

Music & Politics in the Classroom: Music, Politics, and Protest

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This essay is part of the “Music and Politics in the Classroom” series in the journal *Music and Politics*. The series is designed to communicate different approaches to teaching classes around the aforementioned topic. My course, “Music, Politics and Protest,” is structured for non-majors and as such is a general education lecture course. My approach to this class is not musicological but rather inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural—in examining music and its relationship to politics and protest, we have occasion to examine political and cultural theory in the context of U.S. and South Asian history. This approach is based on the fact that I am an anthropologist by training specializing in Hindustani music as well as by the fact that the music department at the University of California, Santa Cruz is in our second year of a Ph.D program in cross-cultural musicology, a program that emphasizes both inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to musical traditions. In particular, this course covers four domains where music intersects the political: (1) music as an agent of change, (2) music as an implicit or explicit commentary on power, (3) music and the politics of spirituality, and (4) music as a mirror of historical, political and cultural change.

Music as an Agent of Change

The first three weeks of the class take us to the theme of music as an agent of change. We begin with three movements in late nineteenth and early twentieth century U.S. history and examine the place of music in them—American Populism in the late nineteenth century, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) at the turn of the century, and the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) around the time of the Great Depression.

The birth of the modern American protest song is often traced to 1904 with the rise of the IWW, otherwise known as the Wobblies. An international union that is still active today, their strategy was to sign a critical mass of the working class into their union and to call for a general strike, thereby establishing who really had control of production. This goal required a mass movement and music was one of the tools used to generate it. The IWW initially used classic European revolutionary songs but soon found them to be out of touch with turn-of-the-century America. Enter Joe Hill, who took American popular tunes, modified their lyrics to convey a political message (often through humor and irony), and went to the streets to reach and recruit new members for the union.

Hill believed that music had an intrinsic power to propagate. Unlike a political pamphlet, it was entertaining. Unlike a stirring speech, its echo could last beyond the origin-point of the pulpit.

Unlike a manifesto, it could be memorized, repeated and disseminated. “The power of song will exalt the spirit of rebellion,” Hill claimed:

A pamphlet, no matter how good, is never read but once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over. And I maintain that if a person can put a few cold common sense facts in a song, and dress them up in a cloak of humor to take the dryness off of them he will succeed in reaching a great number of workers who are too unintelligent to too indifferent to read a pamphlet or an editorial on economic science.¹

It is worth highlighting to students that we are talking about a time when the technologies of mass media were just being established. The radio had not yet been invented and the gramophone was just making its way into the global market. In such a context, the story of “The Ballad of Casey Jones,” which Joe Hill reworked into “Casey Jones, the Union Scab,” nicely illustrates the disseminating power of music. The ballad is credited to Wallace Saunders, an engine wiper at Canton, Ohio who liked to create little tunes about people he encountered at the railway station. As he sang and whistled while working, the station became his stage and the passengers became his audience. After a particularly bad train wreck, Wallace created a song about the engineer who died, Casey Jones. Passengers who stopped in Canton would pick up the catchy tune and sing it through to their different destinations. Spreading viral-like through the country, the song developed a life of its own.

The story, certainly part myth, nevertheless exemplifies the power of music to spread well beyond its point of origin. Joe Hill reworked Saunders’ song “bout a brave engineer” by transforming the martyred hero into a union scab. Hill was unsparing in Casey Jones’ fate. The new story had Jones refusing to join his fellow workers on a strike, crossing the picket line to man the train, only to die a violent death in the wreck. He “hit the river bottom...broke his blessed spine,” and, after “scabbing on the angels” in heaven, was “promptly fired ... down the Golden Stairs.” The final stanza secures his eternal destiny in the lyrical universe:

Casey Jones went to Hell a'flying;
“Casey Jones,” the Devil said, “Oh fine:
Casey Jones, get busy shovelling sulphur;
That's what you get for scabbing on the S. P. Line.”

The sociologist R. Serge Denisoff refers to the protest songs of this era as “magnetic songs of persuasion,” which he contrasts to the “rhetorical songs of persuasion” of the 1960s.² The magnetic song of protest had a clear political function; to draw outsiders into a movement by identifying problems and prescribing clear solutions—join a union, go on strike.³ These songs often drew on the call-and-response form of religious songs, a form that was meant to both literally and symbolically transform the passive listener into an active participant—only here a type of politicization-through-participation substituted for religious conversion and spiritual uplift. In such a

¹ Joe Hill, in Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), 59

² R. Serge Denisoff, *Sing a Song of Social Significance* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular, 1983).

³ The rhetorical song of persuasion, by contrast, was more descriptive; a form of reportage, typically sung by outsiders, that while describing in critical terms a situation, did not necessarily prescribe a solution or even actively seek to recruit outsiders.

formulation the politics of a song were necessarily unambiguous; the lyrics were decidedly not left up for interpretation and musical content was not so rich as to subordinate lyrical content.

A good scene from a bad movie, *Bound For Glory*, nicely depicts the ideal function of magnetic protest songs. The film is based on Woody Guthrie's autobiography by the same title. Guthrie was in many respects Joe Hill's politico-musical "successor" and the scene depicts his political awakening. The backdrop is the Great Depression and the location is a California camp where people from different parts of the country gathered and resided while waiting to be called for temporary work. Economically broken and socially isolated, they were effectively competing with one another for minimal wage labor. Into such these circumstances stepped a union organizer who, armed with his guitar, began recruiting potential members by singing Joe Hill's "The Preacher and the Slave." The scene shows how the song brought the isolated and dispirited workers into a collective space, at first to be entertained but ultimately to be organized. Initially hesitant to respond, the crowd was transformed into a politicized chorus, now braced to withstand the onslaughts of the hoodlums sent to intimidate and break up the gathering. The film clip allows us to discuss the multiple functions of the protest song—not least of which was maintaining morale and solidarity while under siege—as well as larger issues of social alienation and class consciousness.

