

## **ARTSCI 1137.xx: Music and Social Justice**

**Course:** ARTSCI 1137.xx  
**Credits:** 1  
**Grading:** A-E  
**Classroom:** TBA  
**Class time:** TBA (Once a week for the full semester)  
**Office hours:** TBA  
**Office loc.:** 573 Denney Hall  
**Professor:** Dr. Shaun James Russell  
**Contact:** russell.1131@osu.edu

### Course Description

**Course Theme:** Music and Social Justice

**Course Description:** In modern history, popular music has traditionally been a form of entertainment, often enjoyed and appreciated passively without requiring serious engagement on the part of the listener. Yet during periods of social upheaval and unrest, some songs have put their finger on the pulse of large-scale societal issues, elevating the passive listening experience to a call to action, with listeners being urged to help right certain wrongs. In this course, we will be exploring a wide range of songs that have engaged with many of the issues our country (among others) has grappled with over the past century or so, including, but not limited to: civil rights, race relations, war, famine, poverty, immigration, sexuality, and inequality. While I will choose many songs for discussion according to weekly themes, each student will also bring in one song and present on how it is meaningful in its intended context. Note that no pre-existing musical knowledge is necessary for this course—only a general awareness of popular music, and an appreciation for how music can help to aid social change.

### Course Objectives

- To engage students in understanding the social context of multiple historical periods
- To illustrate how music has been used for expressions of social justice
- To build awareness of how forms of popular media can channel important issues
- To demonstrate interdisciplinarity by linking multiple discrete ASC fields such as history, sociology, and music

### Required Materials

- A notebook / binder and writing utensil(s) for notes and potential exercises
- A laptop / tablet (ideally w/ earbuds or headphones) for listening to music, watching videos, and accessing Carmen in class

### Playlist

Band Aid, “Do They Know it’s Christmas?”	Live Aid, Selected Clips
Barry McGuire, “Eve of Destruction”	Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On”
Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit”	Plastic Ono Band, “Give Peace a Chance”
Childish Gambino, “This is America”	Public Enemy, “Fight the Power”
Helen Reddy, “I Am Woman”	RATM, “Killing in the Name”
John Lennon, “Imagine”	Rod Stewart, “The Killing of Georgie”
Lady Gaga, “Born This Way”	U2, “Sunday Bloody Sunday”
Lil Baby, “The Bigger Picture”	USA for Africa, “We Are the World”

## Assignments

### Weekly Discussion Boards

**30 points**

Each week you will have a guided prompt on Carmen that relates to the weekly theme, and you will be expected to make a substantive post of at least 200 words. These discussion posts will often be used to kickstart the next week's discussion and help us segue into the main topic in class.

### “Hear and Tell” Presentation

**20 points**

Each student will be required to find a song (or music video) that engages meaningfully with a topic related to social justice. The song will be played, and each student will then spend five minutes discussing key element of its social context, its history, its meaning (broadly defined), and other elements with a view toward fostering discussion among the class. The grade will be based in part on source relevance and the quality of the material presented (i.e. it will less about public speaking ability and more about content). A basic script / presentation notes will also be submitted.

### Final Reflection Paper

**20 points**

This final paper will be approximately 1000 words (around three full double-spaced pages), and will require you to honestly reflect on what you have learned throughout the course, and how you might use what you've learned in other courses as well as your daily life. You will not be required to do new research for this paper or make an argument, but you should draw on the various assignments, posts, and discussions that have occurred over the semester to arrive at a sincere takeaway.

### Participation

**20 points**

There is a reason why participation is 20% of the grade: a seminar simply cannot work without lively interactive discussion among all students. This grade encompasses your engagement in in-class discussion, your involvement in group work, and your overall attentiveness. It should be quite easy to get full marks, but it is not a given—you'll need to be actively invested in the class.

### Attendance

**10 points**

Woody Allen has been quoted as saying “Eighty percent of success in life is just showing up.” In this class, the percentage is much lower. As with the Participation grade, you need to be in class to engage with discussions, and this portion of the grade reflects that fact. Missing the occasional class is fine, so long as you let me know in advance. Missing multiple classes without an excuse, however, will lower your attendance grade by two points per missed class.

### Total:

**100 points**

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## Course Policies

**Grading:** This course uses a standard grade scale, but note that at the end of the course, if you find yourself half a point below the higher grade, I will round up (as seen below). Because of this lenient policy, note that grades are non-negotiable.

**A:** 92.5-100    **A-:** 89.5-92.5    **B+:** 86.5-89.5    **B:** 82.5-86.5    **B-:** 79.5-82.5    **C+:** 76.5-79.5  
**C:** 72.5-76.5    **C-:** 69.5-72.5    **D+:** 66.5-69.5    **D:** 59.5-66.5    **E:** 0-59.5

**Student Work** for all assignments should be submitted **on Carmen by 11:59 PM on the day before each class session**, unless otherwise indicated. Late submission of an assignment will result in the deduction of **one full letter grade** for each day past the due date (for example, B+ to C+). The grade will not be affected when an assignment is late for reasons that would result in an excused absence, but you need to email me *before* the due date for this to be allowed.

**Discussion Posts** are expected to be posted (and subsequently read) by all students prior to the pertinent class session. Knowing what one another wrote in advance of class will aid discussion.

