

**LS 819: Selected Topics:
Cultures, Currents, and Histories of Popular Music**

Tuesdays – 6:30 – 9:20 pm – In Person – Room HC 2280
Instructor: Martin Laba – SFU Faculty of Communication
laba@sfu.ca

This course offers an interdisciplinary excursion through the roots, progress, trajectories and cultural significance and power of popular music. Ultimately, it focuses on the question: why and how popular music matters. An exhaustive linear history of popular music is clearly neither feasible nor appropriate in a single semester-length course; instead, the course will proceed according to specific themes, issues, debates, and perspectives, including: popular music and protest; popular music and social change; the cultural production of popular music; anthropologies of popular music; technological foundations of popular music production; youth cultures, youth media, and popular music; popular music in film; popular music and advertising; independent music production; regional musical forms and commercial currents; “authenticity” in popular music; the business, profitability and popular music; the machinery of popular music promotion; global perspectives in popular music; and more. Each issue/theme will be traced and analyzed through specific case studies. The course will be highly participatory, and students will contribute substantially to the case studies considered, foci, and analytical parameters of the course.

Preliminary/selected readings and resources:

- Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985.
- Byrne, David. *How Music Works*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2017.
- Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: Macmillan, 2005.
- Friedman, Jonathan C., Ed. *The Routledge History of Popular Music*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Frith, Simon. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll*. New York: Pantheon, 1981.
- Frith, Simon. *Taking Popular Music Seriously*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Gillett, Charlie. *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, 3rd edition. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996.
- Osberby, Bill, Ed. *Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- Osgerby, Bill. *Youth Media*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Palmer, Robert. *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago's South Side, to the World*. New York: Penguin, 1962.
- Rebeka, Reiland. *The Hip Hop Movement*. Lanham: Lexington, 2013.
- Sanneh, Kelefa. *Major Labels: A History of Popular Music in Seven Genres*. Edinburgh: Canondale Books, 2021.

Shaw, Arnold. *Honkers and Shouters: The Golden Years of Rhythm and Blues*. New York: Collier Books, 1978.

Podcasts:

Hickey, Andrew. *A History of Rock Music in 500 Songs*, 2018-present

Pushkin Industries (Rick Rubin, Malcolm Gladwell, Justin Richmond, Bruce Headlam), *Broken Record*, 2018-present.