

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



Classes: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-4:45 in Hamilton 570
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3pm and by appointment
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Course Themes and Objectives

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. In particular, we will focus on the impact of colonialism and nationalism, relations between African populations and post-independence governments, national and communal identities, and social relationships in different places and times. By the end of the course, students will compile their own play lists centered on particular themes in African history, with essays (or liner-notes) interpreting the music in its historical context.

This course fulfills the Historical Analysis Approach and the Beyond the North Atlantic World Connection in UNC's General Education Curriculum.

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 some of these; 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 to discuss 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 (except for the latter two, which are not on reserve but are available as e-books through the UNC Library's online catalog):

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*

Additional readings, designated with "BB," are available as .pdf files on the course Blackboard website, under "Course Documents."

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. Three short essays: These will be based on your interpretations of our class readings and are intended to showcase and hone your analytical and writing skills. Each essay should be approximately five double-spaced (12 point font) pages. Deadlines are firm: late assignments will be marked down one grade increment (A to A- to B+, etc.) for each day past the due date.

3. 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 #4 below.

4. 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 eight 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.

5. We will attend two **evening performances** 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. If you are unable to attend one or both of these performances, please talk to me about a substitute assignment.

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>.

For help with your writing and other academic skills, I strongly recommend UNC's Writing Center (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/about.html>) and Learning Center (<http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>).

Overall grades will be determined as follows:

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| Attendance and participation | 10% |
| Essay 1 | 10% |
| Essay 2 | 10% |
| Essay 3 | 10% |
| Group project and wiki contributions | 15% |
| Final essay and playlist | 25% |
| Presentation of final essay and playlist | 10% |
| Concert mini-reviews | 10% |

Schedule:

Tu 1/12: Introductions

What does music have to do with history?

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: *discussion and workshop with musicians*

Alex Weiss and Kwabena Osei Appiagyei

- BB (meaning “on Blackboard, in the Course Documents section”): Ruth Stone, “Exploring African Music,” in *The Garland Handbook of African Music*, ed. Ruth M. Stone (Routledge 2008), pp. 13-21
- Waterman, *Juju*, ch. 1

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

Th 1/21: Music and Social Change in Colonial West Africa

- Waterman, *Juju*, ch. 2
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 2 and pp. 49-53

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

- White, *Rumba Rules*, ch. 1-2, especially up to p. 45 (with White’s “audio cues” at http://www.atalaku.net/writing/RumbaRules/av_cues.htm)

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

- BB: David B. Coplan, “Popular Music in South Africa,” in Stone (ed.), *Garland Handbook of African Music*, esp. pp. 406-423.
- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, pp. 53-58
- Optional: Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, ch. 6
- In-class video excerpt: “Come Back Africa”

Th 2/4: Decolonization and Independence

- Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, ch. 4
- In-class video excerpt: “Freedom Now”
- **Essay 1 due: In what ways did the African popular music of the 1940s and '50s reflect changes in the societies of Anglophone West Africa, the Congo, and/or South Africa?**

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

Monday, Feb. 15: Tinariwen concert

Please post your review **by Friday, Feb. 19 at 5pm.**

Tu 2/16: Fela's Rebel Music

- Olaniyan, ch. 3-4
- If you're interested, listen to my WXYC "global music" radio show from November 16, 2007 called "Afrobeat and Modern Nigeria," at <http://www.unc.edu/areastudies/publicprograms/global-music-audio.html>

Th 2/18: Protesting Apartheid in South Africa

- Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, ch. 7
- **Essay 2 due: How did popular musicians in Nigeria and South Africa respond to repressive political conditions? Give specific examples to support your answer.**

Tu 2/23 and Th 2/25: In-class film "Sarafina!" South Africa, 1992 (116 mins.)

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

Tu 3/2: Making music under and after apartheid

- Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, ch. 9, esp. up to about p. 313

Th 3/4: **Group Projects Due** and presented in class

March 9 & 11: NO CLASS--Spring Break

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

Tu 3/16 and Th 3/18: *Soukous* in Mobutu's Zaire

- White, *Rumba Rules*, ch. 3, 6, and 8
- In-class video: "La Vie est Belle," Zaire (DRC), 1987 (85 mins.)

Tu 3/23: The "Gatekeeper State" in Modern Africa

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

Th 3/25: *Juju* and Afrobeat, “Big Men” and dissidents in Nigeria

- Waterman, *Juju*, ch. 3 (optional) and ch. 4
- Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music*, ch. 7

Part V: The Global Explosion of Afropop

Tu 3/30: West African Cosmopolitans

- Olaniyan, *Arrest the Music*, ch. 8
- **Essay 3 due: What are some of the ways that producers and consumers of African popular music since the 1960s have expressed their personal, communal, and/or national identities? In other words, what are some of the ways that music has helped to describe who people are?**

Th 4/1: NO CLASS

Tu 4/6: Africa on the World Stage

- BB: Angela Impey, “Popular Music in Africa,” in Stone (ed.), *Garland Handbook of African Music*, pp. 124-147
- In-class video: “You, Africa! Youssou N'Dour and Etoile: the African tour,” 1993 (43 mins.)

Th 4/8: Africa at the Turn of the Century

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

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

Final play lists and liner notes due by class time

That evening: Baaba Maal concert. Please post your review by **Friday, April 30 at 5pm**.