**Shake, Rattle, and Roll: Rock Films and American Culture**

“*Rock 'n' roll by its very nature leads to a breakdown in discipline*.”

Vice Principal Gene Wolters, *Mr. Holland’s Opus* (1995)



This first-year seminar is designed to introduce students to the culture, language, and history of rock music and its representation in American cinema. At one level the class will survey trends and styles in how rock was used in American cinema, focusing first on how rock originally entered cinema in *Blackboard Jungle* and moving through cinematic history to recent offerings like *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story*. We will track the rise of Rock’n’Roll in film and explore the backlash against rock influenced narratives. Our focus will be on film soundtracks as an expression and extension of the social, cultural, and political changes over time reflected in our domestic cinema. The class will also examine the paradoxical developments of the evolution of music videos with the emergence of an abrasive, often angry music of all types by the end of the 1970s and into the 1990s. In the end, this class will examine and define the technological, business, and social forces that helped cement rock music as an essential language of our contemporary cinema.

First-Year Seminar 142-3-A

Glatfelter 204: 11.25-12.40 T/F

*Constitution Tent One*

Online Format: <https://zoom.us/j/2599302248>

Professor Jack Ryan

Pennsylvania Hall 3rd Floor

Office Hours by Appointment this Semester

[**jryan@gettysburg.edu**](mailto:jryan@gettysburg.edu)

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**Office Hours: If you can’t reach me, please contact Kara Flythe** [**kflythe@gettysburg.edu**](mailto:kflythe@gettysburg.edu)

**Please feel free to contact me via email at any time; by phone during regular business hours.**

Allison Schofield

Student Success Advocate

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X6901

**TEXTS**

*All Shook Up: Rock & Roll: A Social History*

[*https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gettysburg/detail.action?docID=316405*](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gettysburg/detail.action?docID=316405)

*Understanding Soundtracks Through Film Theory*

[*https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ezpro.cc.gettysburg.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199896301.001.0001/acprof-9780199896301*](https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ezpro.cc.gettysburg.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199896301.001.0001/acprof-9780199896301)

Moodle Site Documents\*

<https://filmanalysis.coursepress.yale.edu>

Films on Moodle Site

**PURPOSE**

Designed to provide you with experience in the analysis of text & media as expressive, aesthetic mediums, this course uses Rock ‘n’ Roll’s emergence and its infiltration of cinema as its primary area of intellectual analysis. The seminar will be all things to all people: a combination of technical analysis, sound and film discussion, cultural commentary, and writing workshops. Our aim is to answer a single overarching question, **"What do the developments in rock music, in film, and in films about rock music tell us about this important part of American culture**?" To this end, we will "read" films featuring rock music, discuss them in a variety of ways, and examine their connection to American culture. Rock films have formed a major source of entertainment, economics, and political and personal identity for countless people, including Baltimore’s own Frank Zappa:

“When the titles flashed up on the screen Bill Haley and his Comets started blurching ‘One Two Three O’Clock, Four O’Clock Rock…’ it was the loudest rock sound kids had ever heard at the time. I remember being inspired with awe…he was playing the Teen-Age National Anthem and it was so LOUD I was jumping up and down. Blackboard Jungle, not even considering the storyline (which had the old people winning in the end) represented a strange sort of ‘endorsement’ of the teen-age cause: ‘They made a movie about us; therefore, we exist….’”

A key assumption here is that formal analysis is a skill acquired through application and practice, so the writing load is significant; this will sharpen your critical eye and aid your communication skills. You will need to keep up with the deadlines, since to do otherwise will throw you off pace. There will be a steady workload throughout the semester: digital assignments, generative assignments, research, and a larger presentation as a final examination. You will be encouraged to contribute your work to the College’s *Celebration* of first-year work.

This course is more akin to an English class in style of presentation of material. Because we are dealing with subjective source material, there are no “wrong” points of view, interpretations, or answers.

Ideas will be the currency of this class, and therefore attendance and participation will be crucial to your success. Cinema used to be a cultural common, whether one pays attention to movies or not, and rock music became an essential part of cinematic representation.

