**Women, Music, and the Civil Rights Struggle**

**Arts & Sciences 1137.\*\*, Freshman Seminar**

**Spring Semester 2016, 1 Credit Hour**

**Monday mornings**

**Room**

##### Instructor Office

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# Course Description

This course highlights three African-American women who have used their music to advocate for civil rights: Marian Anderson, Nina Simone, and Janelle Monáe. All three have cultivated distinctive personal styles of singing. As highly visible public personalities, all three have spoken to the press and the public about civil rights—which is yet another kind of performance.

This semester we aim to understand the strategies they used to communicate effectively as musicians and civil rights activists. We will use many sources of information: videos, audio, fan mail, articles, blog posts, and classmates’ observations.

Some courses are taught by the Socratic method, in which the teacher asks questions and the students are required to puzzle out answers to those questions. In this class, the students formulate their own questions­—interesting, answerable questions—and we will learn to develop good answers to those questions. (See Leon Neyfakh, “Are We Asking the Right Questions?” *Boston Globe,* May 20, 2012, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2012/05/19/just-ask/k9PATXFdpL6ZmkreSiRYGP/story.html>)

**Course Objectives**

1. To become familiar with three great musicians and their songs
2. To understand the role of the arts in activism
3. To use writing and discussion as tools to increase our understanding

# Texts

Students will have weekly assignments: each week there will be a combination of listening, reading, and/or writing.

Central texts, which will be used by all students, are listed in the weekly schedule below. They will be provided free of charge in Carmen, via YouTube, or through the OSU Libraries. Students are expected to use the Resource List appended to this syllabus to support their writing projects as the semester goes along.

# Grading

This course will use a letter grade.

**Calculation of final grade will be based on:**

**Writing assignments:** 35% : These will be short essays, most one paragraph in length, completed outside of class and submitted online. To receive full credit, these should present good questions (interesting and answerable) and seek to answer them by presenting evidence in a compelling way. Prose should be error-free, in a style and register that complement the argument.

**In-class check-ins:** 20% : Several students will be asked to report on their notes, observations, and questions or to read their paragraphs aloud. Students should come prepared to report.

**Participation in class discussion:** 30% :

• Be respectful of others. Productive and thoughtful disagreement is fine (in fact, it is essential to learning); but it is also very important that each of us respect others’ ideas and opinions. Everyone in the conversation should be taken seriously.

• Maintain the privacy of participants. Federal law (FERPA) protects the privacy of each student's academic information; this also means that comments made in this class should not be distributed or discussed outside of class unless you first ask the permission of the person whose words you would like to cite.

• Try to contribute substance and support to the group conversation. This course relies on a collaborative model of learning, where each person plays an active role both as a learner and as a contributor of ideas to others’ learning.

**Final paper:** 15% : A maximum of 3 pages in length, this paper should focus on one interesting and answerable question, drawing on the materials studied throughout the semester. To receive full credit, the paper should present relevant evidence in a compelling way, including at least one piece of evidence not considered in class (from the Resource List or elsewhere). Prose should be error-free, in a style and register that complement the argument. All sources should be cited appropriately.

Late assignmentswill lose one letter grade per two days of lateness, unless documentation of medical or family emergency is provided. After one unexcused absence, failure to attend class will affect your participation grade.

**Grading scale:**

93-100: A 80-82: B- 68-69: D+

90-92: A- 78-79: C+ 63-67: D

88-89: B+ 73-77: C below 63 E

83-87: B 70-72: C-

I reserve the right to curve grades upward—never downward—at the end of the semester.

**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://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf>).

**Students with Disabilities**

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/>.

#### Weekly Schedule

### **Week 1 – Introductions**

**In class:** Meeting Marian, Nina, and Janelle: brief videos; initial questions

### **Week 2 – Marian, as seen on TV**

**Prepare** before this class meeting: select a few favorite questions and post online in Carmen discussion forum; read others’ questions.

**In class**: view selections from “The Lady from Philadelphia” (Edward R. Murrow’s film about Marian Anderson, 1957) and take notes with observations and questions

### **Week 3 – Question Workshop**

**Prepare** before this class meeting: choose a favorite question (interesting and answerable) and write a paragraph as a first attempt at answering it, based on your notes from “The Lady from Philadelphia.” Post paragraph on Carmen and be ready to share it in class.

**In class:** sharing and discussion of paragraphs

### **Week 4 – Marian’s fans**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

**•** Read excerpts from Marian’s fan mail (held in the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania; a PDF will be in Carmen), and see how these may change or deepen our questions.

