DANCE MUSIC AND CULTURE IN AMERICA

INSTRUCTOR: Heather Mease, heather.mease@tu-dortmund.de

CLASS MEETING: Wintersemester 2022/2023, WEDNESDAY 14:15 - 15:45, R. 0.406

OFFICE HOUR: Tuesday 14:30 – 15:30 and by appointment for in-person & virtual meetings

OVERVIEW

This course traces the history and influence of different forms of twentieth- and twenty first-century dance music in the United States alongside analyses of class, gender, race, and sexuality in the cultures, sounds, dances, technologies, and places connected to these musics. We will explore the lofts of New York disco, the factories of Chicago hsouse, the desert festivals of EDM, and more. The class will also compare cross-Atlantic exchanges and developments such as the techno of Detroit versus Germany, and the commercialization of dubstep upon import from the UK. Film and reading assignments supplement listening-focused course materials. No specific musical knowledge or musicianship is required.

ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES

For the final project you will write an 800-word essay and curate an accompanying playlist/mix of music (8 to 12 tracks) on a dance music topic related to the materials of this course. You may choose to explore a topic we've covered more thoroughly or you may tie other forms of dance music into the themes of American dance music discussed. Format examples for the playlist/mix and essay document will be provided.

Project Proposal and Outline – **Due December 21 at class time (14:15)**

The outline should include your main points clearly organized along with a bibliography and a draft of your playlist (just track and artist names necessary). These are the minimum requirements but you may submit a substantial draft.

Project Presentations - Jan 25 and Feb 1

An approximately 5-minute presentation should condense and exemplify your topic through oral description and audio clips. A slideshow presentation may be used but is not mandatory.

Final Project - Due February 3* by midnight

The final essay with bibliography, written track listing and playlist/mix (either as a link to a streaming platform or as an audio file) is due February 3rd by midnight.

*If you plan to take the module exam (M5 Lehramt) please get in touch about handing in your work earlier.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – OCT 12 Introduction

WEEK 2 – OCT 19 American Dance Music is Black American Dance Music

READ: Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka – *Blues People*, Ch. 10: "Swing–From Verb

to Noun"

WATCH: "The Call of the Jitterbug" (1989)

WEEK 3 – OCT 26 **Disco and the Rise of the DJ**

READ: Tim Lawrence – Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance

Music Culture, 1970–1979, Ch. 1: "Beginnings" and Ch. 5: "Visibility"

Peter Shapiro – Turn The Beat Around, "Disco Timeline"

LISTEN: <u>Larry Levan – Live At The Paradise Garage 1979</u>

WEEK 4 – NOV 2 Life After the Explosive Death of Disco

READ: Peter Shapiro – *Turn The Beat Around,* "Where were you when the

lights went out? THE DEATH OF DISCO"

Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton – Last Night a DJ Saved My Life,

Ch. 8: "Hi-energy"

WEEK 5 – NOV 9 **Just a Fad in the Bronx – Early Hip Hop**

READ: Joseph Ewoodzie – *Breakbeats in the Bronx*, Ch. 1 "Herc: The New

Cool in the Bronx" and Ch. 2 "South Bronx DJs vs. Other DJs"

WATCH: "Style Wars" (1983) (OPTIONAL – a documentary about graffiti and

breakdancing in New York)

WEEK 6 – NOV 16 The House Chicago Built

READ: Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton – Last Night a DJ Saved My Life,

Ch. 12: "House"

WATCH: "How House Music Was Born" (2017)

WEEK 7 - NOV 23 Detroit Techno Meets the World

READ: Matthew Collin – Rave On, Ch. 1 "Techno Cities #1: Detroit" and Ch. 2

"Techno Cities #2: Berlin"

WEEK 8 – NOV 30 **Jamaican Sound Systems**

READ: Michael Veal – *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican*

Reggae, "Introduction" and Ch. 8 "Starship Africa"; Bonus: "Appendix:

Recommended Listening"

WEEK 9 – DEC 7 From Dubstep to Brostep

WATCH: "All My Homies Hate Skrillex: A story about what happened with

<u>dubstep" (2021)</u>

WEEK 10 - DEC 14 PLUR, Burners, and American Festival Rave Culture

READING: Matthew Collin – Rave On, Ch. 4 "Electric Dream Machine: Las Vegas"

WEEK 11 – DEC 21 Southern Styles

DUE: Final Project Proposal and Outline

BREAK - DEC 24 to JAN 6

WEEK 12 – JAN 11 DJ and Dancer Conversations in Footwork

WATCH: "I'M TRYNA TELL YA" Footwork Documentary (2012)

WEEK 13 – JAN 18 Fusion & Revival in Contemporary Pop Music

LISTEN: Choose one of the records below, your choice. Maybe you have your

own suggestion? Please share!

Beyonce - Renaissance (2022)

Lady Gaga - Chromatica (2020)

WEEK 14 – JAN 25 Final Project Presentations

WEEK 15 – FEB 1 **Final Project Presentations, cont.**

FEB 3 – FINAL PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT