

# FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COURSE PROPOSAL

## UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **FSEM 100 topics** courses for review **or** any **other existing course** that you wish to have designated to meet the first year seminar requirement.

<b>COURSE NUMBER:</b>	FSEM 1920		
<b>COURSE TITLE:</b>	Virtual Vernacular: Recording Community Music		
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Gary Stanton	<b>DATE:</b>	8 September 2009
<i>This course proposal has the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**NOTE:** Click on the link for “first year seminar” at [www.jtmorello.org/gened](http://www.jtmorello.org/gened) to see the criteria used to evaluate courses proposed to meet the first year seminar requirement. See the report entitled “General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate” for additional details.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION.** In the space below, provide a one to two sentence description of this class. The description will be entered in Banner, and will also be used in other publications about the first year seminar program (such as the “Eagle Essentials” booklet).

FSEM 1920 Virtual Vernacular: Recording Community Music. This course explores the diverse forms of public music performed in the United States and how the technology of music recordings molded the culture of music and musicians. New marketing and performing strategies sprang up even as vernacular music, whether polka, blues, bluegrass, gospel, hillbilly, country, Cajun, or Calypso—yes even rock and roll, achieved a place in our collective musical consciousness through the medium of recorded sound.

**RATIONALE.** Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a first year seminar course.

This course seeks to expose first year students to the dynamic evolution of the musical industry in America by using both the literature of the first half of the twentieth century and the interpretation of that period how the recording first supported the live performance and now is seen as preferable to the actual event. Along the way the class will use contextualized examples from multiple vernacular traditions to discuss such modern concepts as nostalgia, revival, and revitalization and the invention of heritage through theming of performance events and the market-driven packaging of musical experience. Topics appropriate to our discussion will include, artistic license, virtuosity, novelty, art music and vernacular music, ownership of artistic production, consumer and client based marketing, accessibility, niche marketing, the changing market for vernacular music.

**SYLLABUS.** Attach a course syllabus.

**SUBMIT** this form and attached syllabus **electronically as one document** to Maya Mathur ([mmathur@umw.edu](mailto:mmathur@umw.edu)). All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

**FSEM-1920 VIRTUAL VERNACULAR**

Recorded Community Music

**Spring Semester 2010**

Mr. Stanton  
gstanton@umw.edu  
TR 12:30-1:45  
Combs Hall, 025

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Music is everywhere and all the time, it wakes us up, entertains or enrages us through the day and puts us to sleep at night. It is ubiquitous but unseen. To see a musician perform one must leave the virtual world in which we live and seek out special places of music performance. Where do we hear “live” music? The technology of recordings and radio expanded the possible vicarious musical experiences, as well as creating the melting-pot potential of mass-marketed popular music. However, the mass-marketed popular music has never vanquished the diversity of heritage communities’ musical traditions. Indeed, communities have looked to mass media as a medium for disseminating the vernacular music distinct to their cultural heritage while vernacular musicians have synthesized, revived, and reformulated music balancing the sounds of their roots with the possibility of mass market commercial success.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- (1) Foster a basic understanding and awareness of American vernacular music and explore the content, purposes, instrumentation, and evolution of these sounds.
- (2) Critically explore the differences between music for a live performance and studio production for a virtual audience. Discuss the rapid evolution of instrumentality with electrical sound reinforcement.
- (3) Develop a framework for understanding the conservative and dynamic forces of the musical marketplace within and between heritage communities.

**CLASS REQUIREMENTS**

**TEXTS**

The following books are required and will be available in the College Bookstore and on-line from many sources:

Richard Crawford. *The American Musical Landscape: The Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Lawrence W. Levine. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

## **TESTS**

The student is responsible for all required readings and for listening to recordings for each class prior to class. Any handouts in class with the exception of discussion summaries should be considered materials that will be tested. Examinations will test your knowledge concerning basic terms, concepts or significant examples from in-class discussions, films, or required readings. The tests will include fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions. There will be two tests: Test 1, Tuesday October 23<sup>rd</sup> and the Final Examination, Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup> from noon-2:30 pm.

