

The Ohio State University  
School of Music

## **PROTEST IN AMERICAN MUSIC**

MUSIC 431

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Two 90 minute meetings per week

Dr. David Bruenger

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Office Hours: TBA

Class meeting: TBA

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### **Overview**

The complex interrelationship between and among music, media, commerce, political consent, and social dissent has both shaped and reflected the crucial social and political movements of American history, profoundly impacted the lives of individual Americans, and provided an economic foundation for a protest music industry. Using both topical and chronological frameworks, this course examines musical practice, evolving media technologies, as well as selected political, social, and commercial enterprises engaged in the creation and distribution of socio-political commentary and protest of which music is a central feature.

Through lecture, media presentation, reading, and class discussion, this course will both explore and critically examine the music and musicians of American protest and the social, political, economic, and environmental circumstances that inspired it.

This course fulfills an elective requirement of the Music, Media, and Enterprise minor and may be chosen as an elective in the Bachelor of Arts in Music.

### **Selected Goals & Objectives**

- To increase awareness of the history and diversity of social/political protest and commentary in music using assigned listening, reading, lecture and media presentation.
- To explore, critically consider, and discuss music as social/political commentary and protest, as well a tool to influence public opinion and consent.
- To improve the ability to develop and effectively communicate critical responses to complex artistic and social issues. Factual knowledge and critical understanding will be assessed in both verbal and written forms via class discussions and written examinations.

### **Texts**

- Reading, viewing, listening as assigned
- Selected readings

Available in Music Library or online via Carmen:

Peddie, I, Ed. *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, Ashgate, 2006.

Margolick, D. *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights*,

McDermott, Ian. "Bruce Springsteen, Ronald Reagan, and the American Dream." *Popular Music*

*and Society* (Winter 1992): 1-9.

“Musical responses to 9/11: From Conservative patriotism to radicalism”

<http://www.freemuse.org/sw8119.asp>

“9/11: Is protest music dead?”

Music used to be the dominant voice against war. Now it's easier to shut up and get paid.

What's really going on? Extensive article on 9/11 effects and media concentration, by Jeff Chang, 16 April 2002

<http://www.freemuse.org/sw6334.asp>

“Clear Channel: September 11 & Corporate Censorship”

<http://www.freemuse.org/sw6621.asp>

“No Room for Protest Music On Corporate Radio”

<http://www.freearticulator.com/culture/no-room-for-protest-music-on-corporate-radio/>

### Online Resources via *Carmen*:

- This course will be managed using *Carmen*
- The syllabus, scheduling information, other study materials, assignments, email (to instructor and other students), and student grade information will be available via *Carmen*.
- It will be your responsibility to check the *Carmen* page for this course regularly in order to stay informed about schedule changes

### Grades

- Four written exams, each worth 15% (60% of final grade)
- Final critical research project (30% of final grade)
- Posting and responding to posts in five assigned online discussions (10% of the final grade)
- The following grading scale is used for assigning grades in this course. Normal rounding rules apply and a grading curve is not used.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	E
93+	92-90	89-88	87-83	82-80	79-78	77-73	72-70	69-68	67-60	59-

- Note: To protect student confidentiality grades will never be provided by phone or email. Grades will only be available via *Carmen* or during office hours.

### Policies & Expectations:

- Permission to make-up an examination is not automatic. Request permission, in writing (email is preferred), in advance. Makeup examinations will be scheduled only when the instructor approves your request.
- As a courtesy to fellow students, the subject matter, and the instructor, please turn off cell phones and pagers during class.
- Since coming in late or leaving early tends to be disruptive, please try to avoid doing so.

### Participation & Discussion

Participation requires more than simple attendance. Participation includes giving your full attention during class, being prepared by reading assignments before class, asking questions, and making contributions to the class discussion. In this class, participation also includes writing posts to five assigned online discussion assignments (as noted on schedule below). In addition,

students are required to respond to other student's posts. Both original posts and responses may include both fact and informed opinion (citing sources for facts), but must use appropriate language, demonstrate integrity, and express respect for diversity and difference. Failure to complete online discussion assignments or appropriately participate in classroom activities will negatively impact your grade.

## Critical Research Project:

- 8-10 pages (1500+ words) of *substantive* content
- APA style
- References:

A minimum of 5 references from a variety of sources that represent legitimate inquiry and that are suitable for academic conversations is required. In other words, you may use the Internet as a resource with the following understanding: The INTERNET IS NOT THE ONLY source of reference materials; Wikipedia is not necessarily a legitimate source of information suitable for academic publications; utilizing Internet sources that are simply copies of one post does not represent multiple opinions, ideas, or sources of information; blogs are most often personal opinion or anecdotal evidence.

With this understanding, you should be able to make good decisions about reference materials. If you are still unclear, email me with your questions.

Your opportunity to successfully achieve 100% on this paper requires the examination of both music and other forms of media that cover the same topic and time period. If you choose to examine a single media or musical source, you will receive a 20% reduction for the paper grade.