Joe Hill's *The Preacher and the Slave* is based on the religious hymn, *The Sweet Bye and Bye*. Hill's version, however, excoriates the "pie in the sky" escapism of religious authorities, in particular the "long-haired preachers" who "come out every night, to tell you what's wrong and what's right" only to convince you to turn the other cheek and endure starvation so as to get your "pie in the sky when you die." Taking aim in particular at the Salvation Army (which Hill called the "Starvation Army") the final two stanzas flip the logic of the spiritual stance in typical Joe Hill fashion:

Workingmen of all countries, unite,
Side by side we for freedom will fight;
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry.
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

"The Preacher and the Slave" foregrounds a fraught relationship between secular and religious activist traditions, a relationship that Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison trace to American Populism, a radical social movement that developed in Texas in the 1870s through a coalition between American farmers, small producers and the newly emerging industrial working class.⁴ The late nineteenth century was an era of monopoly capitalism and rapid technological innovation. The railway and the telegraph radically shortened the collective sense of time and space and enabled the already mature Industrial Revolution to expand even more quickly. If such conditions forever

⁴ Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*.

changed the topography of modern life, American Populism represented a challenge over who should control its byproducts—control, in particular, over the domains of transportation (train), communication (telegraph), land and money. Against the trend of private monopolies motivated by profit, the movement of American Populism pushed for public and popular control, for a participatory democracy. As the century came to a close, the farmers abandoned the coalition and were replaced by Evangelical churchgoers and secular wage-earners. Eyerman and Jamison argue that these two segments in the coalition also gave birth to two musical traditions. Country music represented in musical form the Evangelical wing that reacted to the encroachments of a technological modernity by seeking a return to a simpler pre-modern past. Protest music represented in musical form the wage-earning wing that reacted to a technological modernity by seeking to gain control over it.

Progressive and Conservative Thought

The two wings separated over their two visions of politics and history; what we might call a progressive and conservative tradition. I find it useful at this point to explore the intellectual heritage that structures both. The progressive wing clearly has its roots in Enlightenment thought and I spend a few classes exploring some of its core concepts; the narrative of progress, the liberal ideas of individual rights, the rejection of birth entitlements, and freedom from tradition, superstition and arbitrary authority. The conservative tradition can be traced to the positions of English philosopher Edmund Burke, who critiqued the ideals of the French Revolution as a violation of the natural social order of things, and who gave birth to modern conservatism by arguing for a return to the age of aristocratic entitlements.⁵

It is also interesting to show how the two traditions—progressive and conservative—overlap with other, seemingly contradictory ideals, to get a little beyond the narratives of contemporary partisan politics. True, the conservative impulse of early country music had links to the aristocratic positions of Burke, but the anti-colonial leader of Indian national politics, Mahatma Gandhi, also objected to the violence of modernity and pushed for a return to a social ethics of a non-modern polity. The counter-cultural movement of the 1960s in the United States, iconic for many as the quintessential age of progressive protest music, also rallied around the ideals of folk-life simplicity, with the acoustic guitar symbolizing a return from the imperial ambitions of a technologically saturated capitalism.

True as well, the Enlightenment ideals that inform progressive traditions stand as the basis for modern forms of freedom, equality and individuality, but they also justified imperial domination and colonialism; the non-western world was often viewed by enlightenment thinkers as backwards and therefore required paternal guidance to be brought into History.⁶ In *On Imperialism in India*,

⁵ See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis, Hacking Publishing Company, 1987).

⁶ See Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Karl Marx takes an interesting position that both condemns the British for colonizing and destroying traditional India while insisting that we not romanticize the old world tradition that was destroyed; that we recognize that the ancient regime the world over enslaved the human mind and oppressed people through slavery, caste hierarchies and the superstition of religious worship. Marx famously suggested that England might have been the unwitting enablers of a “fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia” that could bring India into modernity. “Whatever may have been the crimes of England,” Marx declared, “she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.”⁷

To demonstrate the global reach of these teleological theories of history and modernity, I present the film *Jalsaghar* (The Music Room) by the Bengali film director Satyajit Ray. Ostensibly a parable about India and its relationship to modernity, the story centers on a *Zamindar* (landowner) who, gripped by tradition and therefore unwilling to adapt to the pressures of the coming age, succumbs to the same fate as befalls India’s feudal world. The *Zamindar* is a narcissistic figure from the old world of entitlements. When we meet him, however, his economic status is already in shambles and it is clear we are witnessing a transitional period; a move from the old to the new world. The landowner still wields cultural authority over his subjects, but he is nearly bankrupt; his palace is in ruins; his land is in decay and his power seems to be shifting to one of his hereditary subjects, Maham Ganguli, a nouveau riche capitalist educated in England and clearly a product of a capitalist class born in colonial conditions.

What symbolically stands in as a key explanation of the *Zamindar’s* mismanagement of his estate is his inordinate attachment to culture, in particular to musical soirees held in his music room. Though each staging of a *jalsa* (musical soiree) reinforces his cultural capital through the logic of the gift, it does so at both a financial and personal cost; his zeal to host a grand musical soiree leads him to summon his wife and son home under treacherous conditions—it is monsoon season.⁸ They perish, of course, and so the *Zamindar* becomes a figure who squanders his wealth, land and ultimately his family on the excesses of culture—on musical soirees. As such he stands in for much of what the feudal world signifies in Indian colonial history: tradition, consumption, leisured decadence, mismanagement, and corruption.⁹ *Jalsaghar* seems well suited for a teleological narrative that locates feudal India as backwards and oppressive, lurching erratically against modernity, a condition blamed on India’s traditional past and, as such, a past left happily behind.

On the other hand, Satyajit Ray presents the profound appreciation of the arts by the *Zamindar* as a kind of insinuating commentary against the possibilities of cultural patronage in the modern capitalist age. Satyajit Ray presents the possibility of the modern endurance of this

⁷ Karl Marx, “On Imperialism in India,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed., Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 658.

⁸ In *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss argues that in gift-exchange economies power accrues to those who can give more and most often. To give is to oblige the recipient with the burden to reciprocate. Nicholas Dirks demonstrates how in South India, kingly sovereignty was established in part by gifting, thereby embedding subjects into a web of obligations that transformed into subjecthood. Nicholas Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993).

⁹ See Nicholas Dirks, “The Sovereignty of History: Culture and Modernity in the Cinema of Satyajit Ray,” in *Questions of Modernity*, ed., Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

tradition, but with cautious reservation. The capitalist figure he offers as the *Zamindar's* historical replacement, Maham Ganguli, presides over the musical gatherings with little refinement, grace and taste. Even as his character gains in swagger over the course of the film, metonymic of the growth of capitalism against the torpor of feudalism, the integrity of the arts appears tenuous under his future patronage. But ultimately the forward march of history prevails. In the final scene the *Zamindar* emerges from his palace in the drunken trails of a completed *jalsa* (musical gathering), its liveliness in memory haunting the stillness of dawn. Having spent his last resources on this occasion, a desperate effort to reclaim the lavish glories of the past, he staggers onto his horse to race it along the river. The film ends as it must. The *Zamindar* is thrown to his death, literally cast away from an age in which he is no longer welcome—cast aside, it would seem, by the teleology of History.

Keeping with the topic of enlightenment philosophies of history and their interaction with colonialism, I also find it useful to discuss how the events of September 11, 2001 made it possible for rival traditions of Liberalism and Marxism to reunite so as to assert a neo-Imperial agenda as the necessary preconditions for a modern polity. Between the rapid spread of illiberal democracies throughout Eastern Europe and Africa and the steady rise of what Christopher Hitchens terms Islamo-fascism, some scholars assert with ever-increasing volume the “benevolent” and “progressive” history of liberal imperialism, usually as a pretext to and model for contemporary U.S. intervention abroad. Their central argument, echoing Karl Marx in some respects, is that constitutional liberalism must necessarily precede democracy and that the establishment of capitalism is the necessary precondition for both. Traditional society requires the development of a middle class to create the conditions through which notions of liberty can become meaningfully institutionalized through a constitutional rule of law, checks on governmental power, independent and impartial courts, separation of church and state, and rights and protections for minorities. Paving the way for the establishment of this ever-crucial middle class were the liberalizing impulse of imperialism (in the nineteenth century) and the developmental policies of liberalism (in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries).¹⁰

The idea that colonialism can, should, and will have liberalizing ends was made forcefully by Thomas Macaulay in 1833. He was more explicit about the ultimate purpose of liberalizing policy and his words therefore carry relevant forbearance. While his reformist project was not presented in defense of a permanent colonial empire, he nevertheless supported a future dominion of trade whereby England would stand paramount over their colony's addictions. Macaulay dreamed of a hierarchical world-system of exchange where England would no longer need to waste its energy and resources in maintaining a colony but could instead reap the benefits of newly created needs and desires in the colonies. “It would be, on the most selfish view of the case,” he writes, “far better for us that the people of India were well-governed and independent of us, than ill-governed and subject

¹⁰ The clearest exponent of this argument is Fareed Zakaria, “When Switching Channels Isn’t Enough: The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” *Foreign Affairs* November 76, no. 6 (November/December 1997). See also Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003). Liberal scholars who are more comfortable with the explicitly Imperial ambitions of such policies are Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) and Paul Johnson, “From the evil empire to the empire for liberty,” *The New Criterion* 21, no. 10 (June 2003).

to us; that they were ruled by their own kings, but wearing our broadcloth, and working with our cutlery, than that they were performing their salaams to English collectors and English magistrates, but were too ignorant to value, or too poor to buy. To trade with civilised men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages. That would indeed be a dotting wisdom, which, in order that India might remain a dependency, would make it a useless and costly dependency, which would keep a hundred millions of men from being our customers in order that they might continue to be our slaves.”¹¹

Macaulay’s emphasis of trade and commerce anticipated, then, some of the conditions of the neo-imperial present. From his perspective, the aim of colonialism was not to impede or quell the assertion of independence, but to create lines of profit in trade; not to suffocate ideas of freedom, but to inculcate desire. The colonies were not to be held in perpetual service to empire, but rather to a global network of unfree trade. The point was to create a colony of buyers; a den of subjects who, though perhaps in time would become independent, were nevertheless “our customers”; whose wants and desires would have been shaped by reform so as to be perpetually in need of the English; who, in this new relation of domination, became the addict to the dealer’s needle. As Gavin Young wrote thirteen years earlier in 1822, colonial policy ought to shift away from a “narrow system of colonial aggrandizement which can no longer be pursued with advantage, and to build our greatness on a surer foundations, by stretching our dominion over the wants of the universe.”¹²

Folk Protest Music

These forays into political philosophy, colonial history and enlightenment thought also help us to understand the peculiar relationship that developed between the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) and folk music, a relationship that shaped the production and reception of protest music in the United States from the Great Depression to the present. Like the IWW, the CPUSA viewed music as having great mobilizing and unifying potential but unlike the IWW they did not draw on and modify popular tunes; instead they turned to “folk” music, music that was created by and for a people. “Folk” material, however, was understood as coming from a rural people inhabiting a pre-modern age. Consigned as such to the historical past it was not a given that such material would appeal to a movement that was fundamentally shaped by a progressive and teleological view of history. According to Denisoff, the success of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 gave credibility to the idea that a people’s art could be mobilized to agitate people in favor of a revolution, and that a movement could push an industrially undeveloped country to pass over the capitalist stage to socialism—in this paradigm art was a tool to fast-forward the inexorable march of history.¹³

¹¹ Speech of Macaulay in Charter Debate, 10 July 1833, in Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Clarendon Publishers, 1959), 43-4.

¹² *Ibid*, emphasis added.

¹³ R. Serge Denisoff, *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1971).

That being said, the CPUSA “originally stumbled upon” the folk idiom as the vehicle to convey protest music in 1929 when organizers from the party went to North Carolina to assist labor during the Gastonia textile strike.¹⁴ Primarily there to lend experienced and educated support (providing mainstream press reportage with strike-friendly points of view and providing legal counsel to jailed strike members), the CPUSA members encountered a balladess, Ella May Wiggins, singing mountain songs at a union meeting. Witnessing five hundred workers standing in rapt attention to local songs with modified topical lyrics, the organizers left impressed not just by the power of music to captivate a crowd but by the “folk” repertoire—these were songs that appeared to speak from and to the very people in attendance. Wiggins became a cause-celebre in left wing publications after she was shot dead by company thugs; her songs were published in *The Nation* and *New Masses*. *The Nation* editor Margaret Larkin wrote, “the artist has the power to move people and thus to accelerate the forward movement of history itself.”¹⁵

The historical circumstances of early 20th century America were, of course, much different than in Russia—with an urbanizing proletariat comprising an international demographic versus a rural peasant class—and it perhaps took the misery of the Great Depression to provide a tangible recruiting ground for the Communist vision. As Robbie Lieberman writes, “It was the human suffering of the Depression, and the sense that the Communists offered the only viable cure, that drew people into left-wing cultural activities and organizations.”¹⁶ Woody Guthrie emerges at this time, a hybrid figure of the IWW and the CPUSA whose music and message took to the radio and record, thereby making him one of the earliest protest singers whose music disseminated through the new technologies of the mass media. We will return to his impact later.