• Write some observations, and the questions those observations inspire, to share.

**In class:** sharing and discussion of observations; writing strategies; in-class writing

**Week 5 – Minorities and Media**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• Read and make notes on *Window Dressing on the Set: Women and Minorities in Television, a Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights,* 1977, pp. ii-iii, 2-6, 8-10; download from Hathi Trust at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007412706>; you will need to log in with your OSU credentials (orange button at upper right).

• Read and make notes on Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation," *Third Text* 4, no. 10 (1990): 61-63, 65-67 (download link in Carmen).

**In class**: Video viewings: Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam,” “Ain’t Got No, I Got Life,” “Four Women,” “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black”

### **Week 6 – Nina: the music**

## Prepare before this class meeting:

Video viewings/reviewings: Nina Simone, “Mississippi Goddam” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVQjGGJVSXc)), “Ain’t Got No, I Got Life” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5jI9I03q8E)), “Four Women” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nf9Bj1CXPH8)), “Suzanne” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pscDRqkFro)), “Work Song Live” (Merv Griffin Show, 1966, [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yfQNdwgvJMw)), “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hdVFiANBTk)): write down observations and questions

**In class**: share observations and questions, start to build new paragraphs

### **Week 7 – Nina: the life**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• Read and take notes on Brian Phillips, “Run to the Devil: The Ghosts and Grace of Nina Simone,” *Grantland,* June 26, 2015,

<http://grantland.com/hollywood-prospectus/run-to-the-devil-the-ghosts-and-the-grace-of-nina-simone/>

• Using the notes you have accumulated about Nina Simone, write a paragraph answering one of your questions (post on Carmen)

**In class:** sharing and discussion of paragraphs

### **Week 8 – Nina: in context**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

Read and take notes on Tammy L. Kernodle, “‘I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free’: Nina Simone and the Redefining of the Freedom Song of the 1960s,” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 3 (August 2008): 295 – 317. (OSU Libraries)

**In class:** discussion of article and reading strategies

### **Week 9 – Nina and Janelle**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• View/listen and take notes: Janelle Monáe, “Tightrope” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwnefUaKCbc)), “Cold War (Official Music Video, [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqmORiHNtN4)),” “Q.U.E.E.N. feat. Erykah Badu” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEddixS-UoU))

• Read Molly Hagan, “Janelle Monáe” in *Current Biography,* May 2013, 76-81 (PDF in Carmen)

• Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting Nina’s and Janelle’s performances; post paragraph on Carmen

**In class:** sharing and discussion of paragraphs

### **Week 10 – Janelle, ArchAndroid**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• Listen to Janelle Monáe’s concept album, “ArchAndroid” (lyrics in Carmen, link to audio will be provided); take notes and write questions

**In class:** discussion of album; sharing and discussion of questions

### **Week 11 – Janelle’s voice and persona**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• Watch and make notes on the interview “Archandroid Janelle Monáe in Studio Q,” timepoint 0-3:00, 16:30-27:58 ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMxQEIGmDww)); Janelle Monáe & Wondaland, “Hell You Talmbout” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SttWb9mDp3Q)); and Janelle Monáe, “Concert- Lowlands 2014,” speech at timepoint 34:10 ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SonH0iVGh8)).

• Make questions; these might compare Janelle with Marian or Nina

**In class:** discussion of persona; sharing and discussion of questions

### **Week 12 – Janelle: in context**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• Read and take notes on Daylanne K. English and Alvin Kim, “Now We Want Our Funk Cut: Janelle Monáe’s Neo-Afrofuturism,” *American Studies,* 52, no. 4 (2013): 217-230. (OSU Libraries)

• Listening to go with English/Kim article:

# Parliament, “Mothership Connection (Star Child) - Live Houston 1976” ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GT3ecv01xDE))

Parliament, “Funkentelechy” ([YouTube)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBAF3NNYAW4)

**In class:** discussion of article and reading strategies

### **Week 13 – Prep work for final papers**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• Review your notes from the semester and think of a compelling, interesting and answerable question that can be answered in three pages. Start to gather some evidence that would help you make an answer to your question.

# In class: discussion of writing strategies, loosely based on Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (W.W. Norton, 2009—not a required text!)

### **Week 14 – Wrap-up**

**Prepare** before this class meeting:

• be ready with questions about writing process

**In class:** discussion

Final papers due **Weds. April 26, 5 pm** (in Carmen)

**Resource List**

**Music and the Civil Rights movement**

Raymond Arsenault, *The Sound of Freedom: Marian Anderson, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Concert that Awakened America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009). On reserve in Music/Dance Library.

