

****draft syllabus****

First Year Seminar: African History through Popular Music
Spring 2010
Professor Lisa Lindsay



In the last two decades, African popular music has found audiences all over the world. Artists like Nigeria's Fela Kuti, South Africa's Miriam Makeba, and Senegal's Youssou N'Dour (all pictured above) have attracted widespread attention in their home countries and abroad not only because their music is extremely compelling, but also because they have expressed sentiments widely shared by others. Often, music such as theirs has contained sharp political or social commentary; other times, African popular music speaks to the universal themes of love, making a living, and having a good time.

In this seminar, we will study popular music as a way of understanding African history from about the 1930s to the present. We'll read background materials on African historical developments and musical styles, do a lot of listening, and try to learn what musicians from various times and places in Africa can tell us about their societies. By the end of the course, students will compile their own play lists, with essays (or liner-notes) interpreting the music in its historical context.

Format and Activities of the Course:

Since people learn best through multiple senses and activities, this course is organized around a mixed format of mini-lectures, discussions, music, films, reading assignments, writing exercises, research projects, and oral presentations. Class meetings will feature a

mix of the first four; you will be responsible for the others with guidance from me and your classmates. Here is some more information on your responsibilities:

Readings: Students should come to class having done the assigned reading and assimilated it well enough both to discuss it and to write occasional in-class essays based on it. If possible, please bring the text(s) with you to class. Our discussions will be much more stimulating if students have substantive ideas, spurred by the reading material, to contribute. Readings will be drawn from the following books, which are available for purchase at Student Stores and on reserve at the Undergraduate Library:

Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*

Christopher Alan Waterman, *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*

David B. Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*

Tejumola Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music!: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics*

Bob W. White, *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire*

Other Assignments:

1. Class participation: At a bare minimum this means attendance in class; it also includes active involvement in class discussion. Missing class more than once will adversely affect your participation grade.
2. Group project: Each student will be part of a small group responsible for a certain era in modern African history (WWII, the 1950s, early independence, the 1970s, etc.). Mid-way through the semester, each group will produce a short text (4-5 pages) describing major political, economic, and social trends in Africa during the group's time period. This text, along with several representative African songs of the era, will be posted on the class wiki page. Class participants may draw on the accumulated information on the wiki page described above in preparation for their final projects, described in #3 below.
3. Final project and presentation: Each student should produce a play list of at least eight recorded African songs organized around a theme—like, for example, urban labor, gender issues, politics, or religion--along with an essay (or "liner notes") of around 8 pages explicating the theme and the relationship of the songs to it. Students will have time in class to help each other with this project, and they will present their themes and play lists, with short listening excerpts, to the class at the end of the semester. We will also discuss ideas for presenting these playlists to a wider audience.
4. We will attend two **evening performances** together at Memorial Hall: Tinariwen (a rock band composed of nomads from the Sahara Desert), on Monday, Feb. 15; and Baaba Maal (the Senegalese pop star), on Tuesday, April 27. After each performance, you will

be asked to post your observations in the form of a mini-review on the class Discussion Board.

You should be aware that plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all suspected cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Court for assessment. Remember that when writing, taking exams, or performing other assignments you are bound by the Honor Code. For details, see <http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html> and <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>.

Overall grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance and participation	10%
In-class writing exercises	25%
Group project and wiki contributions	20%
Final essay (about 8 pages) and playlist	25%
Presentation of final essay and playlist	10%
Concert mini-reviews	10%

Schedule:

Tu 1/12: Introductions

Part I: Introduction to Africa and its Music

Th 1/14: Introduction to Modern African History

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, chapter 1

Tu 1/19: Introduction to African Popular Music

- Reading TBA

Part II: Musical life in the 1940s and '50s

Th 1/21: Colonial West Africa and the Origins of Highlife

- Waterman, *Juju*, ch. 1-2
- In-class video except: "The Rise of Nationalism"

Tu 1/26: Rumba on the River: Colonialism and Popular Music in the Congo

- White, *Rumba Rules*, ch. 1-2

Th 1/28 and Tu 2/2: Segregation's Soundtrack in South Africa

- Coplan, *In Township Tonight*, excerpts

- In-class video excerpt: "Come Back Africa"

Th 2/4: Wrap up Part II

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 4
- In-class Writing Assignment #1

Part III: Protest Music from the '60s to the '80s

Tu 2/9: The Hopes and Disappointments of Decolonization

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, "Interlude" and ch. 5

Th 2/11: Afrobeat Shakes Nigeria

- Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music*, ch. 1-2

Tu 2/16: Fela's Rebel Music

- Olaniyan, ch. 3-4
- In-class video: "Fela Kuti: Music is the Weapon," Nigeria, 1982 (53 mins.).

Th 2/18 and Tu 2/23: Protesting Apartheid in South Africa

- Coplan, *In Township*, excerpts TBA
- In-class Writing Assignment #2

Th 2/25 and Tu 3/2: In-class film "Sarafina!" South Africa, 1992 (116 mins.)

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 6

Th 3/5: Group Projects Due and presented in class

March 9 & 11: Spring Break

Part IV: Having a good time in spite of it all

Tu 3/16: Dictatorship and Debt in the 1980s

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 7

Th 3/18: *Juju* and "Big Men" in Nigeria

- Waterman, *Juju*, ch. 4 and 7

Tu 3/23 and Th 3/25: *Soukous* in Mobutu's Zaire

- White, *Rumba Rules*, ch. 3-4
- In-class video: "La Vie est Belle," Congo, 1987 (85 mins.)

Tu 3/30: Wrap up Part VI

- In-class Writing Assignment #3

Part V: The Global Explosion of Afropop

Th 4/1: Africa at the Turn of the Century

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 8

Tu 4/6: West African Cosmopolitans

- Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music*, ch. 8

Th 4/8: Youssou N'Dour and Modern Africa

- In-class video: "You, Africa! Youssou N'Dour and Etoile: the African tour," 1993 (43 mins.)

Tu 4/13: Writing Workshop

- Rough drafts of play lists and "liner notes" due
- In-class peer editing

Th 4/15, Tu 4/20 and Th 4/22: Student Presentations of play lists

Tu 4/27: Wrap Up