## Discussion Topics

For each topic (listed below) you must post one to two paragraphs of original thought on the assigned subject. You may express your own opinions, but you must support it with fact. When you use another writer and/or source, you must cite it.

1. If “yankee doodle” is an insult, why would “Yankees” use it as a rallying cry? Who was their intended audience or audiences? What was their message? What did they want listeners to do?
2. The description of America as a cultural and social “melting pot” is well established. What does the film “Gangs of New York” suggest about the experience of being “in the pot?” What role does music play in that film and, based on assigned readings and class discussion, what role did music play in the assimilation of new cultures into America?
3. What was the significance of “Route 23” to the laborers of Kentucky early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? How does this compare to experiences of African-American farm workers of the Deep South? Why is movement—whether the highway, the railway, or the riverway—so critical to the American experience? Can you think of modern musical examples that talk about mobility and what it means to be an American?
4. What do the songs “Allentown,” “We Can’t Make It Here Any More,” and “The Preacher and the Slave” have in common? How are they different?
5. Choose one of the “protest music videos” we discussed in class: how did the visuals and music interact in that particular case? Did one strengthen, weaken, or change the meaning of the other? Can you generalize about the significance of the “music video” in modern political and social discourse? What about in modern commercial enterprise?

## **Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

## **Disability Services**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

The escort service is available for students enrolled in evening courses. The phone number is 292-3322.

## Schedule: Topics, Assignments, Tests

<b>Week</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	1	Links: <b>Carmen Course Webpage, syllabus and schedule</b>	<b>Introduction:</b> Syllabus & Course expectations What is protest music? Why do we study it?
	2	Readings: <b>Rosenthal, "Serving the Movement: The Role of Music," <i>Popular Music And Society, Fall/Winter 2001.</i></b> (Carmen reading list)	<b>Definitions:</b> Argument, Persuasion, Propaganda Social Functions of Music Voice and Social Identity Political and Social Movements
2	1	Links: <b>Broadsheet Ballads:</b> <a href="http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/entertainment/2003328195_murderballads30.html?syndication=rss">http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/entertainment/2003328195_murderballads30.html?syndication=rss</a>  <b>Cutty Wren - Video:</b> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nfzxtBjosY">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nfzxtBjosY</a>	<b>Music and Social Inequity</b> - <i>The Cutty Wren</i>  <b>American Experience &amp; Identity</b> - <i>American Taxation</i> - <i>Yankee Doodle</i>
	2	Links: <b>Gangs of New York:</b> <a href="http://urbanography.com/5_points/index.html">http://urbanography.com/5_points/index.html</a>  <b>Freedom Songs:</b> <a href="http://www.osblackhistory.com/songs.php">http://www.osblackhistory.com/songs.php</a>  <b>John Brown:</b> <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown/sfeature/song.html">http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown/sfeature/song.html</a>  <b>Dixie's Land:</b> <a href="http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/patc/dixie/index.html">http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/patc/dixie/index.html</a>	<b>The Consequences of Human Commodification: <i>The Historical Economic Necessity of Cheap Labor Indentured Servitude</i></b> - <i>Gangs of New York</i> [excerpt]  <b>Slavery and Abolition</b> - <i>Follow the Drinking Gourd</i> - <i>Get Off The Track</i>  <b>The Civil War</b> - <i>John Brown's Body</i> - <i>Dixie's Land</i>
3	1	Reading: <b>Eckholm, "A Bluecollar Way of Life Disappears in Ohio," <i>International Herald Tribune, 1-16-08</i></b> (Carmen reading list)	<b>Industrial Revolution, Social Migration, and the American Worker:</b> - <i>Killin' Floor</i> - <i>I Am a Girl of Constant Sorrow</i> - <i>Readin', Ritin', Route 23</i>
	2		<b>EXAM 1</b>  <b>Research Paper: Topic and one paragraph abstract due (in Carmen Dropbox)</b>

4	1	<p>Links:  <b>Hard Times: Music of the Great Depression</b>  <a href="http://www.authentichistory.com/1930s/music/01.html">http://www.authentichistory.com/1930s/music/01.html</a></p> <p>Readings:  <b>Music of the Great Depression, pp. 1-13, Introduction</b></p>	<p><b>Plight of the Common Man - The Great Depression and Dust Storms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Brother Can You Spare a Dime?</i></li> </ul> <p>Unions, Socialism, and the Red Scare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The Preacher and the Slave</i></li> </ul>
	2	<p>Links:  <b>Woody Guthrie Official Site</b>  <a href="http://www.woodyguthrie.org/biography/biography1.htm">http://www.woodyguthrie.org/biography/biography1.htm</a></p> <p><b>Sounds From the Dustbowl</b>  <a href="http://www.authentichistory.com/1930s/dustbowl/01.html">http://www.authentichistory.com/1930s/dustbowl/01.html</a></p>	<p><b>From Authenticity to Commodity:</b></p> <p>Woody Guthrie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Pastures of Plenty</i></li> <li>- <i>This Land is Your Land</i></li> </ul> <p>Folk Revival and the Protest Music "Industry"</p>
5	1	<p>Readings:  <b>Erick Eckholm, A Blue Collar Way of Life Disappears in Ohio</b></p> <p><b>MSNBC: The Soundtrack of Their Campaigns</b></p> <p><b>ABC News: The Business of Political Music</b></p> <p><b>McDermott, Ian. "Bruce Springsteen, Ronald Reagan, and the American Dream." <i>Popular Music and Society</i> (Winter 1992): 1-9</b></p> <p>[Carmen readings]</p>	<p><b>Downsizing the American Dream:</b>  <b><i>Globalization and the Contemporary American Worker</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Born in the USA</i></li> <li>- <i>Allentown</i></li> <li>- <i>We Can't Make It Here Anymore</i></li> </ul> <p><b>You Are My Sunshine: Political Campaign Music</b></p>
	2	<p>Readings:  <b>Bruenger, Theory Overview</b>  [Carmen readings]</p>	<p><b>Introduction to Theoretical Frameworks:</b></p> <p><i>Marx - Political Economy</i>  <i>Adorno - Critical Theory</i>  <i>Foucault - Knowledge/Power</i>  <i>Debord - Commodification and the Society of the Spectacle</i></p>
6	1		<p><b>EXAM 2</b></p>
	2	<p>Links:  <b>Strange Fruit: The Film</b>  <a href="http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/film.html">http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/film.html</a></p> <p>Readings:  <b>Strange Fruit</b>  <b>Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights, Chapter 1</b>  [Carmen readings]</p>	<p><b>Domestic Violence &amp; Civil Rights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Strange Fruit</i></li> <li>- <i>We Shall Overcome</i></li> </ul> <p><b>African-American Identity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud</i></li> <li>- <i>Everyday People</i></li> <li>- <i>Funny Vibe</i></li> </ul>
7	1	<p>Readings:  <b>Malkin/DiFranco, Art is Activism</b>  [Carmen readings]</p>	<p><b>Womens' Rights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I Am Woman</i></li> <li>- <i>The Pill</i></li> <li>- <i>Grand Canyon</i></li> </ul>

	2	Links: Vietnam Era Antiwar Music <a href="http://www.jwsrockgarden.com/jw02vvaw.htm">http://www.jwsrockgarden.com/jw02vvaw.htm</a>	<b>War: Vietnam</b> - <i>Eve of Destruction</i> - <i>Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag</i> - <i>Ohio</i>
8	1	Readings: Hajdu, <i>Folk Hero</i> [Carmen readings]	<b>Protest Music Business</b> <b><i>Authentic vs Commercialized</i></b> Woody Guthrie and His Tradition Phil Ochs - <i>The Power and the Glory</i> Bob Dylan - <i>Subterranean Homesick Blues</i> Legacy of <i>Ohio</i> : - <i>War</i> - <i>Ball of Confusion</i>  <b>Research Paper Revised Draft due if you want feedback and opportunity to rewrite (in Carmen Dropbox)</b>
	2		<b>EXAM 3</b>
9	1	Readings: Oliver, <i>Democracy in Suburbia</i> [Carmen readings]	<b>Postmodernity: Problems of Commodification &amp; Alienation</b> - <i>Little Boxes</i> - <i>Callifornia Uber Alles/Kill the Poor</i>
	2	Links: Potter, "The Future is History: Hip Hop in the Aftermath of Postmodernity," in Peddie, <i>The Resiting Muse</i> , pp. 65-74	<b>Postmodernity: Urban Poverty &amp; Disempowerment - Hip Hop</b> - <i>Grandmaster Flash, The Message</i> - <i>Public Enemy, Fight the Power</i> - <i>Nas, Rule</i>
10	1	Links: "Musical responses to 9/11: From Conservative patriotism to radicalism" <a href="http://www.freemuse.org/sw8119.asp">http://www.freemuse.org/sw8119.asp</a>	<b>Postmodern Political Responses:</b> - <i>The Day After Tomorrow</i> - <i>Dear Mr. President</i> - <i>Yell Fire</i> - <i>Obama, Yes We Can</i> & responses
	2	Links: 9/11: Is protest music dead? <a href="http://www.freemuse.org/sw6334.asp">http://www.freemuse.org/sw6334.asp</a>  Clear Channel: September 11 & Corporate Censorship <a href="http://www.freemuse.org/sw6621.asp">http://www.freemuse.org/sw6621.asp</a>  No Room for Protest Music On Corporate Radio <a href="http://www.freearticulator.com/culture/no-room-for-protest-music-on-corporate-radio/">http://www.freearticulator.com/culture/no-room-for-protest-music-on-corporate-radio/</a>	<b>Music Mashups &amp; Digital Shorts - Protest, Propaganda, Discourse, &amp; Consent in the 21st-Century Social Media</b> - George Bush Doesn't Care About Black People - We Will Not Be Silenced - Counting Bodies Like Sheep  <b>Research Paper Final Version due (in Carmen Dropbox)</b>
Finals Week		<b>Final scheduled according to University Academic Calendar</b>	<b>EXAM 4</b>