

**ETHNIC STUDIES 2100-01  
THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF HIP HOP  
FALL 2016**

**Instructor: Frank C. King, Jr**

**Location:** Doudna Hall 0144

**Meeting Times:** Tuesday 6:00-8:52

**Contact:** 246 Gardner Hall  
608-342-7343  
kingf@uwplatt.edu

**Office Hours** 9:00-10:50AM TU/TH  
1:00-2:00PM TU/TH

9:00-9:50AM MWF  
12:00-12:50PM MWF

**Open Door or By Appointment**

“**Hip Hop is America. Its only real crime is being so much so.** It boils mainstream standards and practices down to their essences, then turns up the flame. Violence, materialism, misogyny, homophobia, racialized agony, adolescent views of sex and sexuality . . . . These are the common, bankable, all-American obsessions. They’re the underbelly items that have always defined this country’s real, daily-life culture. What that means is the top-of-the-line hip-hop and its true artists (be they ‘mainstream’ or ‘underground’) soar on the same terms that America’s real artists – and everyday folk – have always soared: by being un-American, by flying in the face of the fucked up values and ideals that are wired and corroded in this country’s genetic code even as no-lip lip-service is given to notions of equality, justice, and fairness”--**Ernest Hardy**

Hip Hop is more than music/  
Hip is the knowledge/  
Hop is the movement/  
Hip Hop is intelligent movement—**KRS-ONE**

“All art is political”—**Amiri Baraka**

**Course Description**

There is no denying that Hip Hop is one of the most recognized forms of music in the world. It is also one of the most misunderstood cultural forms. It has influenced many aspects of American culture such as fashion, language, sports, and entertainment. But we tend to pigeonhole Hip Hop as one category that oftentimes connects to aspects of negativity. Media personalities routinely accuse Hip Hop of the violence in America a culprit to the plight of impoverished Black communities. While these problems have existed for generations, Hip Hop becomes the easy scapegoat for every societal ill in America. What Hip Hop does is reflect

America's problems in such a brutally honest way that causes fear among individuals too afraid to confront our nation's issues.

Throughout this course, we will analyze Hip Hop culture and the way it developed into a global phenomenon. In examining Hip Hop, we will discuss intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. By developing our critical media analysis, we will develop a stronger understanding of the historical connection between Hip Hop and systemic forms of oppression today. We will examine Hip Hop's history and look at it as a culture rather than a musical genre.

**It is important to fully understand that Hip Hop is not just a singular entity, but rather a complex culture with many elements and interpretations. We will look at Hip Hop as a revolutionary outlet, a pedagogical tool, an apparatus that reinforces racial and sexual stereotypes, as well as a multi-billion dollar industry that oftentimes neglects the communities originally intended for.**

In this class we will look at alternative rhetorics that may go against everything that we have been convinced as gospel during our entire academic experiences. I only ask that you come to class with an open mind, look at the quotes at the beginning of the syllabus, and ask questions.

This class is almost three hours long with two 10 minute breaks at the 50 minute mark. It will usually be divided into 3 parts\*:

- The first hour will be lecture/reading analysis
- The second hour will be an audio/video analysis.
- The third hour will be group discussions.

\*These will occasionally overlap.

### **Required Texts:**

You will not have any materials to purchase for this class. The majority of the readings will be available via D2L or email.

- Please note that electronic devices such as laptops and tablets are allowed during specified times. When digital readings are assigned, **students will not have other browsers open, nor will they be using electronic devices for anything other than this course.**

### **Essential Terms:**

It is understandable that many students will not know proper terminologies in discussing issues that may seem controversial and uncomfortable. Terms such as *Race* can be seen as pejorative. The only race is the *Human Race*. Race is not biological, but a social construct. Therefore statements like "The black race," "The white race," "The Asian race," will not be used.

Also using the term "Colored" is not acceptable; it has been historically used to distinguish groups as inferior based on social AND biological determinants. The proper terminology is *People of Color* (as an overall term), or Black, Latino, Asian-American, White, Native American, etc.

Unless directly quoting from another source, you must use Hip Hop (capitalized, without hyphen). We must acknowledge that Hip Hop is a culture and needs to be given that recognition. Capitalizing Hip Hop will help students understand that is more than our general understanding.

This semester we will discuss some controversial issues; no issue is as controversial as the N-Word. Because it is the most heated word in the English language, for this class your instructor will be the only one permitted to say it. To ensure a safe learning environment, please refrain from using any type of heated words that have been historically used as derogatory terms. We are going to discuss some controversial issues, and while open discussion is encouraged, please be mindful of terms that can offend.