Music as an Implicit Critique of Power Structures

The CPUSA encounter with folk traditions also allows us to explore different ideas of what it means to be political, the contours of which are made clear as we move between the two declarations below made by Charles Seeger about American folk music.

“Many folksongs are complacent, melancholy, defeatist, intended to make slaves endure their lot—pretty but not the stuff for a militant proletariat to feed upon.”¹⁷

“The folk music of America [has] embodied for well over a hundred years the tonal and rhythmic expression of untold millions of rural and even urban Americans. Contrary to our professional beliefs, the American people at large has had plenty to say and ability to say it, so that a rich repertory has been built up—thousands of tunes each for the dance, for the ballad, the love song, and the religious song.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Denisoff, *Great Day Coming*, 18.

¹⁵ Denisoff, *Great Day Coming*, 21.

¹⁶ Robbie Lieberman, *My Song is My Weapon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 28.

¹⁷ Charles Seeger in Lieberman, *My Song is My Weapon*, 30.

¹⁸ Charles Seeger, “Grass Roots for American Composers,” in Lieberman’s *My Song is My Weapon*, 37.

Seeger's initial assessment of the American slave song—pretty but defeatist—was based on a traditional view of politics (and therefore political music) that addressed itself directly to centers of power, be they government or corporations. It was difficult to read a politics into lyrics that were not only apolitical but often anti-political, appearing to subscribe to precisely the pie-in-the-sky escapism that Joe Hill had earlier decried. Seeger's subsequent reconsideration, however, points to a fact that people engage in different ways in different regimes of power. In the next section of class, we explore how people respond to circumstances when power has an especially violent hand; we move in particular to the era of slavery, emancipation, reconstruction, and the aftermath of its disintegration. We will see that in none of these cases was the music of the African American *explicitly* political. We must necessarily turn to other forms of expression, forms that take place when direct political action can be met with swift and violent reprisal. This is not to say that resistance awaits politically convenient regimes to express itself. To be sure there were slave insurrections, where resistance was visible in content and revolutionary in intent. At times these insurrections were successful and led to independence, such as the Haitian revolt in 1803. More commonly, however, slave revolts were violently suppressed.

In order to understand the political impact of slave songs I find it useful to remind students about the circumstances of slavery; that plantation owners worked explicitly to destroy community and kinship forms of slaves by separating families and inhibiting the development of new ones; that they actively repressed forms of communication between slaves by preventing discussion, monitoring talk, regulating movement between plantations. The goal of these policies was to divide and isolate, to inhibit any sense of community and therefore to preempt any possibility of agitation. "People do not individually resist in any significant degree without some sort of support and social confirmation from a community."¹⁹

In circumstances of complete repression and surveillance, the one activity that plantation owners allowed, and even actively encouraged, was singing. From the perspective of the "master," singing was a sign of the slaves' contentedness. Music served as an acceptable medium between the dangerous presence of verbal communication and the paranoia inspired by "loud" silence. "Slaves are generally expected to sing as well as to work," wrote Frederick Douglass, "A silent slave is not liked by masters or overseers. 'Make a noise, make a noise,' are the words usually addressed to the slaves when there is silence among them."²⁰

From the perspective of the slave, however, singing became a rare vehicle for safe expression, a veneer of obedience that masked a deeper politics. Singing appeared to provide a double-level of compliance. It is not just that slaves were singing as requested, but that they were singing the spiritual, a West-African musical form bolted onto a Judeo-Christian message. In signifying conversion to Christianity, the Slave appeared to mark a dutiful obedience to their master, a form of compliance that initially caused disappointment among traditional progressive activists such as Charles Seeger, who viewed these songs as anti-political symptoms of false-consciousness, marking a

¹⁹ George Rawick in Kerran Slinger, "Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self-Definition: Spirituals as a Strategy," *Western Journal of Communication* 59, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 177-92. See page 182.

²⁰ Frederick Douglass, in Sanger, "Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self-Definition," 180.

belief among slaves that they would endure their lot in life to get their “pie in the sky when they die.”

But such was precisely the point and the power of a form of political engagement that worked through metaphor and double entendre, what Lawrence Levine calls “techniques of indirection.”²¹ The point was to communicate compliance to dominant society while communicating defiance to one another. The spirituals were based largely on the story of Exodus, the Biblical story that recounts an enslaved people being led to freedom. The secret—obvious in retrospect—was the slaves placed themselves in the subject position of the Israelites, thereby transforming the very act of singing into an act of subversion—a proclamation that they were God’s chosen people, that they would achieve political emancipation and that their oppressors would be punished.

Another political function of the spiritual was that it brought people into “dialogue” with one another through the call-and-response form. Spirituals therefore enabled communication at a time when communication was otherwise denied; communication helped forged social connections at a time when communities were ripped apart. What was being communicated was often directly political even if indirectly expressed. The words of some spirituals, for example, were understood as a call for freedom; others provided an actual map to freedom. As Frederick Douglass writes,

‘O Canaan, sweet Canaan/I am bound for the land of Canaan,’ symbolized ‘something more than a hope of reaching heaven. We meant to reach the North, and the North was our Canaan . . . Run to Jesus, shun the danger,/I don’t expect to stay much longer here,’ had a double meaning which first suggested to Douglass the thought of escaping from slavery . . . Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus!’ was used ‘as explicit calls to secret meetings.’²²

Precisely because music appeared to be such an innocent form of entertainment, it became an ideal vehicle of resistance. Metaphor and double-entendre were deployed to speak just beneath the surface of dominant discourse.

Lawrence Levine demonstrates how this “technique of indirection proved to be an effective tool through different historical circumstances, such as those that gave birth to the work song and the minstrel show. The work song emerged after emancipation. Newly freed African Americans still found themselves working under conditions of grueling physical demands and abject poverty. They also still worked together in groups and so their songs retained the call and response form of the community-based spiritual. These songs had multiple functions. On the one hand, they enabled efficiency and production, coordinating work and determining the tempo of labor—seeming to work on behalf of the socio-political system. On the other hand, the songs provided relief, helping people withstand the strenuous circumstances and, like the spiritual, they provided a means for double-talk and subversion. The Ballad of the Boll-Weevil, for example, celebrated their infestation of the cotton south from the 1890s to the 1920s. Though many African-American farmers and sharecroppers also suffered from the damaged crops, the songs expressed admiration for the insects’ ability to disrupt the political-economic system. Gray Goose too was a song that expressed admiration for a figure who could withstand persecution, in this case a bird that was shot out of the

²¹ Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 240.

²² Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 51-52.

sky but took 6 weeks to fall, 6 weeks to be plucked, 6 weeks to boil and still resisted entry from fork and knife.²³

The minstrel show also used the “technique of indirection.” Though minstrelsy was a completely bigoted form of entertainment meant to depict African Americans as simple buffoons, it was a subversive form for African American performers, who were now performing in a public forum for the first time. The songs directed “grievances against the master class” but did so through the veneer of a false nostalgia, a nostalgia that dominant society was more than willing to accept at face value.²⁴ I like to provide as an example the Minstrel song, *Blue Tail Fly*, which is still taught to and sung by children today. *Blue Tail Fly* seems to be about a former slave waxing nostalgic about the bygone days with master, but is actually about the happiness he felt over his master’s death, or the death of slavery.

When I was young I used to wait
On master and hand him his plate
Pass him the bottle when he got dry
And brush away the blue-tail fly . . .

Now he lies beneath the 'simmon tree
His epitaph is there to see
“Beneath this stone I'm forced to lie
The victim of the blue-tail fly”

Though mainstream society accepted these skits as slapstick, African American performers viewed them as:

outlets for a quite different complex of emotions. Just as the slaves found that they could easily articulate their longing for freedom by projecting it into the future world, thus legitimizing it through their spirituals, so their descendants living in the repressive atmosphere of the turn-of-the-century South could most safely vent their complaints against the whites and the social system by projecting them back into the past and giving them the appearance of nostalgia and not protest. They were able to utilize the commonplaces of the minstrel idiom to criticize parody, and sharply comment on their society and their situation.²⁵

The Politics of Spirituality

The techniques of indirection that emerged with the slave spiritual allow us to segue into the third theme of class, what I call the politics of spirituality. For Marx and other thinkers of the enlightenment, religion represents a colonized mindset, a subordination to arbitrary authority—an “opiate of the masses.” Another view of religion and history comes from the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, the Judeo-Christian era represents the first important revolution of “Western Civilization,” the revolution of the slaves over their masters. Nietzsche argues the ramifications of the Exodus revolution still reside with us today, as it led to a radical alteration of

²³ Ibid., 242

²⁴ Ibid., 193

²⁵ Ibid., 194

values and morality; it led to a value-system based on the principles of the powerless as opposed to the powerful, to the morality of the slave as opposed to the aristocrat.

To explain his argument, I begin with a more accessible theme; a critical understanding of history as the narrative of the victors. Hegel writes, “The History of the World is not the theatre of happiness. Periods of happiness are blank pages in it, for they are periods of harmony.” But in so far as history is written, Winston Churchill argues, it “is written by the victors [and it] will be kind to me for I intend to write it.” George Orwell echoes the theme when he writes, “He who controls the past commands the future.”

For Nietzsche, religions had a similar narrative structure until the Exodus story; religions were traditionally stories written from the perspective of those who had power. Prior to the slave revolt, for example, we read about Greek and Roman gods who could be bribed by the rich and powerful, saving them from punishment in the afterlife, and therefore sparing them from disciplined acts of justice in their lifetime. Nietzsche’s argument is complex; he is not celebrating what he calls the “slave revolt.” While he credits the revolt for making us fundamentally human, moving civilization beyond the beastly appetites of the aristocracy, he also argues that it gave birth to evil, hatred and resentment; to a unique form of spiritual vengefulness. These ruminations allow us to critically engage the tricky questions of religion as well as to explore the appeal it may have had—some religious narratives made their appeal because they spoke for those who lived on the margins of political and economic power.

I like to introduce the class to the Bhakti and Sufi traditions in South Asia to draw out some parallels with the African American spiritual. In South Asia, spiritual traditions have been inextricably linked to music and politics. Music facilitated the path to the divine, through ecstasy (in popular traditions) or through meditation (in aristocratic traditions). Many of the Bhakti and Sufi movements were popular in form and drew on music to both propagate and uplift people on the margins of society. Indeed, if the Exodus story appealed to slaves because it provided a narrative framework for their vindication and emancipation, the Bhakti and Sufi movements in South Asia appealed to untouchable castes (and in some cases women) because it provided an alternative value-system.

Sufis are a heterodox mystical tradition within Islam. Their music, known as Qawwali, is popular in form and ecstatic in function, organized to bring listeners into rapturous dance, and therefore into living proximity with the divine. What is less well known is that Sufis provided social services to lower castes and, through conversion, a mechanism for social mobility.²⁶ Qawwali is considered “light-classical,” in contrast to its “classical” counterparts of dhrupad and khayal. Though both terms problematically draw on a European epistemological hierarchy they do correctly convey the point that this tradition was never restricted to aristocratic court consumption. Qawwali was meant, through lyric and music, to have popular appeal.

The Bhatkti movements emerged earlier, in the 6th century, and were a reaction against an orthodox caste order. Bhakti movements also worked, like their Sufi counterparts, through ecstatic song and appeals to social mobility. Many of the leaders of Bhakti movements were singer-saints

²⁶ Eqbal Ahmad, *Confronting Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2000), 135-36.

and came from humble backgrounds. Ravidas, for example, was a *chamar* (a leather worker), a caste whose profession required direct contact with dead animal (often cow) skin, which, in the context of a social hierarchy that divides social groups along the ranges of purity and impurity, consigned *chamars* to the impure, and therefore to a lower social strata. Ravidas railed against such a spiritual hierarchy and argued instead for a social and religious order that “Is neither high caste nor low caste, lordly or poor.”²⁷ Another important singer saint, Kabir, was a weaver by profession. His poetry and songs blasted scriptural authority and priestly asceticism:

Brother, if holding back your seed
 Earned you a place in paradise
 Eunuchs would be the first to arrive
 If the union yogis seek
 Came from roaming around in the buff,
 Every deer in the forest would be saved
 Vedas, Puranas—why read them?
 It’s like loading an ass with sandalwood!”²⁸

The most worshipped of the Bhakti saints is, perhaps, Mirabai (1498-1547), a Rajput princess whose story highlights the theme under discussion. Mirabai considered herself to be a bride to the god, Krishna Giridhar. She was therefore none-to-pleased when arranged to marry a prince and was none-to-sad when he died on a battlefield soon after their wedding. She openly rejected the ritual mourning of widowhood, incurring the fury of her in-laws, and escaped their many attempts to murder her by joining other devotees of Krishna. These were wandering singer-saints who enlarged their movement through song and social services, providing both material support and spiritual uplift for the silent majority of dispossessed subjects. Her songs are expressions of longing for her beloved God—appearing wholly a-political in this form—but are also statements against social injustice. Another example of the technique of indirection, her allegiance to Krishna meant no other devotion was possible; a clear statement against the earthly constraints of womanhood in patriarchal society.

