Ill Communication: 
Race, Gender, & Sexuality in Hip Hop Discourse

Communication Studies

Syllabus – Summer 2012

Instructor: Jackie Arcy

Course Description
This course will provide a comprehensive overview of contemporary cultural critiques of race, gender, and sexuality by hip hop scholars and activists. We will consider the use of hip-hop as a form of cultural and political activism that forces Americans to confront key social justice issues including: sexual and gender violence, homophobia, and destructive representations of black and brown masculinity and femininity in U.S. popular culture.

We will explore how hip hop discourse reiterates, challenges, and critiques dominant social structures. Specifically, this course will investigate representations of social inequalities related to race, gender, and sexuality in hip hop. We will be concerned with the process of cultural critique. How is hip hop framed in popular culture? How does hip hop challenge social inequalities? How does hip hop reinforce dominant social structures? To pursue these questions, each student will work in groups responsible for creating their own critique in the hip hop remix project. The project should be conceived to interrogate the readings and viewings; to raise questions and issues around the material and its presentation; and to critique the relationship of hip hop in popular culture

Course Goals
• To explore theoretical and popular debates about hip hop music’s impact on race, gender, and sexuality.
• To engage the larger social, economic and political histories that produce hip hop and its impact on popular culture.
• To explore how race, gender, and sexuality shape popular culture and impact our perspectives.
• To demonstrate critical thinking skills and utilize theoretical frameworks in Communication Studies.

Required Text

Other readings, listening, and music videos to be distributed via Moodle.

Course Requirements

Participation and Attendance- 25%
Your participation and attendance grade will be measured by your physical presence in the classroom and the extent to which you actively participate in an informed manner. This class values group discussion and the sharing of personal experiences; however, informed participation implies that your contributions should also demonstrate critical consideration of the assigned readings. Because this is a Maymester Course and each class day corresponds to one week of classes during a 15 week course, it is imperative that you attend every class meeting.
Hip Hop Background Report- 10%
Background Reports let you draft a briefing document on a social justice issue, post it to our class blog, and then bring it to the class for open discussion and debate. You will choose a topic that is relevant to hip hop culture and related to race, gender and/or sexuality, do some preliminary research, find an infographic and media example and compile the information you find into a blog post.

Media Example- 10%
You will sign up to present a media example during one class meeting. The media example (song, music video, TV clip, website, image, artifact, etc.) should relate to the reading assignments in some way, and should be presented in a manner designed to clarify concepts and stimulate class discussion. Please introduce the example with a brief (5 minute) presentation in which you note how the media example pertains to what we have read. You will post your media example to our blog by **8PM** the day before class. We will devote about 45 minutes to discussing media examples each class.

Concert Assignment- 25%
For this assignment, you will go to a hip hop concert and blog about your experience. At the show, look at as much as you can, in as much detail as you can, from as many perspectives as you can. Take notes, pictures and video (if you can). Take stuff from the concert home with you (if possible). In your blog post you will consider how the concert is related to issues of race, gender, and sexuality.

Final Project- Hip Hop Remix! – 30%
A hip hop ‘remix’ is an alternative interpretation that highlights the problematic assumptions about race, gender and sexuality that are embedded in hip hop narratives. For your final assignment, you will work in teams to create a ‘remix’ of a hip hop artifact: a popular song, music video, book, commercial, TV show, film, etc. This project includes two major components:

1. **Group Remix Presentation/Performance** – Each team will perform/present their remix on the last day of class. After the remix is performed, teams are required to deliver an oral presentation (in which the rationale behind the remix is explained) and field questions about their remix from the class and instructor. Detailed guidelines will be posted to Moodle.
2. **Annotated Bibliography**- Each student will submit an annotated bibliography with 4 sources that explicates the social, political and cultural dimensions of your remix artifact. For each annotation you will explain how your group utilized the concepts, readings and vocabulary of the course. Detailed guidelines will be posted to Moodle.

Grades:

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<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Attendance</td>
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<td>Background Report</td>
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<td>Media Example</td>
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<td>Concert Assignment</td>
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<td>Hip Hop Remix Project</td>
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M 21-May  Intro & History
• Syllabus

T 22-May  Hip Hop Theory

W 23-May  Race & Racism

Th 24-May  Whiteness

M 28-May  MEMORIAL DAY—NO CLASS

T 29-May  Masculinity & Femininity
• Film: *Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes* (2006)

W 30-May  Misogyny, Feminism and Women in Hip Hop
• Rose, T. “Never Trust a Big Butt and a Smile” p. 335-352 (Forman and Neal)

Th 31-May  Gender & Family

REMIX Preliminary Proposal Due

M 4-June  Queer Hip Hop
• “We Invented Swag: New York's Queer Rap” http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/8793-we-invented-swag/
- “Why Rappers Are Suddenly Speaking Out in Support of Gay Pride”

**CONCERT Assignment Due**

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<td>T</td>
<td>5-June</td>
<td>Sex &amp; Sexuality</td>
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**REMIX Progress Report/ Special Requests Due**

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<td>W</td>
<td>6-June</td>
<td>HIP HOP REMIX Work Day</td>
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<td>7-June</td>
<td>HIP HOP REMIX Delivery Day</td>
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