

History 3368R: History of Rock and Roll
Dr. Jason Mellard
Fall 2017 | CRN# 38648 | T/R 5:00 – 6:20 p.m.



Born at the crossroads of country and blues at a moment and in a region riven by massive resistance to integration, it is perhaps no wonder that rock 'n' roll traffics in so many contradictions. Rock is synonymous with youth culture, and also a relic of generations past; it is the paragon of rebellion, and an assemblage of guitar god clichés that crowd out innovations in the digital age of pop; the music liberates as we “keep on rockin’ in the free world,” even as it has to account for a track record of misogyny and whitewashing the contributions of its African American practitioners. Rather than detracting from the form, these contradictions make for a powerful and enduring music,

and rock, like jazz and hip-hop, provides a foundational American contribution to world culture. This course traces the history of rock music through its origins in “hillbilly” and “race” records, its tendentious birth in the civil rights-era South, the flowering of the youth counterculture of the Sixties, the proliferation of subgenres in the Seventies, the punk and grunge rebellions that railed against the form’s corporatization, and rock ‘n’ roll’s messy present as the music becomes just one among many options in the global marketplace of sound. We will explore rock’s history by taking different angles of view on the genre’s production, texts, and reception, looking to the business end of how the music is made, the artists’ performances, and the question of how fans receive and interpret the music.

Potential Texts:

Glenn Altschuler, *All Shook Up: How Rock 'n' Roll Changed America*

Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm 'n' Blues*

Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin*

Robert Walser, *Runnin' With the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*

Joshua Clover, *1989: Bob Dylan Didn't Have This to Sing About*