**Attendance** is vital to your success in this class, given its seminar format and focus on discussion. That being said, I am also well aware that you may need to miss class for any number of reasons: illness, appointments, family matters, or sometimes for reasons that are simply none of my business. And that's fine! My absence policy is this: **it is your responsibility to contact me via email as soon as possible if you must miss class, regardless of the reason**. I'll consider it an "excused absence" if you let me know *before* class, but missing multiple classes without letting me know will result in unexcused absences that will detract from your Attendance grade.

**Lateness** is disruptive to the classroom environment, and prevents you from fully participating and absorbing the information and materials discussed in class. Since classes will typically start right on time, habitual lateness will lower your participation grade.

**Electronic Devices:** Laptops, tablets, smartphones, and various other electronic devices are encouraged in class, and are even necessary...but ***for academic purposes only***. If class gets a little boring, it may be hard to resist checking your email, monitoring social media, or leveling up in your favorite MMORPG...but resist you must. Real talk here: in a small, discussion-based class like this, your distraction is *always* obvious to the professor and your fellow students.

**Class Cancellation Policy:** If class is cancelled due to weather, illness, or emergency, I will contact you via email and make an announcement on Carmen a.s.a.p. In addition, I will also contact you as soon as possible *after* the cancellation to convey any expectations of you for our next class meeting.

**Office Hours/Communication:** I strongly encourage you to make use of my office hours, which are listed at the top of this syllabus, though I ask you to **let me know ahead of time (via email)** if you plan on meeting—it allows me to prepare as needed. Even beyond those listed hours, I am open to meeting on Zoom at other times, as my schedule allows, so please don't hesitate to contact me. Also, I tend to be *very* responsive to email, so feel free to send along emails with any questions / comments etc. at your leisure, and I should get back to you fairly quickly.

**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/csc/>.

**Accessibility:** The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's request process, managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please

let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.

### **Resources**

**COVID-19 Safety Statement:** To ensure a safe living, learning, and working environment for all Ohio State Buckeyes, please continue checking the University's Safe and Healthy Buckeyes webpage for updates on COVID-19 policies. As of this semester, masks are optional in the classroom, but as a class, we will continue to follow university guidance on pandemic safety policies. I will help to guide you through any possible significant changes to the class and/or semester.

**Counseling and Consultation Services:** As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). Additional 24-hour crisis services include NetCare Access (614) 276-2273 and OSU Hospital Emergency Department (614) 293-8333.

**Student Advocacy Center:** The Student Advocacy Center is committed to helping students navigate Ohio State's structure and to resolving issues that they encounter at the university. Their office is located at 001 Drackett Tower, 191 W. Lane Ave., Columbus, OH 43210. Reach them by calling (614) 292-1111 or by emailing [advocacy@osu.edu](mailto:advocacy@osu.edu)

**Title IX** makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu).

**Course Technology:** For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.

- Self-Service and Chat support: <http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice>
  - Phone: 614-688-HELP (4357)
  - Email: [8help@osu.edu](mailto:8help@osu.edu)
  - Text Telephone for the Deaf (TDD): 614-688-8743
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**Daily Schedule**

	<b>LESSON TOPICS</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus overview</li> <li>• What is “social justice”?</li> <li>• How we think about music</li> </ul>	
<b>WEEK 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and Race 1</li> <li>• Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 1
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and Race 2</li> <li>• Public Enemy, “Fight the Power”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 2
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and Race 3</li> <li>• Childish Gambino, “This is America”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 3 Hear & Tell 1 & 2
<b>WEEK 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and War 1</li> <li>• Barry McGwire, “Eve of Destruction”</li> <li>• Marvin Gaye, “What’s Going On”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 4 Hear & Tell 3 & 4
<b>WEEK 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and War 2</li> <li>• U2 “Sunday Bloody Sunday”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 5 Hear & Tell 5 & 6
<b>WEEK 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Library Visit: Special Collections (meet in Thompson Library, further details TBA)</b></li> </ul>	N/A
<b>WEEK 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tributes and Benefits 1</li> <li>• Live Aid, Selected Clips</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 6 Hear & Tell 7 & 8
<b>WEEK 9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tributes and Benefits 2</li> <li>• USA For Africa, “We Are the World”</li> <li>• Band Aid, “Do They Know it’s Christmas”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 7 Hear & Tell 9 & 10
<b>WEEK 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-political Anthems</li> <li>• Plastic Ono Band, “Give Peace a Chance”</li> <li>• John Lennon, “Imagine”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 8 Hear & Tell 11 & 12
<b>WEEK 11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women’s Rights</li> <li>• Helen Reddy, “I Am Woman”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 9 Hear & Tell 13 & 14
<b>WEEK 12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender and Sexuality</li> <li>• Rod Stewart, “The Killing of Georgie”</li> <li>• Lady Gaga, “Born This Way”</li> </ul>	Discussion Board 10 Hear & Tell 15 & 16
<b>WEEK 13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responses to Violence</li> <li>• Rage Against the Machine, “Killing in the Name”</li> <li>• Lil Baby, “The Bigger Picture”</li> </ul>	Hear & Tell 17 & 18
<b>WEEK 14</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music <i>Against</i> Social Justice</li> <li>• TBA</li> </ul>	
<b>WEEK 15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Conclusion: Bringing it all together</li> </ul>	Reflection Essay