The Krishna worshipped by Mirabai was one of the champions of the Bhatkti period—a hero for the downtrodden, the peasant, and the cowherder.²⁹ He is known as Krishna Giridhar, “lifter of the mountain.” The myth is that he appealed to the people of Braj to turn their devotional attentions away from aristocratic god Indra (the mighty sky god of the old Vedic Pantheon) and towards Krishna himself, in particular toward his incarnation as Mount Govardhan. Indra was furious at the apostasy and rained his anger for days. Krishna countered by raising his mountain-form above the heads of those he loved, proving his role as their protector and therefore winning their devotion.

Krishna Giridhar was a different incarnation than the Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita. The latter is an aristocratic god. He appears as Arjuna’s charioteer on the footsteps of an epic battle and beckons the prince, who questions the wisdom of war, to follow his duty and go to battle. This is the

²⁷ John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.

²⁸ Hawley and Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, 50-51.

²⁹ George Ruckert, *Music in North India: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

Krishna who articulates the phrase—"I am become death, destroyer of worlds"—that inspired Oppenheimer's reflection after witnessing the atomic explosion. The Krishna of the Bhagavad Gita is the confidant and champion of the ruling class. It turns out that the split that Nietzsche points out between aristocratic gods and slave gods plays out in other cultural regions, sometimes in the very same figure.

Music As A Mirror of Change

The third theme of the class, music as a mirror of change, moves through different historical eras covered in the course. As we transition from the post-emancipation field holler, to the post-reconstruction birth of the blues we can trace how history, politics and music interact. How do we understand, for example, the solo form of the blues in the context of the communal based song-forms that preceded it? The history of post-emancipation African-American labor and migration help us begin an answer. The field-holler emerged in circumstances of heightened alienation. The African American laborer was increasingly working alone. Separated by acres, the work song transformed into the field holler, a musical statement that was responded to in kind by a neighboring worker; out of eye-shot from one another, but still within ear shot. The hollers were an intermediary genre; they enabled safe communication messages and in so doing they clearly drew on the techniques of the spiritual and work song. However, the hollers were also forms of self-expression, and in that respect they pointed forward in anticipating the blues. The blues emerged after the Civil War and towards the end of the period of reconstruction. Many former slaves became tenant farmers or sharecroppers and, though formally free, were still tied to abject conditions of poverty and increasing racial violence. To escape these circumstances many took to the road in search of new opportunities, and the blues became their music.³⁰ Interestingly, the call-and-response form remained in the blues, but the call was no longer made for others to respond. Unlike the social context that gave birth to the spiritual, work song and field holler, there was no stable community to respond. Rather, it was the task of the individual bluesman to respond to himself, either in the second line of the AAB song structure—where the second line repeats the first—or with the guitar response to the sung line. It is as if the blues singer embodied into himself the absent responder and in doing so also embodied into this song-form the history of African American labor and migration post-emancipation. The re-binding of the call-and-response form with an actual "community of performers" takes us to the birth of Jazz as well as the post-World War I migration to northern cities and the birth of what Eyerman and Jamison call a "new kind of black public sphere."³¹

³⁰ Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman, *American Popular Music* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 100.

³¹ Eyerman and Jamison, *Music and Social Movements*, 83.

The Dawn and Dusk of The Civil Rights Era

We continue the theme of music as a mirror of change in the last three weeks of class, which moves us to the era of civil rights and the Vietnam war protests, and concludes with the post Vietnam War decline of the New Deal and Great Society and concomitant emergence of modern country music and rap.

I like to use the early 1960s as a fulcrum point around which several themes of the class converge. The larger shift we can identify is that prior to 1965 most African American music was implicitly political but explicitly silent as a form of protest. After the early 1960s, however, songs started conveying the anger and frustration of the times. We need look no further than Nina Simone's 1963 *Mississippi Goddam* as an example.

Alabama's gotten me so upset
Tennessee made me lose my rest
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam

Can't you see it
Can't you feel it
It's all in the air
I can't stand the pressure much longer
Somebody say a prayer

Of course, one cannot assume forty years later that “everybody knows about Mississippi” so I do spend some time covering the history of the civil rights movements and the key events that precipitated, activated and mobilized it. In the early 1960s, Mississippi was one of the poorest states in the nation, with 86% living below the poverty level and with only 5% of voting age African-Americans registered to vote. For those who were registered, other barriers effectively kept many from the booth, such as literacy tests (which disqualified many registered voters), long lines and slow service (which discouraged many who stood in line), and the Tuesday voting-day ritual (which caused many to fear they would be fired if they skipped work to vote). The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) organized The Freedom Vote movement to counter these barriers and the summer of 1964, with a presidential election at stake, served as the perfect moment to launch the campaign.³² The campaign also inspired violent reactions that came to symbolize the enormous barriers faced, such as the murder of Medger Evers and three Civil-Rights students, Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney.

