

Course Proposal

I. Details:

- a) Course Title: Songs of Praise, Songs of Protest: Explorations in Spiritual, Hymns, and Protest Music.
- b) Sponsors: Dr. Lourin Plant, Music
Dr. Frances Johnson, Composition and Rhetoric
- c) Credit Hours: 3 credit hours
- d) Course level: 100 level/Rowan Seminar/ Undergraduate
- e) Curricular Effect: Under the Bildner Family Foundation New Jersey Campus Diversity Initiative, this course will increase the number of freshman seminar offerings that are interdisciplinary and have a focus on issues of democracy and diversity.
- f) Prerequisites: None
- g) Suggested Time/Implementation: Fall 2006 or Spring 2007.
One section per year in the first year. Additional sections may be offered if enrollment warrants.
- h) Resources: Through support of the Bildner Family Foundation New Jersey Campus Diversity Initiative, teaching faculty are on staff. A smart classroom will be required to teach this course.
While library resources are adequate, additional music and videos will be requested (supported through the Bildner Family Foundation New Jersey Campus Diversity Initiative.)

II. Rationale and Course Description:

This multi-disciplinary course, a product of the New Jersey Campus Diversity Grant through the Bildner Foundation, is a team-taught course that addresses issues of diversity and social change in the rhetoric of music.

This course will examine the ways in which music has served as an instrument for expressing social change, examining social behavior, and serving as a creative outlet for marginalized groups. A variety of songs including those from the African American, the 18th-19th century woman, and the civil rights and protester will be

studied. The songs of these social groups not allowed to be heard in other mediums often found a public forum in song. As such, the rhetoric of this music can provide an alternative history to be examined. Thus, the prism of democracy, diversity, and social justice that these songs characterize can provide a medium in which students are encouraged to study justice and social action not in theory but in action. The rhetoric of the song as well as its music will provide a medium for connecting the message of the song with actual historical times, events, and personalities.

To achieve this aim, the course will focus on the music of four different groups: One, spirituals; two, Blackface Minstrelsy; three, the feminization of hymnody; and four, the civil rights and protest songs of the 60's and early 70's. African-American music in the form of spirituals and Blackface Minstrelsy will provide a mechanism for exploring social change, tensions between races, confused dynamics of racial identity and stereotypes. Hymns of the late 18th and early 19th century will uncover how women used song as a means of self-expression often denied them in other more public spheres, like public lectures, newspapers, and editorials. Finally, the civil rights and protest songs of the 60s and 70s will provide a backdrop for exploring issues of race and social culture as they were manifested in through the rhetoric of music. It is our aim to have students understand the rhetoric of music by studying this material as well as listening to it and performing it. Lyrical singing or prior voice training will not be essential as singing voice is not the main thrust of this music; quite the contrary, this music's point and purpose is the message (the rhetoric) and the social action that the music stirred and promoted.

Designed as a Rowan Freshman Seminar, the course also has secondary aim. It attempts to enhance and strengthen students' critical thinking skills through explorations of the music and analysis of its cultural role. While music has always served as a vehicle for expression, particularly for marginalized voices, its rhetorical connections to issues of diversity often go unexplored. The music of the Court of Louis 15th in France may be studied but the power structures and practices that lead to musical creations are not. The movements of a symphony may be examined or the elements of a composer's life will be reviewed, but an examination of the intersections of music and history are not subject matter for many classes in musical education. As a discipline that focuses on notes, lyrics, voice, sound as represented in the concert or recital, discussions about other issues are thought to be secondary. This practice leaves a gap within students' understanding. By studying the intersections of race, social change, and music and by bringing issues of race, culture, and identity to the foreground, this course fills this gap, providing students with a venue in which such issues of diversity are critically and rhetorically examined.

This unique and exciting academic venture melds the expertise and life work of two professionals involved in academia from different educational perspectives. Dr. Johnson is an Associate Professor in the College of Communication (Department of Composition and Rhetoric) and currently serving as Director for the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Dr. Lourin Plant is an Assistant Professor of Music in the College of Fine and Performing Arts. He has served as an instructor of

voice and choirmaster at Rowan University where he also teaches classes in Music Appreciation.

