MUS 128: A History of Dance Music (3+0) 3 credits

Professor Louis Niebur
Office: 105 Mack Social Science
Phone Number
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Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2pm
Class Time: ???

Course Description:
This course will explore how popular dance music has developed since WWII, tracing the history through uptempo rock and roll, the twist, soul, funk, disco, house, concluding with a study of electronic dance music (EDM). Students will examine dance music's roots in West African drumming techniques, the social dances of the early twentieth century, and investigate the societal factors that led to the rise of dance music subcultures, particularly in African-American, Latin, and LGBT communities. Students will also study the role of technology, both in this music's creation and its dissemination.

Requirements and Pre/Co-requisites: There are no pre/co-requisites for this course. Music-reading ability is NOT required for this class.

Required texts and course materials:
There are three books you are required to purchase for this class:

In addition, there will occasionally be articles placed on Canvas to be read ahead of the class in which they are to be discussed.

There will be extensive listening examples, either on Spotify or YouTube, to be listened to and studied, and will be discussed in class. Note that the core of this class is careful listening to significant quantities of music. You will be required to know and recall 10-12 songs per week; around half of the exams will be based on your ability to identify, categorize, and discuss what you hear on these listening examples.

Two Midterms and a Final Exam will be taken, and will cover material discussed in class from the readings and listening.

This course satisfies Core Objective 7: Artistic Composition, Interpretation & Expression: "Students will apply techniques of critical analysis to study, interpret, and/or create works of art, dance, music, and theater in the context of culture, society, and individual identity."

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students will be able to identify the constituent elements of music.
Students will be able to create music derived from dance music techniques using software.
Students will be able to describe the various technologies that have made this music and its dissemination possible.

Students will be able to identify individual songs studied in class, and describe their characteristics.

Students will be able to recognize and identify specific characteristics of each era of dance music discussed in the class.

You will acquire the competencies described in the Core Objective through lectures, readings, and in-class discussion, learning the methods of analysis appropriate for studying dance music. You will get to apply this knowledge in class discussion, and on exams, demonstrating your comprehension. You will also get to practice making your own dance music, using free software, exploring in more detail the actual creation of grooves, rhythmic patterns, and loops.

**Grading:**
Participation: 20%
Weekly responses to readings: 20%
First Midterm: 15%
Second Midterm: 15%
Final Exam: 15%
Final Paper (including abstract): 15%

The percentage distribution for the course is:

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There will be no late material (exams, papers, etc) accepted in this class, unless with prior permission or, due to illness, with a doctor’s note. Course materials will not be accepted via email: hard copies of papers must be turned in.

Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog.

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Pennington Student Achievement Center, Suite 230) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.
Your student fees cover usage of the University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing-center). This center supports your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

The instructor of this course is committed to teaching equitably and inclusively, addressing the academic needs, concerns, and interests of every student, regardless of age, gender identity and expression, race/ethnicity, religion, social class, sexual orientation, English language proficiency, or disability.

By NSHE policy in Title 4 Chapter 20 A, Section 3, paragraph 1, <http://system.nevada.edu/tasks/sites/Nshe/assets/File/BoardOfRegents/Handbook/T4-CH20%20%20General%20Policies%20Regulating%20Students%20and%20Student%20Government.pdf>, there are no official absences from any university class. It is the personal responsibility of the student to consult with the instructor regarding absence from class. In the event that a student misses a class because of an official university function or event or because of serious personal issues, the Office of the Vice President for Student Services may, at its discretion, send an explanation to affected faculty. The instructor shall make the final determination on whether the missed work can be done at a time other than during the regularly scheduled class period.

It is the policy of NSHE (Title 4 Chapter 20 A, Section 3, paragraph 2, <http://system.nevada.edu/tasks/sites/Nshe/assets/File/BoardOfRegents/Handbook/T4-CH20%20%20General%20Policies%20Regulating%20Students%20and%20Student%20Government.pdf>), to be sensitive to the religious obligations of its students. Any student missing classes, quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holy days should, whenever possible, be given an opportunity during that semester to make up the missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holy day absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor in advance in writing, if the student intends to participate in a religious holy day which does not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the assignment at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the institution which could not reasonably have been avoided.

Course Schedule:

**Week 1 - Music Fundamentals/Rhythm Fundamentals**
Tuesday, Introduction to course materials. Go over fundamentals. Baseline quiz to determine introductory knowledge.

Thursday, Work with freeware rhythm generators
Principles of Western and African rhythm, principles of "groove," backbeats, breakbeat, etc.

**Week 2 - Social Dancing**
Tuesday, Discuss short dance readings

Thursday, Social Dance, Post-war Dance Crazes, introduce Soul Music (Ray Charles)
Week 3 - Soul Music: Stax and Motown Records. Gospel Music

Tuesday, Readings: Tim Lawrence
James Brown, Aretha Franklin, The Temptations, Wattstax,
Thursday, Shirley Caesar, 1960's Gospel, groove rock (Titanic, Chicago, War, Rare Earth)

Week 4 - Pre-Disco (Philly Soul), Funk

Tuesday, Readings: Tim Lawrence.
Philadelphia International Records (MFSB), Isaac Hayes, The Stylistics, Curtis Mayfield
Thursday, February 12 - Midterm 1

Week 5 - Disco 1972-1975

Tuesday, Readings: Alice Echols.
Soul Makossa, Carol Douglas, The O'Jays, First Choice, Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes
Thursday, Reading: Alice Echols.
Hues Corporation "Rock the Boat", The Three Degrees, Bunny Sigler, The Black Byrds "Walking in Rhythm", Kraftwerk


Tuesday, Gloria Gaynor, "Never Can Say Goodbye"; Donna Summer, "Love to Love you, Baby", John Davis and the Monster Orchestra
Thursday, Sylvester, Patrick Cowley, Grace Jones, Madleen Kane, Amanda Lear, Viola Wills, Munich Machine

Week 7 - Disco Goes Mainstream (1977-1979)

Tuesday, Saturday Night Fever, Thank God It's Friday, rock musicians who do disco: Bee-Gee's, Abba, Rod Stewart, Blondie, Ethel Merman, Meco
Thursday, Disco Divas: Gloria Gaynor, Donna Summer, Chic, Paradise Express, Village People

Week 8 -
Tuesday, March 10 - Mainstream Disco (cont.), and the "death" of Disco (1979)
Thursday, March 12 – Midterm 2

Tuesday, and Thursday, - SPRING BREAK

Week 9 - SF Gay Disco (1979-1984)

Tuesday, Patrick Cowley, Paul Parker, JoLo, Megatone Records
Thursday, Boys Town Gang, Cynthia Manley, Moby Dick Records
Week 10 - Things Move Overseas (Second British Invasion) (1980-1987)

Tuesday, - Depeche Mode, Soft Cell, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, New Order

Thursday, Bronski Beat, The Communards, Erasure, Pet Shop Boys


Tuesday, Readings: Simon Reynolds begins.
Bauhaus, Ministry, Einstürzende Neubauten, Skinny Puppy

Thursday, The Warehouse, Frankie Knuckles


Tuesday, House takes over.

Thursday, Acid house: gimmick or innovation?

Week 13 - House, Fragmentation into various EDM genres (trance, gabba, soulful house, drum 'n bass)

Tuesday, Goa, Trance, Gabba

Thursday, The (d)evolution of House

Week 14 - Global EMD culture

Tuesday, Las Vegas DJ culture

Thursday, International DJ Culture

Week 15
Tuesday, tba

FINAL EXAM (date)