## **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

### **In class assignments**

From the first day until the last day of class we will be thinking, speaking, and writing about music as a sound, as an expressive art, as skillful performance, and artistic creation and as a container for and commentary about community values. This class is centered upon performance in the context of communities in the United States. Where we cannot have recordings we may use notated examples in lieu of the sound. However, we will be listening to a considerable number of examples of music in class. What you hear is important and everyone in the class will benefit from your comments. Musical examples will be posted to our web site on the class period prior to our discussion. You are expected to have listened and are able to talk about the readings and the sounds during our class sessions. To this end our class will involve your total participation and a portion of your grade directly relates to how thoroughly you participate and how well you prepare to participate.

Each student will be responsible for preparing a background report for one of the class topics which will be circulated to the class on the day of the class meeting before the topic is discussed. Any class is available for student report, but we will need to agree on who has which day-topic. The reporting student will lead the discussion for that class, including adding insight gathered through further research, and by questioning the class about the how the music and its performance is illustrative of events occurring within American society at that time. The student report will be posted on our website and each student is required to contribute a comment expanding on a point made or provide a query upon an implication of the contents of the report. The report is a graded experience and should be well crafted with citations that include page numbers for hard copy and url information for web content. Your comments on the reports will be evaluated as part of your class participation score.

### **Out of class Assignment**

Each student will prepare a term project on the relationship of a form of vernacular music to the social, economic or political patterns of the time. The paper will be approximately ten pages in text length, not including the endnotes and appendices. I need to know what your topic will be by Thursday February 18<sup>th</sup> although I am happy to work this out with you considerably sooner. So we are clear, I will not accept a term project whose topic has not been approved. The papers are due Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. The paper may focus on music, musicians, musical events, themes of the music, interactions with the audiences. A paper may focus on a particular time period or compare music across time. For example comparing "God Bless America" in the context it was first

composed, to the time when it was a electricifying performance of Kate Smith in 1939. You may use the full range of resources available, including the internet, archival collections, books, journals, popular magazines and newspapers. However, each paper should use both primary resources and secondary sources of analysis. You may also wish to incorporate the class discussion into your analysis of the topic.

I am excited to talk to each of you about your musical interests that may form the basis for this project. The range of musical abilities and experiences we have within our class is vast. Beyond the basic understandings mentioned above you are encouraged to seek out and explore vernacular musical expressions that are interesting and meaningful for you. If you are a singer, then the style(s) of song may be most interesting to you; if you are an instrumentalist, then exploring the shifting sounds, repertory, or notable players may be particularly interesting. Interest in a particular ethnic music, or a heterogeneous musical expression may be a subject that you find personally stimulating.

Final copies of the project should be *typed, double spaced*, using a computer. I can help you place images into the text, if you wish assistance. I take the Honor Code very seriously and insist that all written work that you submit for my evaluation include the Honor Pledge and be signed.

## GRADING

In an effort to be open about the scoring of writing projects so that we are all clear about how a grade is achieved the following comments are provided: Grades have two parts, (1) an evaluation of the content and the considerable intellectual effort that goes into the creation of a student project, and (2) the skill with which this material is integrated into a coherent thoughtful presentation that reflects student control of the subject. A paper receiving an outstanding grade must show the intellectual effort of its creation (more than just a cut-and-paste presentation), the skillful integration of the material and evidence of having reviewed and edited the final product.

Letter grade descriptions and quality point conversions are taken from the *Academic Catalog*. This and the *Dictionary of Academic Regulations* should be consulted for further explanation of these and all other grading details and other academic regulations.

The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.), I would be happy to refer you to the Office of Disability Services. They will require appropriate documentation of a disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266.

## FINAL GRADE

Please note: **No passing grade** can be achieved in this course without completion of *all* examinations, participation in discussion, and graded assignments. Your final grade will be based on the following scores—In class report and leading discussion, 15%; Test I, 15%; In-class participation (including posting comments and questions) 20%; Term Project 25%; Final Examination 25%. The Out-of-Class Assignment will be marked down by ten (10 points) for each day later than the beginning of class on the date due.