The films that we will screen might contain graphic language, imagery, and questionable personas. The films cover a wide span of time, and each was made at a time that is reflected in the content of the film. You certainly have every right to question a film’s content from a modern perspective.

This class satisfies the first year Effective Communication requirement, and its subject matter makes it an ideal cluster class, a component of the Gettysburg Curriculum.

**Grades**

The merits of your individual work, including your level of participation and attendance will anchor your final grade. Your work and effort will all be included in this assessment. If you skip class, miss due dates, and ignore the assigned readings your grade will suffer.

**Learning Outcomes**

* To Develop discussion skills through classroom-based work
* To Refine writing and communication skills though revision and practice
* To Appreciate the broad cultural reach of film
* To Consider how Rock & Roll functions in American Culture
* To Distinguish between high-quality and weak research resources
* To Appreciate and consider unfamiliar cinematic and historical topics

**4th Credit Hour**

You have arrived at Gettysburg College at a time when we faculty and students are required to interact for more time each week than had been customary practice. This change occurred nationwide. You will complete the 4th credit hour for this course by engaging our films on a weekly basis

**Attendance**

The class will proceed mostly in a read, watch, and discuss format. Thus, to participate and receive credit for participation and ultimately engage the subject matter, you will need to be in class. If you know you are going to miss more than one class, please contact Academic Advising, a great resource in the time of a personal or family emergency. As an official guideline for attendance, please be aware of the following policy: More than three absences during the semester will result in the loss of 5% of your overall grade; more than four absences, 7.5%; and more than five, 10%. I reserve the right to make further grade reductions.

**The Honor Code**

The Honor Code is an integral part of the College’s culture. Please use the Honor Code on all your assignments. In a class like this one, plagiarism will not be tolerated.

**Grading**

Participation and Attendance: Will increase your final grade

Exams: 10% (Moodle; open book)

Playlist Assignment: 10% (digital)

Timeline Assignment: 10% (digital; included in Word Press Final)

Word Press Posts: 30% (this includes drafts and revision—necessary for final project)

Word Press Final: 40% (this includes drafts and presentation)

***Schedule***

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| Week | Assignment | Films |
| ***Thinking in Pictures & with Sound***  One: 18 & 21 August  Cinema & Rock & Roll | “Rock and Roll Teenpics\*”  Film Analysis: Basic Terms | *The Girl Can’t Help It* |
| ***Photography***  Two: 25 & 28 August | *All Shook Up*, Chapter One  “Elvis Movies” (Moodle)  Film Analysis: Framing (Yale Site) | *Jailhouse Rock* |
| ***Mise-en-Scène***  Three: 1 & 4 September | “Beyond the Beach” (In class presentation)  Film Analysis: Mise-en-Scène (Yale Site)  *Scorpio Rising* (in class) | *Mean Streets* |
| 8 &11 SEPTEMBER | **CAMPUS SHUTDOWN** | NONE |
| ***Movement***  Four: 15 & 18 September | *All Shook Up*, Chapter Two  Film Analysis: Movement (Yale Site) | *American Graffiti* |
| ***Editing***  Five: 22 & 25 September | *All Shook Up*, Chapter Three  Film Analysis: Editing (Yale Site) | *Baby, It’s Yo*u  *Dazed and Confused* |
| ***Sound***  Six: 29 & 2 Sept/October | Film Analysis: Sound (Yale Site)  *Moodle Test One* | *Don’t Look Back*  *I’m Not There* |
| ***Acting***  Seven: 6 & 9 October  (6 October Gallery Tour; 9 October remote) | *All Shook Up*, Chapter Four  Film Analysis: Acting (In Class)  ***6 October Gallery Tour (Assignment)*** | *The Decline of Western Civilization 2: The Metal Years*  *Rumble* |
| ***Dramatization***  Eight: 13 & 16 October | Film Analysis: Drama (In Class)  *Understanding Soundtracks*, 52-85. | *Dead Man* |
| ***Story***  Nine: 20 & 23 October | *All Shook Up*, Chapter Five  Film Analysis: Screenplay (In Class) | *Almost Famous*  *Sid & Nancy* |
| ***Writing***  Ten: 27 & 30 October | Film Analysis: Writing (In Class) | *Easy Rider*  *The Harder they Come* |
| ***Ideology***  Eleven: 3 & 6 November | *All Shook Up*, *Chapter Six*  Film Analysis: Ideology (In Class) | *Prey for Rock & Roll*  *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* |
| ***Critique***  Twelve: 10 & 13 November | *All Shook Up*, *Epilogue*  Film Analysis: Critique (In Class) | *Repo Man*  *8Mile* |
| ***Synthesis***  Thirteen: 17 & 20 November | Genres  Film Analysis: Synthesis (In Class) | *The Last Waltz*  *This is Spinal Tap* |
| 23-27 November | THANKSGIVING BREAK |  |
| Fourteen: 1 & 4 December  (***Remote***) | Wrap up & Review  *Moodle Test Two*  ***Rock-n-Roll Playlist Due 8.00PM*** | *Jimmy Carter: Rock-n-Roll President*  *Leningrad Cowboys Go America* |
| Fifteen: Final Exam Presentations | *Tuesday 8 December* 1:30PM—4:30PM  Final Word Press Project Due 8 December | ***Presentations*** |

**Assignments**

Each assignment required for this course will become components of your final WordPress assignment, which will ask you to analyze a rock-n-roll film of your choice. Your WordPress website will address how the cinematic components that go into making a film function in your selection. In addition, your Blog assignments, two mapping exercises, digital timeline, and two short papers will all be included in this final assignment.

1. ***Weekly Word Press Post*:** Every Friday, you will receive a question that you will respond to in writing. These responses should be brief, no more than 500 words. Each question will address on issue connected to reading assignments, film appreciation, and the week’s film. (Due the following Tuesday.)
2. ***Tests:*** You will engage a short test, which will be more like an elaborate quiz, twice during the course of the semester. The first will occur in October and one more in November. (Completed on Moodle within 24-hours.)
3. ***Rock-n-Roll Playlist:*** This is a class about rock-n-roll music and film, and it’s about the impact music can have on shaping our sensibilities––cultural, emotional, aesthetic, and otherwise. Therefore, one of your projects will be to choose some songs from the films we will screen and then explain why the music is important to you. (Due 4 December.)
4. ***Rock-n-Roll Films Timeline Assignment***
5. ***Word Press Synthesis Assignment:***

Your WordPress assignment involves developing a website that you will create based on the content of this course. The title of your site is yours. The endpoint is up to you. This assignment will allow you a great deal of creative leeway: you can use images, outside sources, or sound to help you explain how a particular film functions within this genre using all the language systems that make up any film. (Due 8 December.)

You should include the following:

* Site should include at least 10 pages of content; this includes the work listed above. Be sure to cite content from outside sources.
* Site should contain images.
* Site should contain your posts.
* Site should contain a menu that is visible an accessible.
* Site should contain a creative color scheme.
* Site should demonstrate your interest in the subject matter and the project.

[**https://libguides.gettysburg.edu/digital-tools/home**](https://libguides.gettysburg.edu/digital-tools/home)

[**https://dh.sites.gettysburg.edu/toolkit/**](https://dh.sites.gettysburg.edu/toolkit/)

[**https://libcal.gettysburg.edu/appointments?lid=966&g=9924**](https://libcal.gettysburg.edu/appointments?lid=966&g=9924)

(Use these links to find the digital tools you’ll need to complete your assignments. The first link displays all the tools; the second is a digital humanities toolkit, which is a work in progress; the final site is to schedule a meeting for help to learn how to use these digital tools.)

**Streaming and Recording of Course Lectures & Discussions**

*Because of COVID-19, the College has installed cameras in classrooms to support students participating remotely in classes. We have made this decision because not every student will be present in the classroom this semester, and therefore, we think it equally important to advise you that class content, including discussions, may be streamed and/or recorded during this academic year. If you have questions or concerns, please discuss this with your course instructor.*