III. Essence of the Course:

a. Objectives

- To fulfill the goals of the Rowan Seminar
- To introduce artistic forms, differing musical genres, and musical literatures
- To encourage creative thinking and active discussion
- To build a basic critical music vocabulary and apply the seven elements of musical criticism (form melody, harmony, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, and texture.)
- To forge an understanding of the history and chronology of the genres of spirituals, hymns, blackface minstrelsy, and civil rights/protest songs/music
- To provide insight into the role of music in evolving social, political, and religious institutions and understand the role of music as a force for social change
- To flesh out the connections between different genres of music (spirituals, hymns, blackface minstrelsy, and civil rights/protest songs/music)
- To encourage activities that draw upon self-development, confidence and experience
- To consider the contribution of women and minorities in the search for political/artistic voice
- To serve as a catalyst for personal positive social change

b) Topical Outline

1. Introduction to the course. Ice breakers. Background
2. Establishing a musical and rhetorical vocabulary.
3. Definition of terms.
4. Musical genres.
5. Spirituals, part 1.
6. Blackface Minstrelsy.
7. The feminization of hymnody.
8. Spirituals, part 2.
9. Civil rights music.
10. Protest music
11. Collaborative presentations

c) Assignments:

1. Weekly Reflection Responses.

Students will be required to participate in on-line discussions (blogs) in which they record their responses to music, readings, and other classroom activities. Often

instructors will post questions and other reflective comments for reviews. The use of Web-Ct will facilitate this work.

2. Midterm Multimedia Project.

Students will be asked to make a connection between particular songs and a moment in history in the form of a poster, video, painting, scrapbook, 3D image, song, or other multimedia, which they will bring and discuss. Group or individual projects.

3. Reflective Listening Project.

Students will select a piece of music to research and write about.

4. Group Seminar Presentations.

Teams of four to five students will prepare a presentation on a topic of their choice that relates to the issues and topics covered in class or on the web blog. The instructors will provide a list of suggested topic areas.

5. Class participation.

Students will be expected to read all the course material and to be able to discuss it. Participation in the web-ct discussions will also be expected. Students will also sing and perform songs in class.

6. Concerts.

Students will be expected to attend a musical event on campus and write a short analysis of its text and form.

4. Results of Consultations:

Consultations for this course have been completed via the Bildner Program.

5. Additional Supporting Information: Bibliography Attached

6. Sample Week-by-Week Overview of the Course

Weeks One and Two

Introduction to course. Establishing community. Discussion of Rowan Seminar Goals. Establishing a critical musical and rhetorical vocabulary. Defining terms. Discussion of the seven fundamentals of musical criticism. Introduction of the rhetoric of music and its criticism.

Weeks Three and Four

Spirituals, Part one. The origin, social function, symbolism, rhetorical messages, and the power of transcendence of African American spirituals. Listening. Becoming aware of form. Singing.

Weeks Five and Six

Hymns. The origin, social and political function, rhetorical and musical meanings of hymns created by women as a means self-expression. Listening, performance, and singing.

Weeks Seven, Eight,

Blackface Minstrelsy. The genre's origins, positives and negative aspects, and popularity. The origin and dissemination of racial and cultural stereotypes in the US as exhibited through the minstrelsy circuit of traveling shows. The first voices of African Americans on stage. Transmitting images into radio, television and film. *The Jazz Singer, Birth of a Nation, and Ethnic Notion (films)*.

Weeks Nine and Ten

Spirituals, Part Two. A continuation of the origin, social function, symbolism, rhetorical messages, and the power of transcendence of African American spirituals. Spirituals on the concert stage. First voices of African American women on stage. Listening, performance, and singing.

Weeks Eleven and Twelve

Civil Rights and protest music. An examination of the music of the civil rights and protest movement in word and song. Collections of freedom and protest songs, including figures of the movements such as Martin Luther King, the Southern Coalition and Leadership Conference, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the Democratic Convention in Chicago. The music of Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and others.

Weeks Thirteen, Fourteen and Fifteen

Group Seminar Presentations

c) Evaluation and Grading Procedures:

The final course grade will be based on the faculty evaluation of student work throughout the semester. The course participation grade will be assessed on student activity during the general classroom discussion, group exercises, and student presentations. The goal of each assignment is for students to demonstrate understanding of the content presented in the seminar.

Course evaluation will also be assessed through the standard Rowan Seminar evaluation. Additional evaluations may be undertaken at the discretion of the instructors.

7. Course Description:

This course will examine the ways in which music has served as an instrument for social change. African-American music in the form of Spirituals and Blackface Minstrelsy will provide a mechanism for exploring social change, tensions between races, confused dynamics of racial identity, and stereotypes. Hymns of the late 18th and early 19th century will demonstrate how women used song as a means of self-expression denied them in other spheres. Finally, the civil rights and protest songs of the 60s and 70's will provide a backdrop for exploring issues of race and social culture.