This course will present American popular music after 1950 by focusing on the specific ingredients of musical styles, and relating those styles to broader social constructs. The course will also focus on the problem of writing a history of anything – what gets in, what gets left out and why? While the subject is music, critical thinking is the major methodical emphasis of the course.


**Websites & Internet use:** The textbook website (see class website for active link) is useful. It has listening guides, practice quizzes, and iTunes links. The class website (http://www.smccd.net/accounts/meckler/MUS210/MUS210.htm) will be a simple archive of class materials, such as the syllabus and class notes. Review it weekly. The listening guides can be particularly helpful for your song assessments. Check your student email account at least once a week. (It is easy to have this forwarded to any convenient email address.) While hard copy is preferred for assignments, if you do submit assignments via email, paste the text into the body of your email, and use your last name as the first part of the file name in any attachments. (For example, a student named Janis Joplin would name an attachment as “joplin_assessment3.doc”)

Other class materials (listening examples) may be posted on the WebAccess site (see class website for active link) for this class. Log in using your G number and 6-digit birth date, MMDDYY, no spaces or hyphens.

**Reading assignment** -- read the entire book; it can be boring, so plan on reading one chapter a week to keep it manageable.

**Homework assignments** – at the end of each unit, turn in an assessment of three songs from the era covered in class. Each song assessment will be worth 10 points. Each assessment should cover musical aspects of the song, poetic and formal aspects of the lyrics, and the song’s significance should be related to broader questions of genre and social history. Why did you choose it? Historians usually like to choose examples that are the first, the best, most typical, most popular and influential, traits that and don’t always come together in the same example. How does your example rate in those categories? What class, race or gender issues might be associated with your example? Can any of these broader issues of social context and be tied to specific musical details? Where does the song fall in the pop-rock continuum? Musical specifics to note include tempo (fast or slow?), rhythmic feel (backbeat, syncopation, swing, duple or triple subdivision, four-on-the-floor?), harmony (usual or unusual, simple or complex?), form (usual or unusual? All four-bar phrases or something different?), timbre (sound characteristics of instruments and singing style), and the texture (layers of sound).

1 – introduction; the roots of American Popular music; early rock, doo-wop, surf music (1950-1962) (assessments due )

2 – the Beatles, Dylan . . . (1964-1975) (assessments due 8 Sep)  
3 – 1970-1985 (assessments due 29 Sep)  
5 –1995–today (assessments due 24 Nov)  

**Final assignment (no final examination)** (see more assignment details on the class website)  

1. Select five songs and one album that can be used to summarize the history of popular music since 1950. Explain your choices in detail and describe what currents are reflected in your examples, with an emphasis on musical traits. Briefly criticize your list, mentioning what is left out or in what ways it is imbalanced. 200 points. You may reuse and refine the song assessments that you have created during the course for this final project. Personal statements of taste are strongly encouraged, but this is not to be a simply a list of your five favorite songs.  

2. A brief essay: Describe several examples of how music reflects society and social structures and conditions; did music play a role in changing or creating those conditions? Draw on the textbook for your evidence and examples with specific citations. (A social structure could be anything from a corporation, such as a record label, to laws, such as civil rights legislation, to social
classifications like race and gender.) Music reflects society; can it change society? Does music inevitably reflect society? 50 pts.

The final grade will be based on the percentage earned of total possible points (270). Standard grading percentages apply (A = 90%). Additional quizzes and assignments, such as in-class film study guides, may be assigned.

Attendance is absolutely vital. The book leans towards the social side of the music; class will emphasize the musical side of the music, material best covered in lecture. The song assessments should include specific observations about the music, as well as the social context of the song. Please no late arrival, early departure, sleeping in class, doing non-course related computer work or reading non-course related materials in class. Miss a class for a good reason? You are the judge, but only WRITTEN excuses are recorded. Late work will not be accepted after graded papers are returned to the class. The first assignment will not be accepted late at all. Period.

Extra Credit
Recognizing that life events interfere with perfect class attendance, extra credit may be earned by attending performances, lectures, concerts, etc. and writing a 3-page report about it. The extra credit activity must be approved by me in advance IN WRITING – use e-mail. It can be used to replace one song assessment.

Academic Integrity = Personal Integrity
You must do you own work unless specified. Severe penalties, outlined in the Student Handbook, will be used in case of cheating or copied work without proper attribution. Plagiarism will result in zero points awarded for the assignment. Never write about music that you have not heard as if you have heard it. Cite all sources in your work; for the textbook, just the page number will do, but please give full citations to books and websites. Even if you are paraphrasing and not quoting exactly your source, it should be cited.

Student Learning Outcomes
SLO 1 – Students will identify in musical terms key stylistic traits of various genres of popular music.
SLO 2 – Students will analyze the role of popular music in society, especially with regard to expressions of social conflict and identity.
SLO 3 – Students will construct a personal canon of songs, critically evaluating expressive content, expressive means, and connection to the history of the relevant genres.

Assessing Song Assessments

10/A+ = engaging, vivid, personal; a novel or surprising creative approach
9/A = well-organized and thorough; unique personal observations; a good mix of big ideas and supporting details
8/B = good content but not well-organized or with several incorrect uses of music terminology
7/C = too short; lacking in personal points of view; few details, many incorrect uses of music terminology or no musical specifics
6/D = poor writing obscures whatever point you are trying to make; not internally consistent (self-contradictory) but at least some evidence that you did listen and think!
5/F = much better for your average than a zero.