When discussing LGBTQ communities, the term “Queer,” if used in its proper context, is allowed. Proper context includes describing the entirety of certain groups (eg. “Queer communities face discrimination beyond the marriage equality debate.”). An example of improper context would be “The queers are fighting for marriage equality.”

In order for this class to be successful we must understand that the system of White supremacy is the problem and we need to address the system. There is no singular “White Man” causing problems, nor should there be any chastising of your fellow classmates. This class will not be about bashing White people. We are ALL victims of White supremacist systems, and this class will discuss how.

### **Attendance:**

Attendance is important and will be taken for this class. Because we meet only once a week, you will be allowed a total of 3 absences (excused or unexcused). More than 3 will result in reduction of grade. 5 or more will result in an F grade.

- Please note: if there is a trend in absence or any other issues that can greatly impact your grade, and after consultation with me, Beacon Early Alert will be notified.
  - For more information of Beacon Early Alert, please contact the Pioneer Academic and Transitional Help (PATH) Center.
- On the first day, I will assign you groups for collaboration for the entire semester. The individuals in your group will be who you talk to regarding missed information. You will be completely responsible to make up assignments, notes, readings, etc. DO NOT ASK ME WHAT YOU MISSED!!

If you are more than 15 minutes late, please do not come to class. It will cause a disruption.

### **Cell Phone Policy:**

As stated earlier, electronic devices will be used at specific times during class. Students taking advantage of this will result in restriction of electronic devices. Cell phones are not allowed, so please put your phones away during class.

### **Persons with Disabilities:**

The Ethnic Studies Program supports members of our community who request disability accommodations. Please notify me during the first two (2) weeks of class for any requirements needed for the course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented

disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). All accommodations MUST be approved through the SSWD. Late notification may result in the request being unavailable.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:**

UW-Platteville takes academic misconduct seriously and strives to promote an environment of achievement and scholastic success. Therefore students violating (such as cheating on exams/quizzes) could result in severe punishment.

According to University website, “Plagiarism is stealing or using the writing or ideas of others as though they are one’s own.” Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated in this class. It is important that you cite the sources you use to avoid any potential punishment. If you are unsure about how to use another author's work to support your own ideas without plagiarizing, please ask me.

### **Classroom Etiquette:**

Along with cell phones and general consideration for your instructor and fellow classmates, please be respectful of all questions and comments during class. By analyzing alternative rhetorics, we will be discussing some controversial topics that will spark heated debates. Please respect the opinions of others, especially those you disagree with.

### **Contacting Instructor**

Email is the best way to contact me. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. Since I will have four courses with almost 160 students this semester, it is important that you follow these guidelines for email communication:

**IN YOUR EMAIL, YOU MUST HAVE NAME, COURSE TITLE, NUMBER, DAY AND TIME!**

Failure to do so will result in a late response from me.

## **Assignments**

### **Participation**

In order for this class to be productive you will need to come to class every day prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply doing the reading, but arriving at class ready to discuss the issues for that day. Participating in class not only consists of talking but also includes listening, so please do not talk while others are speaking). If there is a lack of participation I will “volunteer” individuals to discuss the materials for that day.

### **Weekly Write-Ups**

This will be given to you on a weekly basis and will entail anything from a write-up of the week’s readings or an analysis of a specific issue. This will be given in class and will be due the following class session. Some weekly write-ups will be in group form.

**Points for Each Write-Up 25pts**

### **In-Class Write-Up/Presentation**

Assignments will be given randomly and they will not be made up. Therefore it is crucial to attend class to ensure you do not miss any of the assignments.

**Points for Each Write-Up 10 pts. 15pts for each presentations**

### **Music Journal**

Throughout the semester we will discuss Hip Hop culture in music. This assignment will have you log the music provided in class, as well as an analysis of Hip Hop music that is in your everyday lives.

**Total Points 100pts.**

### **Final**

The final will be a group presentation that will analyze certain aspects of Hip Hop culture. You will need audio and visual materials and full participation from the entire group. More details to come later in the semester.

**Total Points 200pts.**

### **Determining your grade**

All grades will be updated on D2L. This way you can know what your grade is without asking me on a weekly basis.

