



**Nanchang University**  
**MUS217: African American Music**  
(Last Updated in Jan. 2025)

**Credit: 4**

***Contact Hours***

This course is composed of 24 lecture sessions, 3 tutorial sessions and 9 office contact hours. Each lecture session takes 2 contact hours in length; each tutorial session takes 3 contact hours in length; There will be a Q-A review session (3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours) at the end of this term. This course has 72 contact hours in total.

***Course Description***

This course explores the history and significance of musical performance of the African diaspora in the United States, including its musical roots in Africa, how it has evolved and developed, and its influence on the American music. After this course, students will be able to recognize and describe general elements of African American musical and cultural practices.

After completion of this course, students will be able to

1. Explain the different genres and styles of the music and their characteristics.
2. Learn about African American musicians who shaped American culture with a wide variety of musical styles and genres.
3. Relate trends in American music to the major historical movements and events.
4. Interpret how race intersects with gender, class, and other aspects of identity during social processes of music production and reception.
5. Find legacies of historical African American musicians in today's musical practices.

*Note: This Syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class.*

***Required Textbook***

**Textbook:** *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*, by Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. Oxford University Press. 1995.

*The Music of Black Americans: A History*, by Eileen Southern. W. W. Norton & Company. 1997.

***Grading***

- |                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| • Participation | 5%  |
| • Assignments   | 20% |



- Research Paper 20%
- Presentation 10%
- Midterm 20%
- Final Exam 25%

|           |         |          |
|-----------|---------|----------|
| A+ 96-100 | A 90-95 | A- 85-89 |
| B+ 82-84  | B 78-81 | B- 75-77 |
| C+ 71-74  | C 66-70 | C- 62-65 |
| D 60-61   | F < 60  |          |

## ***Course Schedule***

The course has 24 class sessions in total. All sessions are 2 contact hours in length. At the end of this term, there will be a Q-A review session(3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours).

Note: the course outline and required readings are subject to change.

Class 1:

Course Overview and Introduction to the Syllabus

Class 2:

African Music Roots

West African Griots

Mbira Music from Zimbabwe

South African Choral Singing

Class 3:

Spiritual Music

Listen to “Go Down Mosses” and “Deep River”

Class 4:

Ragtime Music

Listen to Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag” (piano roll), and Morton’s “The Pearls,”

Class 5:

The Early Jazz

Listen to Armstrong’s “Hotter Than That”

Class 6:

The Blues

Listen to “Trouble so Hard,” “Nobody Knows,” “Crossroad Blues,” “Key to the Highway”

Class 7:

Urban Blues Women

Listen to: “Crazy Blues,” “St. Louis Blues”



Class 8:

The Swing Era

Listen to Ellington's "Song of the Cotton Field"

Class 9:

Classical Music and Harlem Renaissance

Listen to Still's Afro American Symphony, mvt. 1 and Price's violin concerto no. 2

Class 10:

Women in Jazz

Listen to "Strange Fruit" performed by Holiday and Vaughn, Sarah Vaughn's "Body and Soul"

Class 11:

Hot and Cool jazz

Listen to Gillespie and Parker's "Anthropology," Miles Davis's "So What"

Class 12:

Midterm

Class 13:

R&B

Listen to Thorton's "Hound Dog," Sister Rosetta Tharpe's "Rock Me," Little Richard's "Good Golly Miss Molly," Chuck Berry's "Johnny B. Goode"

Class 14:

Rock-n-Roll

Listen to Chuck Berry's "Rock and Roll Music"

Class 15:

Music of the 1960s Civil Rights Era

Listen to Mavis Staples' "We Shall Overcome," Alicia Key's "Lift Every Voice and Sing,"

Class 16:

Funk

Listen to Parliament/Funkadelic's "Give up the Funk" and "Tear the Roof off the Sucker"

Class 17:

Gospel Music

Listen to Toshi Reagon's "We'll Understand it Better," Thomas A. Dorsey, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," Mahalia Jackson's "How I Got Over," Hawkins Singers's "Oh Happy Day"

Class 18:

Soul



Listen to Aretha Franklin's "Respect," Ray Charles's "A Bit of Soul"

Class 19:

Disco in the 1970s

Listen to Carl Douglas' "Kung Fu Fighting", Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive"

Class 20:

Reggae

Listen to Bob Marley & The Wailers - Concrete Jungle, Johnny Nash "Hold Me Tight"

Class 21:

Hip-hop and Rap Music

Listen to Grandmaster Flash's "Rappers Delight" and "The Message," Kurtis Blow's "The Breaks," , Public Enemy's "One Million Bottlebags"

Class 22:

Modern Music and Discussion

Class 23:

Research Presentation

Class 24:

Final Exam

### ***Attending Policy***

Regular and prompt attendance is required. Under ordinary circumstances, you may miss two times without penalty. Each absence over this number will lower your course grade by a third of a letter and missing more than five classes may lead to a failing grade in the course. Arriving late and/or leaving before the end of the class period are equivalent to absences.

### ***Policy on "Late Withdrawals"***

In accordance with university policy, appeals for late withdrawal will be approved ONLY in case of medical emergency and similar crises.

### ***Academic Honesty***

Nanchang University expects all students to do their own work. Instructors will fail assignments that show evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, and will also report the student's name to the University administration. A student reported to the University for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

### ***General Expectations:***



Students are expected to:

- Attend all classes and be responsible for all materials covered in class and otherwise assigned;
- Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class;
- Review the previous day's notes before class and make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading;
- Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time;
- Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during the class period;
- While class participation is welcome, even required, you are expected to refrain from private conversations during the class period.

### ***Special Needs or Assistance***

Please contact the Administrative Office immediately if you have a learning disability, a medical issue, or any other type of problem that prevents professors from seeing you have learned the course material. Our goal is to help you learn, not to penalize you for issues which mask your learning.