Bennett Berger, “Audiences, Art, and Power,” *Trans-Action* 8, no. 7 (April 1971), 26-30. Carmen. (Includes a first-person account of a Nina Simone concert.)

Allida M. Black, “Championing a Champion: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Marian Anderson ‘Freedom Concert,’” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 4, (fall 1990): 719-736. JSTOR.

Ruth Feldstein, “‘I Don't Trust You Anymore’: Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s.” *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1349-1379. OSU Libraries.

Danielle Fosler-Lussier, “African American Ambassadors Abroad and at Home,” ch. 4 of *Music in America’s Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 101-122. Carmen. (About Marian Anderson.)

T.V. Reed, “Singing Civil Rights: The Freedom Song Movement,” “Reflections on the Cultural Study of Social Movements,” chapters 1 and 10 from *The Art of Protest* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 1-39 and 286-315. [Project Muse.](http://library.ohio-state.edu/record=b7704052~S7)

Renato Rosaldo, “Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism.” *In Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights,* ed. William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor (Boston; Beacon Press, 1997), 27-38. Carmen.

**Women and Civil Rights (not about music):**

 Dayo Gore,  Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: NYU Press, 2009). Project Muse.

Davis W. Houck, David Dixon, *Women and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009). Project Muse.

Tiyi M. Morris, Womanpower Unlimited and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015). Project Muse.

**Examining music and performance in detail:**

Frederika Arns, Mark Chilla, Mikko Karjalainen, Esa Lilja, Theresa Maierhofer-Lischka and Matthew Valnes, “Interpreting Meaning In/Of Janelle Monáe’s ‘Tightrope’: Style, Groove, and Production Considered.” In *Song Interpretation in 21st-Century Pop Music,*  **ed. Ralf von Appen, André Doehring, Dietrich Helms, and Allan F. Moore (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 197-212. Carmen.**

Eric Harvey, “What The Hell Is Going On? Contemplating The Possible Genius Of Janelle Monáe's "Tightrope" Video,” The Village Voice, June 24, 2010, <http://www.villagevoice.com/music/what-the-hell-is-going-on-contemplating-the-possible-genius-of-janelle-mon-es-tightrope-video-6637338>

Brenda Marie Osbey, “Evening News: A Letter to Nina Simone,” *All Saints: New and Selected Poems* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 54-62. Carmen.

Salamishah Tillet, “Strange Sampling: Nina Simone and Her Hip-Hop Children,” *American Quarterly* 66, no. 1, (March 2014): 119-137. OSU Libraries. (About Simone’s legacy in hip-hop)

**Race and Performance**

Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Race in the Modern World,” Foreign Affairs 94, no. 2 (March 2015), 1-8. [OSU Libraries](http://web.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=c1b58c80-8edb-4a6f-9f57-4ea325f9b2ca%40sessionmgr120&hid=123&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=100961096&db=a9h)

# “Kwame Anthony Appiah on Race” (Interview), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEOQcVLvnKo)

Nina Sun Eidsheim, “Marian Anderson and ‘Sonic Blackness’ in American Opera,” *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (Sept. 2011), 641-671. OSU Libraries.

# Stuart Hall, “Race, the Floating Signifier” (Transcript, PDF, Carmen); video summary on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMo2uiRAf30)

bell hooks. *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

**Self-Presentation**

Marian Anderson, *My Lord, What a Morning: an autobiography* (New York: Viking Press, 1956). On reserve, Music and Dance Library.

Dorian Lynskey, “Janelle Monáe: Sister from Another Planet.” *The Guardian,* August 26, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/aug/26/janelle-monae-sister-another-planet>

Monica L. Miller, “All Hail the Q.U.E.E.N.: Janelle Monáe and a Tale of the Tux,” *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art,* no. 37 (November 2015): 62-69. Carmen.

Jackie Royster, “Introduction: Eccentric Performance and Embodied Music in the Post-Soul Moment” (pp. 1-33) and “Epilogue: Janelle Monáe’s Collective Vision.” In *Sounding Like a No-No: Queer Sounds and Eccentric Acts in the Post-Soul Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012). Project Muse.

**Media:**

Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012. Project Muse.

**Biography:**

Nadine Cohodas, *Princess Noire: The Tumultuous Reign of Nina Simone* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Project Muse.

Allan Keiler, *Marian Anderson, A Singer’s Journey* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). On reserve, Music and Dance Library.