The previous decade brought a different tenor to the civil-rights movement. Brian Ward and Reebee Garofalo help us re-tell this history in a way that shows how popular music reflected and sometimes even pre-figured larger political changes. While Ray Charles, for example, fused the religious and secular music of the gospel and blues/jazz, the *Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (SCLS), led by Martin Luther King Jr. and NAACP/ CORE/ SNCC were fusing religious and secular organizations. While 1954 brought *Brown vs. the Board of Education* and the

³² It is most useful to tie these events to contemporary events concerning voter registration and access during the two 21st-century Presidential elections.

legal prohibition of segregation, it also brought The Chords' release of *Sh-Boom*, which was one of the first R&B songs to cross over from the black market to white mainstream consumption, pointing to the desegregation of musical consumption. *Sh-Boom* was soon followed by Fats Domino, Little Richard and Chuck Berry, all of whom were consumed in the mainstream pop market, and who opened the way for Rock & Roll. Market forces also helped mould a more mainstream and sweet pop styles, such as those found with the Platters and Brook Benton, with a presentation and sound that was decidedly conventional; signaling the possibility of assimilation to and acceptance by majority culture. As Brian Ward writes,

This pattern of creation and consumption reflected a mood of rising optimism about the possibility of black integration into a genuinely equal and plural America. Fashioned by the early promise of the civil rights movement, this was an era in which all symbols of black access to, and acceptance in, mainstream culture were seized upon as portents of a coming new day of racial amity and black opportunity.³³

The early 1960s was a period marked by landmark change and increasingly violent reaction. On the one hand, it brought us the March of Washington in 1963—the location of King's "I have a dream" speech, the 24th Amendment which abolished the poll tax, one of many long-standing policies meant to discourage and deny African-Americans from voting, and the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. On the other hand, the early 1960s also brought increasingly violent setbacks, made visible by the widely televised images of "Bull" Conner using fire hoses and police dogs on African American demonstrators; the assassination of Medger Evers in Mississippi in 1963 and the Klu Klux Klan's killing of three civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964.

The violent set-backs of the civil-rights movement that marked the post-1965 period also brought Funk and Soul, two styles that explicitly abandoned any concessions to mainstream society and celebrated instead the sounds, style and dance of African-American culture. This was a politics of identity that did not require explicit protest to assert itself. Ward writes,

This sort of psychological empowerment was apparent even among the majority of blacks in America who never marched, sat-in, joined voter registration drives, rioted, or took part in any of the myriad political actions which historians have usually recognized as the outward manifestations of inner transformations in black consciousness during the two decades after *Brown*.³⁴

I like to supplement this segment of the class with a reading of Karl Marx's *The Jewish Question*, an essay that provocatively introduces students to the concepts of civil society and political society; provocative because he both critiques the infringement of minority cultural rights as fundamentally anathema to liberalism but also criticizes advocacy of minority rights as fundamentally anathema to a radical progressive politics. For Marx, issues of religious, minority and property rights were symptomatic of a society confined to a capitalistic mode of production. With the passage to a new economic structure, so too would pass the very concepts of minority, religion, family and private property. Hence any political appeal to minority rights would be limited by its

³³ Brian Ward, "Can I get a witness?": civil rights, soul and secularization," in *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm & Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations* (University of California Press, 1998).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

link to a soon-to-be-outdated framework. This discussion returns us to some of the introductory themes of what it means to be political—for civil society always indicated a domain that concerned “non-political” (non-office holding) matters such as property, inheritance and marriage.

It is in this context that the women’s movement, buttressed by the motto “the personal is political,” gains salience as part of the larger civil-rights movement that fundamentally expanded what it meant to be political. As Rebee Garofalo writes,

The cultural arena is not conceived of as a primary site for political struggle. It was the movements of the sixties which forced a reconsideration of the traditional Marxist model at the experiential level. Participation in the major movements of the decade—civil rights, anti-war, the counterculture, Black Power, student power, welfare rights, and women’s liberation—often included contact across strict class lines.³⁵

The Folk Protest Revival & The Mass Media

Music, that very cultural of domains, played a central role in mobilizing this movement. And while we do spend considerable time contextualizing and listening to the music and politics of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, the Almanac Singers, the Weavers as well as to their successors in Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary and the Kingston Trio, we also explore the role of mass media in popularizing their music, their message and the identities associated with both. If we recall, Joe Hill turned to music in part because of its disseminating power, but he did so prior to the age of Tin Pan Alley. The folk-revival movement, by contrast, can only be understood in the context of the disseminating powers of mass media.

Woody Guthrie was a front-line protest singer to be sure, but he also broadcast his messages quite literally on the radio, where he worked for several years while in California in the late 1930s. In 1940, Woody Guthrie joined the Almanac Singers, a “folk” group formed by Pete Seeger, Millard Lampell, and Lee Hays in New York City. Though the group was known for its Hootenannies—topical folk-music gatherings where people were encouraged to participate and create—the Almanac Singers also became one of the first protest bands to be recorded, sold and consumed at a mass level. Such levels of exposure had some corresponding pitfalls. The timing of their 1941 anti-war album *Songs for John Doe*, released just months before Germany invaded Russia, brought public disfavor to pacifism and helped to cement an association between anti-war and anti-patriotism positions, a link that first took hold when the IWW opposed World War I. *Songs for John Doe* was critical of Roosevelt for the establishment of a peace-time draft, in which 16,500,000 men had registered. In the *The Ballad of October 16th*, based the cowboy song *The Ballad of Jesse James*, Seeger sings,

I have wandered over this land, a roaming working man
No clothes to wear and not much food to eat.
But now the government foots the bill

³⁵ Rebee Garofalo, *Rockin the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements* (London, South End Press, 1999), 17.

Gives me clothes and feeds me swill
Gets me shot and puts me underground six feet.

Oh, Franklin Roosevelt told the people how he felt
We damn near believed what he said
He said, "I hate war, and so does Eleanor"
But we won't be safe 'till everybody's dead.

After Hitler invaded Russia the record label pulled *Songs for John Doe* (as well as Paul Robeson's *Spring Song*) out of production. Mindful of the imperial ambitions of Nazi Germany, both Seeger and Guthrie changed their position regarding military intervention, supported the war, wrote anti-Hitler songs, and enlisted in the military. In "Dear Mr. President" Pete Seeger sings,

Now, Mr. President
We haven't always agreed in the past, I know
But that ain't at all important now
What is important is what we got to do
We got to lick Mr. Hitler, and until we do
Other things can wait

The FBI nevertheless went after the band on charges of sedition, which reminds students that until 1964, when the Supreme Court overturned the 1798 Sedition Act, freedom of speech did not formally extend to criticism of the government under times of war.³⁶ Between governmental assaults and popular reaction the band broke up a few years later. In 1948, Lee Hays and Pete Seeger reunited as The Weavers. Their first hit was Leadbelly's *Goodnight Irene*, which went to the top of the charts in 1950. They went on to sell millions of records and in the process codified many of the standard folk protest songs we have inherited.