**MY OFFICE HOURS**  
**OFFICE**

Monday thru Friday 2 p.m.  
Combs 128, Phone: 654-1313

I will be in my office for *set* office hours (that is, I'll be there and you can drop in whether you have an appointment or not) every weekday, as noted above. If I must attend a meeting with a faculty committee during one of those periods, I will announce this in class. I am happy to make an appointment to see you at some specific time that suits your needs.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS, TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Week #1 Introduction to American Vernacular Music

Tuesday 12 January 2010

The place of music in cultural creations

Defining the vernacular

Required Reading: Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape*, Pp. 85-107.

H. Wiley Hitchcock, "The Vernacular Tradition." **Reserve**

Thursday 14 January 2010

The Business of Musical creation: The composer, the arranger and the public domain

Required Readings: Crawford, Pp. 3-37

Robert James Branham "Of Thee I Sing": Contesting "America" see **Links**

Week #2 Popular Music at the end of the Nineteenth Century

Tuesday 19 January 2010

The popular made playable: Books of technique and method

Required Reading: Crawford, Pp. 151-183.

Samuel Swain Stewart, "The Banjo Philosophically." **Reserve**

See Discussion page for **Links**

Thursday 21 January 2010

The Business of Sheet Music: Tin Pan Alley

Required Reading: Crawford, Pp. 151-183; Levine, Pp. 171-242.

Paul Charosh. "Studying nineteenth-century popular song." **Reserve**

Charles Hamm, "Genre, performance and ideology in the early songs of Irving Berlin" **Reserve**

Week #3 The Consumer Revolution

Tuesday 26 January 2010

Inventing the Classical, demoting the Popular

Required Readings: Crawford, Pp. 85-90; Levine, Pp. 85-168.

Thursday 28 January 2010

The Parlor and Home: Player Piano, guitar, harp, and mechanical reproduction

Required Readings: Crawford, Pp. 151-183.

Week #4 Stage and Public Performance in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America

Tuesday 2 February 2010

From Spiritual to Jubilee Quartet: Black Secular and Sacred

Required Readings: Tim Brooks "Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Popularization of Negro Spirituals." **Reserve**

Crawford, America's Musical Life, Pp. 407-428. **Reserve**

Thursday 4 February 2010

Inventing the Jazz Craze

Required Readings: Vermazen, "Start of a Legend" **Reserve**

"Wilbur C. Sweatman: Disrespecting Wilbur" **Reserve**

Week #5 The threshold of Vicarious Music

Tuesday 9 February 2010

Ragtime: the first recorded musical enthusiasm

Required Reading: John Edward Hasse, "Ragtime from the Top." **Reserve**

Thursday 11 February 2010

The Virtue of Virtuosity: Variations on a familiar theme and other early recording agendas

Required Reading: Anya Peterson Royce, "Virtuosity: The Masque of Nonchalance." **Reserve**

Week #6

Tuesday 16 February 2010

Novelty Piano: A schooled Approach to Vernacular Music

Required Reading: *ZeZ Confrey's modern course in novelty piano playing*. New York: J. Mills, 1923.

Thursday 18 February 2010

Musical Self-Improvement: Banjo Bands, Mandolin Orchestras, Accordion, Hawaiian guitar and ukulele

Required Reading: Robert B. Winans. "The Folk, the Stage, and the Five-String Banjo in the Nineteenth Century." *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 89, No. 354 (Oct. - Dec., 1976), pp. 407-437. **See Links**

**Term Paper topic must have been submitted by this date**

Week #7 Get Yourself a Gimmick to Get Applause

Tuesday 23 February 2010

**Midterm examination**--Y'all Come!

Thursday 25 February 2010

It was all about Sound: Moaning Saxophones, Squawking Clarinets, and laughing Trombones

