

FYWS 151 (06): Revolution at 33¹/₃: The Album as Text

Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Keith Corson

Meeting Times: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. 2:00pm-2:50pm

Room: Barrett 214

Email: corsonk@rhodes.edu

Office: Palmer 309A

Office Hours: Wednesdays noon-2:00pm or by appointment

Course Description

Over the past decade critics have posited the death of the album, with the rise of online consumption emphasizing singles, personal playlists, and Internet radio programmed via algorithm. Has the digital download brought an end to the immersive experience of putting on headphones and getting lost for an hour in a visceral text that has been painstakingly recorded and sequenced? Before we write the obituary and list the MP3 as the cause of death it is worth considering that the album has survived similar threats from the 45 RPM single, cassette tape, and compact disc. Providing a structure that can expand in scope and depth over the isolated song, the album format has been essential to how we have engaged the work of artists ranging from Frank Sinatra and the Beatles to Radiohead and Kanye West. This course will use chapters from the *33 1/3* book series to explore the aesthetics and cultural context of popular music through varying rhetorical strategies. The writing exercises will develop research skills and challenge students to think critically about the ways in which politics, history, and social values are articulated through the album form.

Communication

I strongly encourage students to utilize office hours to discuss any questions or concerns about writing, the course material, or any other related topics. Email should be reserved for brief questions or to inform the instructor of absences in advance. Questions about grading will not be answered via email. Please allow 24-48 hours for email responses.

Required Material

1. David Barker. (ed.) *33 1/3 Greatest Hits, Volume 1*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2006. ISBN: 0826419038
2. David Barker. (ed.) *33 1/3 Greatest Hits, Volume 2*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2007. ISBN: 0826428762
3. Christopher R. Weingarten. *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back (33 1/3)*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010. ISBN: 0826429130
4. Your choice of an individual title from Bloomsbury's *33 1/3* series. Please choose from volumes 41-86. For a complete list of titles and author information please see: <http://333sound.com/33-13-series/>

5. In addition to the required readings students are expected to listen to the albums that serve as the foundation for this course. To ensure access, responsible consumption, and audio fidelity each student should use a reputable subscription service to listen to each album, such as Rhapsody, Spotify, or Beats Music.

Goals

As per the guidelines for all first-year writing seminars at Rhodes, by the end of the semester students should be able to:

1. Determine important questions about a topic or a text on their own.
2. Analyze a writing task and develop a strategy to fulfill it, considering the rhetorical situation and the audience.
3. Assess fairly the arguments of others and develop a critical/analytical response to a written text.
4. Plan and organize a coherent, well-supported argument with a clear thesis.
5. Support the thesis with unified paragraphs that are clearly related and substantially developed. Develop a polished, rational, evidenced argument.
6. Distinguish between kinds of evidence and select evidence that is relevant, sufficiently detailed, and substantial.
7. Summarize, extrapolate, and synthesize material from a variety of sources, giving adequate and accurate documentation.
8. Demonstrate sensitivity to tone, diction, syntax, and figurative language.
9. Express complex ideas in clear and effective prose that has been carefully edited and proofread.
10. Assess their own drafts (drawing on audience feedback when appropriate) and reconceive, restructure, or significantly modify their own arguments.

Assignments/Grades

Grading:

93-100% A	80-82% B-	60-69% D
90-92% A-	77-79% C+	0-59% F
87-89% B+	73-76% C	
83-86% B	70-72% C-	

“Incomplete” grades are reserved for serious emergencies only and must be formally applied for and approved by the instructor beforehand.

Grade Breakdown

Attendance/Participation.....	10%
Exercises	5%
Presentation 1.....	5%
Presentation 2.....	5%
Museum Visit.....	5%
Paper 1.....	10%
Paper 2.....	15%
Paper 3.....	20%
Paper 4.....	25%

Attendance/Participation

Attendance and participation are required elements of this course. Students are expected to arrive on time, stay for the entire class period, complete assigned reading/listening beforehand, and actively engage in discussions, workshops, and other class activities. All absences that are not properly documented or approved by the instructor in advance will be considered unexcused. Being late to the class or leaving early will count as ½ of an absence. A fourth unexcused absence will result in the drop of a full letter grade (e.g. an A- becomes a B-), with each additional absence resulting in the drop of an additional letter in the final semester grade. Keep in mind, simply showing up to class will not result in an automatic “A” for this portion of the grade. Participation is graded based on the quality and consistency of your contributions to class discussions.

Exercises

On four occasions during the semester students will be asked to hand in hard copies of an exercise they were asked to complete outside of class. These may include bibliographies, research overviews, and comments for peer reviews and workshops.

Presentation 1

Each student will choose one class session during the semester and give a 10-minute presentation relating to the album and corresponding reading for that day. Students are required to use PowerPoint as a component of their presentation and must send the professor their .ppt files via email at least three (3) days before your scheduled presentation date.

Presentation 2

At the end of the semester each student will give a concise 10-minute presentation of the research project they have chosen for their final paper. Students are required to use PowerPoint as a component of their presentation and must send the professor their .ppt files via email no later than November 23rd.

Museum Visit/Response

Each student will be required to visit one of the following:

- Stax Museum of American Soul Music. 926 E. McLemore Ave. Memphis, TN
- Sun Studio. 706 Union Ave. Memphis, TN
- Memphis Rock n’ Soul Museum. 191 Beale St. Memphis, TN
- Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. 222 5th Ave. S. Nashville, TN
- FAME Recording Studio. 605 East Avalon Ave. Muscle Shoals, AL

After making your visit you will write a two-page personal response. This can take any number of shapes, ranging from a review of the museum itself, a response about your favorite artifacts on display, or an overview of what you learned. You must staple your museum ticket to the paper to prove your attendance.

Papers 1-4

The primary assignments in this course will consist of four separate papers. Below are brief descriptions to give you a rough idea of what you can expect. I will provide individual handouts with a detailed overview of the scope, subject, and approach for each

assignment. Keep in mind that papers are expected to be original material written exclusively for this course. Papers written for other courses may not be submitted for credit. The exact grade breakdown for each paper – including drafts, workshop responses, peer editing, and revised final paper – will be included with each assignment handout.

Paper 1 (10%)

Topic: Album Review

1,000-1,250 words

- Choosing an album released this past year, each student will write a feature length review that utilizes the style and tone of contemporary rock criticism.

Paper 2 (15%)

Topic: *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*

1,250-1,500 words

Paper 3 (20%)

Topic: Full *33 1/3* of your choosing

1,500-2,000 words

- Choosing one of the books from the *33 1/3* series that is not included in either of the chapter anthologies assigned for the course, this paper will function as a literary review, focusing on the author's approach to the album/artist that is the subject of their monograph.

* Along with the final draft you will be required to provide the instructor with a physical copy of the *33 1/3* book you will be analyzing.

Paper 4 (25%)

Open Topic Research Paper

3,000-3,500 words

- Using any album not included in either the *33 1/3* or *Classic Albums* series, each student will write an original research paper.

*After the proposal has been handed in, each student will be required to schedule a one-on-one meeting with the instructor to discuss this paper.

*This paper will also require a formal in-class presentation that counts for an additional 5% of the total semester grade (Presentation 2).

*Absolutely no late papers accepted for the final revised draft

Late Papers

Because the approach to these papers is cumulative, with each step essential to the next in the writing process, late papers will be accepted with appropriate penalties. If for some reason you cannot hand in a paper on time you may submit the paper late, with each late day resulting in the subtraction of 1% from your total semester grade (for example, a first draft or revised paper that is three days late will lead to a deduction of 3% from your final semester grade). Please be advised that technology related issues such as computer crashes, loss of electricity, lack of internet access, or printer problems are not acceptable

excuses for late work. Be sure to plan ahead to ensure yourself every opportunity to succeed in the course.

Formatting for Hard Copies

To ensure clarity and a sense of uniformity which foregrounds your writing and ideas I have instituted ten aspects of formatting for all papers and responses handed in via hard copy. Each guideline carries with it a 5% grade deduction if it is not followed, so be sure to take extra care and format your paper correctly. Papers must meet the following guidelines:

1. Typewritten in black ink
2. Stapled in the upper left corner if over one page
3. Double-spaced, with no additional spacing between paragraphs
4. Standard 1" margins
5. Times New Roman font
6. 12 point font size
7. Title on first page (do not include a cover page)
8. Include page numbers throughout
9. The first page must include the student's name, course name or number, instructor's name, and date at the top of the page.
10. Include the grading rubric at the end of the paper. (Only required for final revised drafts of papers 1-4)

Rhodes Honor System

Please keep in mind the pledge that you signed upon entering the Rhodes community and apply these guidelines in and out of the classroom. The Honor System agreement reads as follows:

- Honor Code: "As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge I will not lie, cheat, or steal, and that I will report any such violation that I may witness."
- Social Regulations: "As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge to respect my fellow students, faculty, staff and their property. I will treat others as I would be treated and their property as I would my own."
- Rhodes Commitment to Diversity: "As a member of the Rhodes community, I pledge to help create a community where diversity is valued and welcomed. To this end I will not engage in, nor will I tolerate, harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, color, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and national or ethnic origin."

Note on Plagiarism

Not all forms of academic dishonesty are intentional, so keep in mind that plagiarism is not solely a matter of motive. Using the ideas of others without properly crediting the source is considered plagiarism. We will be working with the ideas of a number of authors, scholars, cultural critics, musicians, and filmmakers (etc.) in this course. Part of your responsibility as a scholar is to properly cite the ideas of others. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and may lead to serious repercussions, including a failing grade for the course. Please refer to the student handbook for the university's policies relating to academic integrity. If you have any questions about how to cite the work of

others, or are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please be sure to talk with the instructor or seek guidance from a reputable source (Writing Fellows, Rhodes' *Guide to Effective Paper Writing*, MLA Handbook, etc.).

Writing Center

Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the Writing Center at Rhodes, which is located in Room 122 in Barrett Library. For further information you can call the Writing Center directly at (901) 843-3393 or visit their webpage at <http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/>

Learning Accommodations

Students with documented disabilities, learning differences, observation of religious holidays, or any special needs should talk to the instructor as soon as possible to arrange for any necessary accommodations.

Class Schedule

Please be advised that while the following schedule is intended to remain intact, the dates, quantity, and order of assignments and readings may be changed at the instructor's discretion.

* Indicates readings that will be provided by the instructor.

1. Wednesday 8/27

Introduction

2. Friday 8/29

Lecture: The Album as Text

Monday 9/1

No Classes: Labor Day

3. Wednesday 9/3

Required listening: Miles Davis – *Kind of Blue* (1959)

Reading due: Richard Williams. "Introduction" from *The Blue Moment: Miles Davis's Kind of Blue and the Remaking of Modern Music*.*

4. Friday 9/5

Required listening: The Beach Boys – *Pet Sounds* (1965)

Reading due: Jim Fusili (Chapter 19 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

5. Monday 9/8

Optional listening: Lou Reed – *Metal Machine Music* (1975)

Reading due: Lester Bangs. "The Greatest Album Ever Made" *

6. Wednesday 9/10

Required listening: Kanye West – *Yeezus* (2013)

Reading due: Ten (10) critic reviews of *Yeezus* from metacritic.com

*******Exercise 1 Due*******

7. Friday 9/12

Documentary Screening: *The Making of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*

Optional listening: The Beatles – *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*

*******Paper 1 Due*******

8. Monday 9/15

Required listening: The Replacements – *Let It Be* (1984)

Reading due: Colin Meloy (Chapter 16 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

9. Wednesday 9/17

Required listening: Prince – *Sign O' the Times* (1987)

Reading due: Michaelangelo Matos (Chapter 10 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

10. Friday 9/19

Lecture: Keeping It Real: Hip- Hop and Authenticity

11. Monday 9/22

Required listening: The Beastie Boys – *Paul's Boutique* (1989)

Reading due: Dan Le Roy (Chapter 30 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

12. Wednesday 9/24

Required listening: Nas – *Illmatic* (1994)

Reading due: Matthew Gasteier (*33 1/3 Greatest Hits* #64) *

13. Friday 9/26

Documentary Screening from *Classic Albums* series

Optional listening: Meat Loaf – *Bat Out of Hell* (1977)

*******First Draft Paper 2 Due*******

14. Monday 9/29

Required listening: Pink Floyd – *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967)

Reading due: John Cavanagh (Chapter 6 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

15. Wednesday 10/1

Required listening: The Velvet Underground – *The Velvet Underground & Nico* (1967)

Reading due: Joe Harvard (Chapter 11 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

16. Friday 10/3

Small group workshops

*******Exercise 2 Due*******

17. Monday 10/6

Required listening: Abba – *Abba Gold* (1992)

Reading due: Elisabeth Vincentelli (Chapter 7 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

18. Wednesday 10/8

Required listening: The Kinks – *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968)

Reading due: Andy Miller (Chapter 4 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

19. Friday 10/10

Documentary Screening from *Classic Albums* series

Optional listening: Judas Priest – *British Steel* (1980)

*******Paper 2 Revisions Due*******

20. Monday 10/13

Required listening: Joni Mitchell – *Court and Spark* (40)

Reading due: Sean Nelson (Chapter 40 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

21. Wednesday 10/15

Required listening: Bob Dylan – *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965)

Reading due: Mark Polizzotti (Chapter 35 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

22. Friday 10/17

Required listening: David Bowie – *Low* (1977)

Reading due: Hugo Wilcken (Chapter 26 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

Monday 10/20

No Classes: Fall Break

23. Wednesday 10/22

Required listening: Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band – *Born in the USA* (1984)

Reading due: Geoffrey Himes (Chapter 27 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

24. Friday 10/24

Library visit

*******First Draft Paper 3 Due*******

25. Monday 10/27

Workshops

26. Wednesday 10/29

Workshops

27. Friday 10/31

Workshops

*******Exercise 3 Due*******

28. Monday 11/3

Listening due: Curtis Mayfield – *Superfly* (1972)

Reading due: Todd Boyd. Selections from *The Notorious Ph.D.'s Guide to the Super Fly '70s*. *

29. Wednesday 11/5

Listening due: Genesis – *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (1975)

Reading due: Jon Michaud “The “Ulysses” of Concept Albums” *

30. Friday 11/7

Documentary Screening from *Classic Albums* series

Optional listening: Queen – *A Night at the Opera* (1975)

*******Revised Paper 3 Due*******

31. Monday 11/10

Class Vote: _____

32. Wednesday 11/12

Class Vote: _____

33. Friday 11/14

Class Vote: _____

*******Exercise 4 Due*******

34. Monday 11/17

Class Vote: _____

35. Wednesday 11/19

Required listening: The Beatles – *Let it Be* (1970)

Reading due: Steve Matteo (Chapter 12 from *33 1/3 Greatest Hits*)

36. Friday 11/21

Music Video Blow Out!

*******First Draft Paper 4 Due*******

37. Monday 11/24

Presentations

Wednesday 11/26

No class: Thanksgiving Break

Friday 11/28

No class: Thanksgiving Break

38. Monday 12/1
Presentations

39. Wednesday 12/3
Presentations

Friday 12/5
*****No Class*****

40. Monday 12/8
Presentations
*****Museum Visit Due*****

Tuesday 12/16
*****Revised Paper 4 due by 5pm*****

Appendix

Titles from the 33 1/3 Book Series for Paper 3

41. Guns N' Roses – *Use Your Illusion I and Use Your Illusion II* (1991)
42. Stevie Wonder – *Songs in the Key of Life* (1976)
43. The Byrds – *The Notorious Byrd Brothers* (1968)
44. Captain Beefheart – *Trout Mask Replica* (1969)
45. Minutemen – *Double Nickels on the Dime* (1984)
46. Steely Dan – *Aja* (1977)
47. A Tribe Called Quest – *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm* (1990)
48. PJ Harvey – *Rid of Me* (1993)
49. U2 – *Achtung Baby* (1991)
50. Belle & Sebastian – *If You're Feeling Sinister* (1996)
51. Nick Drake – *Pink Moon* (1972)
52. Celine Dion – *Let's Talk About Love* (1997)
53. Tom Waits – *Swordfishtrombones* (1983)
54. Throbbing Gristle – *20 Jazz Funk Greats* (1979)
55. Patti Smith – *Horses* (1975)
56. Black Sabbath – *Master of Reality* (1971)
57. Slayer – *Reign in Blood* (1986)
58. Richard and Linda Thompson – *Shoot Out the Lights* (1982)
59. The Afghan Whigs – *Gentlemen* (1993)
60. The Pogues – *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash* (1985)
61. The Flying Burrito Brothers – *The Gilded Palace of Sin* (1969)
62. Wire – *Pink Flag* (1977)
63. Elliott Smith – *XO* (1998)
65. Big Star – *Radio City* (1974)
66. Madness – *One Step Beyond...* (1979)
67. Brian Eno – *Another Green World* (1975)

68. The Flaming Lips – *Zaireeka* (1997)
69. The Magnetic Fields – *69 Love Songs* (1999)
70. Israel Kamakawiwo'ole – *Facing Future* (1993)
72. Pavement – *Wowee Zowee* (1995)
73. AC/DC – *Highway to Hell* (1979)
74. Van Dyke Parks – *Song Cycle* (1968)
75. Slint – *Spiderland* (1991)
76. Radiohead – *Kid A* (2000)
77. Fleetwood Mac – *Tusk* (1979)
78. Nine Inch Nails – *Pretty Hate Machine* (1989)
79. Ween – *Chocolate Cheese* (1994)
80. Johnny Cash – *American Recordings* (1994)
81. The Rolling Stones – *Some Girls* (1978)
82. Dinosaur Jr. – *You're Living All Over Me* (1987)
83. Television – *Marquee Moon* (1977)
84. Aretha Franklin – *Amazing Grace* (1972)
85. Portishead – *Dummy* (1994)
86. Talking Heads – *Fear of Music* (1979)
87. Serge Gainsbourg – *Histoire de Melody Nelson* (1971)
88. They Might Be Giants – *Flood* (1991)
89. Andrew W.K. – *I Get Wet* (2001)
90. Aphex Twins – *Selected Ambient Works Volume II* (1994)
91. Gang of Four – *Entertainment!* (1979)
92. Richard Hell and the Voidoids – *Blank Generation* (1977)
93. J Dilla – *Donuts* (2006)
94. The Beach Boys – *Smile* (2011)
95. Oasis – *Definitely Maybe* (1994)
96. Liz Phair – *Exile in Guyville* (1993)
97. Kanye West – *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* (2010)