If The Weavers brought folk protest songs into mass circulation, the Kingston Trio and Peter, Paul and Mary brought the folk idiom into mega status. The Kingston Trio was deeply influenced by The Weavers and at one point had four albums simultaneously in the top ten. Peter, Paul and Mary's first album, which was in the top ten for ten months, included covers of two Pete Seeger songs, "If I Had a Hammer" and "Where have all the Flowers Gone." In 1964, Peter, Paul and Mary turned towards the future and popularized Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," which would soon be recognized as an anthem for the civil-rights era. Bob Dylan is, of course, the iconic folk protest musician. Starting out in the late 1950s as a coffee house singer, he turned into a mega-star after his infamous performance at the Newport folk festival in 1965, where he played "Like a Rolling Stone" with electric guitar, organ, piano and drums, a decided departure from the acoustic simplicity of the folk vision. What was particularly upsetting to the veteran activists who were present, such as Pete Seeger, was less the fact of electrified music and more the fact that its sonic density and volume did not allow for audience participation—so key to the structure and function of traditional protest songs. But Dylan's turn to rock mirrored a more general phenomenon wherein folk protest singers were achieving celebrity status. With a message, music and style that circulated wide, audiences began to absorb a lifestyle. By the mid 1960s, both funk and folk were being

³⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 269.

consumed by assertive new politicized identities. In both cases a political movement was enabled by the convergence of music and mass media.

We are prepared, then, to discuss the politics of mass and popular culture, whether it concerns the emancipatory possibilities of mass media, as articulated by Walter Benjamin, or their repressive effects, as articulated by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.³⁷ Raymond Williams allows us to think outside of those binaries with his notion of popular culture as mass mediated but nevertheless coming from and expressing meanings and values of a people; a theoretical position that allows us to segue into Hip Hop and Modern Country, two traditions born in response to mid 1970s decline of the Post War Compromise and the end of the Great Society in the mid 1970s.

The readings are as follows:

Weeks 1 & 2

Labor, Union Songs and the Pursuit of Folk Music

- Class 1 Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 48-73
- Class 2 R. Serge Denisoff, "Songs of Persuasion and Their Entrepreneurs," in *Sing a Song of Social Significance*, pp. vii-x, 1-18
- Class 3 Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk*, pp. 183-232
- Denisoff, "The Rural Roots of Folk Consciousness," in *Great Day Coming: Folk Music and the American Left*, pp. 3-39
- Class 4 Robbie Lieberman, "'This Machine Kills Fascists': Communism, Antifascism, and People's Music during WWII," in *My Song is My Weapon*, pp. 50-83

³⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans., Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) and Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, "The Culture Industry," in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (The Continuum Publishing Company, 1994).

Week 3
Marx's Theory of History

- Class 5 Karl Marx, *On Imperialism in India*
- Class 6 View film, Satyajit Ray's *Jalsaghar* (The Music Room)

Weeks 4 & 5
Slave Songs

- Class 7 Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. ix-xiv, 3-19
- Kerran Slanger, "Slave Resistance and Rhetorical Self-Definition: Spirituals as a Strategy"
- James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, pp. xv-xviii, 28-47, 304-350

Politics of Spirituality & the Spiritualizing of Politics

- Class 8 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay
- Denisoff, "Religious Roots of the Song of Persuasion," in *Sing a Song of Social Significance* by Denisoff, pp. 48 to 57
- James Rodnitzky, "The New Revivalism: Protest Music as a Religious Experience," in *Minstrels of Dawn*, pp. 17-40
- Class 9 John Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India*, pp. 3-7, 35-51, 119-135.
- Parita Mukta, *Upholding the Common Life: The Community of Mirabai* pp. 19-45.
- Class 10 Midterm exam (in-class)

Weeks 6 & 7
From Sacred to Secular Music
Minstrelsy, Field Hollers, The Blues and Work Songs

- Class 11 Eric Lott, *Love & Theft: Black Face Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, pp. 3-37
- Class 12 Lawrence Levine, "Rise of the Secular Song," in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 190-217
- Class 13 Lawrence Levine, "Rise of the Secular Song," in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 217-239
- Class 14 Eric Hobsbawm, "Jazz as Protest," pp. 229-250
- Eric Porter, *What is this Thing called Jazz?*
- William Roy, "Reds, Whites, and Blues: Politics and Race in the Construction of American Folk Music"

Week 8
The Civil-Rights Era

- Class 15 Karl Marx, *On The Jewish Question*, pp. 26-52
- Eyerman and Jamison, "The movements of black music: from the New Negro to civil rights," in *Music and Social Movements*, pp. 74-105
- Class 16 Brian Ward, "Can I get a witness?": civil rights, soul and secularization," in *Just My Soul Responding: Rhythm & Blues, Black Consciousness and Race Relations*, pp. 231-240

Week 9
Folk Revival and the Vietnam War

- Class 17 Reebee Garofalo, *Rocking the Boat*, "Popular Music and the Civil Rights Movement," pp. 231-240

Jerome Rodnitzky, *Minstrels of the Dawn, The Folk-Protest Singer as a Cultural Hero*, pp. preface, introduction, and pp. 1-16; *Minstrels of the Dawn*, “Woody Guthrie: Father of the New Generation,” pp. 43-62

Class 18 Denisoff, *Sing a Song of Social Significance*, “The Political Side of Bob Dylan,” pp. 118 to 134

Rodnitzky, *Minstrels of the Dawn*, “Bob Dylan: Beyond Left and Right,” pp. 101-134

Week 10

Hip Hop and Country

Class 19 Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, pp. 21-61

Class 20 Aaron Fox, *Real Country: Music and Language in Working-Class Culture*, Preface, Prelude and pp. 1-45

Abstract

This essay is part of the “Music and Politics in the Classroom” series in the journal *Music and Politics*. The series is designed to communicate different approaches to teaching classes around the aforementioned topic. My course, “Music, Politics and Protest,” is structured for non-majors and as such is a general education lecture course. My approach to this class is not musicological but rather inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural—in examining music and its relationship to politics and protest, we have occasion to examine political and cultural theory in the context of U.S. and South Asian history. This approach is based on the fact that I am an anthropologist by training specializing in Hindustani music as well as by the fact that the music department at the University of California, Santa Cruz is in our second year of a Ph.D program in cross-cultural musicology, a program that emphasizes both inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to musical traditions. In particular, this course covers four domains where music intersects the political: (1) music as an agent of change, (2) music as an implicit or explicit commentary on power, (3) music and the politics of spirituality, and (4) music as a mirror of historical, political and cultural change.