<b>Weekly Write-Up/ Group</b>	<b>25Pts Each</b>
<b>Quizzes/ In-Class Write-Up</b>	<b>10Pts Each</b>
<b>Presentations</b>	<b>15Pts Each</b>
<b>Music Journal</b>	<b>100Pts</b>
<b>Final</b>	<b>200Pts</b>

### **Grade Breakdown**

<b>100%-95%</b>	<b>A</b>
<b>94-90</b>	<b>A-</b>
<b>89-87</b>	<b>B+</b>
<b>86-83</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>82-80</b>	<b>B-</b>
<b>79-77</b>	<b>C+</b>
<b>76-73</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>72-70</b>	<b>C-</b>
<b>69-60</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>&lt;60</b>	<b>F</b>

### **Late Paper Policy**

***I do not take late assignments!!! All assignments, quizzes, presentations, etc. will not be made up!!*** However, there will be extra credit assignments given throughout the semester. While some assignments will be turned in through dropbox, you must plan for hard copies to be required! **DO NOT EMAIL ME ANY ASSIGNMENTS!!!!**

Due to scheduling restraints, you cannot make up the Final.

## Course Reading Schedule

PLEASE NOTE: READING LIST AND SCHEDULE ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE  
READING FOR WEEK WILL BE DUE THE FOLLOWING WEEK:

### Week 1 Sep 5-9

Syllabus, Class Introduction

Assignment: "Love of My Life" When did you fall in love with Hip Hop

Reading: "The Post-Hip-Hop Generation"

Begin the Questlove *Vulture* Series

### Week 2 Sep 12-16

Lecture/Discussion: Hip Hop History: Before its creation.

Discussion: "The Post-Hip-Hop Generation"

Reading: "Hip Hop and the Evolution of the Black Image"

Continue the Questlove *Vulture* Series

Assignment: Reading analysis on one of the first 3 readings (I CHOOSE)

### Week 3 Sep 19-23

Lecture/Discussion: Hip Hop History: Now

Reading: "Hip Hop Reflects Black Dysfunctional Ghetto Culture"

"Hip Hop is Destroying America's Values"

Assignment: Reading Analysis

### Week 4 Sep 26-30

Lecture/Discussion: Hip Hop's Voice

Video: *Letter to the President*

Assignment: Group presentations of songs

### Week 5 Oct 3-7

Group presentations

Lecture/Discussion: 9 Elements

Reading: "Global Black Self-Fashionings"

"The Politics of Graffiti"

"Physical Graffiti"

Hip Hop Language Articles

Video: *The Freshest Kids*

Assignment: Group analysis

### Week 6 Oct 10-14

Lecture/Discussion: 9 Elements Continued

Readings: "Global Black Self-Fashionings"

"The Politics of Graffiti"

"Physical Graffiti"

Hip Hop Language Articles

**Video: *Fresh Dressed***

**Week 7 Oct 17-21**

**Discussion of readings/ Analysis Due**

**Lecture/Discussion: “Gangsta Rap”**

**Readings “Rebels with a Cause: Gangstas, Militants, Media, and the Conquest for Hip Hop”**

**Assignment: Reading Analysis**

**Week 8 Oct 24-28**

**Lecture/Discussion: Race and Hip Hop’s Political Economy**

**Reading: “Old White Men (Or Who Owns Hip Hop?)”**

**“Why White Kids Love Hip Hop”**

**Assignment: Group Writing Assignment**

**Week 9 Oct 31-Nov-4**

**Lecture/Discussion: Gender and sexuality in Hip Hop**

**Readings: “Hip Hop Demeans Women”**

**“Scared Straight: Hip Hop, Outing, and the Pedagogy of Queerness”**

**“Love Feminism, But Where’s My Hip Hop?”**

**Assignment: Group Presentation**

**Week 10 Nov 7-11**

**Lecture/Discussion: Hip Hop and Global Revolution**

**Readings and Group Exercise:**

**Hip Hop and the Arab Spring**

**“Native Tongues: A Roundtable on Hip Hop’s Indigenous Movement”**

**“Rapping and Repping Asian: Race, Authenticity, and the Asian American MC”**

**Video: *Slingshot Hip Hop***

**Week 11 Nov 14-18**

**Lecture/Discussion: Hip Hop as Pedagogy**

**Readings:**

**Sections from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed***

**“Stakes is High: Toward an Anthropology of Hip-Hop—Based Education”**

**Assignment: Audio/Visual Project**

**Week 12 Nov 21-25**

**Thanksgiving Break. Work on projects**

**Week 13 Nov 28-Dec 2**

**Audio/Visual Project**

**Lecture/Discussion: The Religion of Hip Hop and Urban Inspirational Metaphysics**

**Video: *Slam***

**Week 14 Dec 5-9**

**Video: *At Night I Fly***

**Work on Final Presentations**

**Week 15 Dec 12-16**

**Music Journal Due**

**Final Presentations: Politics of Hip Hop**

**Week 16 Dec 19-23**

**Final Presentations: Politics of Hip Hop**