Novelty: Whistling, Ocarina, Jugs, Musical Saws and other musical depreciation

## MID-SEMESTER BREAK

Week #8 The revolution in musical instrumentation

Tuesday 9 March 2010

From Mambo to Hip Hop: Roots Music is the enduring fountain

**Video and discussion**

Thursday 11 March 2010

Electrical Amplification in the studio and on the Radio: The Genie is out of the Bottle

Required Reading: Marvin R. Bensman “The History of Broadcasting, 1920-1960.” see **Links**

Steven E. Schoenherr, “Microphones part 2 - The Electrical Era.” see **Links**

TECnology Hall of Fame “Electrical recording process—Western Electric/Bell Labs” **Links**

“History of the Electric Guitar” see **Links**

Week #9 The Rise of Regional Music

Tuesday 16 March 2010

From Hillbillies to Country-Western Music Stars

Required Reading: Linn, Pp. 118-153.

Archie Green, “Hillbilly Music: Source and Symbol.” see **Links for these articles**

Norman Cohen, “The Skillet Lickers: A Study of a Hillbilly String Band and Its Repertoire.”

John Greenway, “Jimmie Rodgers: A Folksong Catalyst”

Thursday 18 March 2010

European Music: Roots and Rendered Sounds

Required Reading: James Leary and Richard March, “Dutchman Bands: Genre, Ethnicity, and Pluralism in the Upper Midwest.” **Reserve**

Week #10 All That Jazz

Tuesday 23 March 2010

Black and White Dance Bands: Hot or Sweet?

Required Reading: Crawford, Pp.184-212;

Interview of Jeffrey Magee, on *Fletcher Henderson: The Uncrowned King of Swing*. **Reserve**

Thursday 25 March 2010

Hispanic and Afro-Caribbean Hybrids: Calypso, Cha-Cha, Mambo, Samba

Required Reading: Michael Eldridge: “There Goes the Transnational Neighborhood: Calypso Buys a Bungalow.” see **Links**

Guy Bensusan, Charles R. Carlisle. “Raices y Ritmos/Roots and Rhythms: Our Heritage of Latin American Music.” see **Links**

Week #11 Virtuosity and Emotional Intensity

Tuesday 30 March 2010

Twentieth-Century Gospel Sounds

Required Reading: James R. Goff Jr., “Introduction.” *Close Harmony: A History of Southern*

*Gospel. Reserve*

Thursday 1 April 2010

Classic Blues and Country Blues

Required Reading: Jeff Todd Titon. *Early Downhome Blues*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition **Reserve**

Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff. "They Cert'ly Sound Good to Me": Sheet Music, Southern Vaudeville, and the Commercial Ascendancy of the Blues." *American Music*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (Winter, 1996), pp. 402-454. **See Links**

Week #12 From Regional to National Music

Tuesday 6 April 2010

From style to sound: Early Bluegrass Music

Required Reading: L. Mayne Smith. "An Introduction to Bluegrass" see **Links**

Neil V. Rosenberg, "From sound to Style: The Emergence of Bluegrass." see **Links**

Thursday 8 April 2010

Sing a Song of Social Significance: The Folksong Revival

Required Reading: Jerrold Hirsch. "Modernity, Nostalgia, and Southern Folklore Studies: The Case of John Lomax." *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 105, No. 416 (Spring, 1992), pp. 183-207. see **Links**

Week #13 Where are we going?

Tuesday 13 April 2010

Breaking Market Place Bonds: Independent Recording Studios.

Required Reading: Susan Schmidt Horning, "From Polka to Punk: Growth of the Independent Recording Studio, 1934-1977." **Reserve**

Thursday 15 April 2010

Does Digital Matter?

Required Reading: Bernd Enders, "Musical Education and the New Media." **Reserve**

Week #14 The End

Tuesday 20 April 2010

The Reverse Salient in Electric Guitar Technology

Required Reading: Rebecca McSwain, "The Social Reconstruction of a Reverse Salient in Electric Guitar Technology: Noise, The Solid Body, and Jimi Hendrix." **Reserve**

**Term Project is due**

Thursday 22 April 2010

"... the Fat Lady Sings."

Thursday, April 29

Noon-2:30 p.m. Final Exam