *The Devil's Music.*

Post to the discussion board

Week 4: June 24 Songs of Survival

Film: The Songs Are Free

Part 1: History and Culture

Part 2: Freedom Songs

Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation.*
Sanger, Kerran. "*When the Spirit Says Sing!*"

Second Short Paper due

Week 5: July 1 Sounds of Social Change

Film: Freedom Riders

Part 1: Social Movements

Part 2: Religious and Secular Music

Reed, *The Holy Profane.*

Jones, *Blues People.*

Carawan & Carawan, *Sing for Freedom.*

Post to the discussion board

Week 6: July 8 Transformation?

Film: Harlan County USA

Part 1: Society and Pop music

Part 2: Counterculture

Viorst. *Fire in the Streets.*

Doggett, *There's A Riot Going On.*

Oppenheimer, *Knocking on Heaven's Door.*

Ryback, *Rock Around the Bloc.*

Third Short Paper due

Week 7: July 15 Everything is at Risk

Film: The Wall Live in Berlin

Part 1: 20th Century Noise

Part 2: Devils and Deviants

Mooney, "Popular Music Since the 1920's."

Denisoff and Levine, "Brainwashing or Background Noise: The Popular Protest Song."

Robinson and Hirsch, "Teenage Response to Rock and Roll Protest Songs."

Stern, "Altamont: Pearl Harbor to Woodstock Nation."

West, "On Afro-American Music: From Bebop to Rap."

Week 8: July 22 Chulas Fronteras

Film: Chulas Fronteras

Part 1: Resistance and Resilience and cynicism

Part 2: Final projects

Sylvan, *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music*.
Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me*.
Werner, *A Change Is Gonna' Come*.

Final Projects due July 29 by 11:59 PM

The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and assigned readings to achieve course objectives. In this case, please send the updated syllabus so we can replace it in the course description at SKSM website.