In the United States, there has been a connection between music and politics since the nation’s founding. Politicians, social movements, and the citizenry have routinely expressed political views through music. What messages are these actors sending? Are the messages being received? Is there something unique about music that changes the nature of the message? Music has been used for both pro-establishment and anti-establishment purposes. National anthems, patriotic songs, campaign songs, protest songs, and anti-war songs are just some examples of the ways in which politics and music intersect. Unlike other forms of music, political music is usually not ambiguous, and is therefore relatively easily discerned by listeners. In this course we will explore various types of political music and topical songs over time with an emphasis on contemporary music and how it relates to various social movements and issues particularly those involving race, class, and gender. Through readings, discussion, films, and, of course, music, we will examine how artists such as Billie Holiday, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Marvin Gaye, Bruce Springsteen, N.W.A., Ani DiFranco, Green Day, and Jay-Z have had their political songs both understood and misunderstood by politicians and citizens alike. We will examine these issues through an
historical examination of the development of American popular music from early blackface minstrelsy to present-day hip-hop.

Online Class via Blackboard (webcourses.niu.edu) (3 credits)

**Instructor:** Artemus Ward  
**Office:** 410 Zulauf Hall  
**E-mail:** aeward@niu.edu (the best way to reach me)  
**Website:** [http://polisci.niu.edu/polisci/faculty/profiles/ward/](http://polisci.niu.edu/polisci/faculty/profiles/ward/)  
**Office Hours:** T & TH 2-3:30pm

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**Required Reading**


Additional readings are posted on Blackboard and listed and/or linked from the syllabus.

**Recommended (but not Required) Readings**


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**Recommended (but not required) Films**

- *The Beatles at Shea Stadium* (1965). Watch the Beatles invent stadium concerts. 30 minutes.  
- *Help!* (1965). “We were smoking marijuana for breakfast at that point” – John Lennon. 92 minutes.
• The Beatles Live at Budokan (1966). Weary of touring and death threats, and ready to leave the road for good, watch a bored, listless, frightened group go through the motions in Japan. [Link](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xsuerk_the-beatles-live-at-budokan-1966_music#_UbuAivmyCSo) or [Link](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/L9NeGeCLypo/)

• Magical Mystery Tour (1967). The walrus was John, not Paul. 53 minutes. [Link](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/Gz4iLDFAp0Q/)

• Don't Look Back (1967). When asked whether he considered himself a songwriter or a poet, Bob Dylan responded that he thought of himself more as a “song and dance man.” 92 minutes. [Link](http://youtu.be/ofr6SxzHAAU) or [Link](http://youtu.be/LSWxy8QXWcw) or [Link](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/WT8lQq2Lavc/)

• Yellow Submarine (1968). This psychedelic animated film is how kids commonly get introduced to the Beatles. [Link](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/_KmVBFlbTnw/)

• Monterey Pop (1968). The summer of love at the 1967 International Pop Festival in California. 78 minutes. [Link](http://youtu.be/FlaNm7Mg0cg) Bonus performances: 112 minutes. [Link](http://youtu.be/OiQN3pQ6EwM) or [Link](http://video.mail.ru/mail/ianaborman/3221/17939.html)

• Woodstock (1970). Max Yasgur lets some kids host a music and art fair at his dairy farm. Little did he know what he was getting in to. Director’s cut: 228 minutes. [Link](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/aEABysfz8gg/)

• Let It Be (1970). Watch the Beatles break up and get busted by the cops in the process. [Link](http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/X1UvYAaMrgg/)

• Soul to Soul (1971). Documentary of African American soul artists performing and visiting locals in Ghana, Africa. 96 minutes. [Link](http://popvideo.org/v/3334106/MTY3Mzg4NDBfMTQ1NTMzNzE0/)

• Cocksucker Blues (1972). The Rolling Stones decided they did not want this film released as it shows the band and their entourage engaging in all sorts of debauchery during their 1972 North American tour. Legally, the film can only be screened when the director, Robert Frank, is present. 93 minutes. [Link](http://youtu.be/y6CWapkc9Lc)

• Bound for Glory (1976). David Carradine plays Woody Guthrie in 1930s America. 147 minutes. [Link](http://youtu.be/awjDKFTZaes)

• Saturday Night Fever (1977). Watch how disco can make any punk feel special on the weekend. 118 minutes.


• The Last Waltz (1978). Martin Scorsese captures the final concert of The Band, with guest stars throughout. 117 minutes.

• The Last of the Blue Devils (1980). Documentary about the 1974 gathering of Kansas City blues greats including Big Joe Turner, Count Basie, and Jay McShann. 90 minutes. [Link](http://youtu.be/f1RbBFIM_E)

• The Great Rock ‘n’ Roll Swindle (1980). Were the Sex Pistols – and punk rock in general – real or simply a money-making scam? 103 minutes.

• Coal Miner’s Daughter (1980). The story of country singer Loretta Lynn is portrayed by Sissy Spacek who won an Academy Award.

• The Decline of Western Civilization (1981). A study of LA punk at a key stage in its development, Penelope Spheeris shows how youth, innocence, naivety, and stupidity of
and fans comes together. 100 minutes.
http://popvideo.org/v/1888873/MjM4NTk0XzE1NTM5MTU4MA/ or
http://kinofilms.tv/film/padenie-zapadnoj-civilizacii/11373/


- Amadens (1984). Even Mozart had to deal with the politics of his day as shown in the Academy Award winning film. Director’s cut: 180 minutes. http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/C3C1Kfh2SA/ or http://www.tudou.com/programs/view/oaipBN_R9gs/


- The History of Rock ‘N’ Roll (1995). Ten-part, 10-hour documentary covers rock 'n' roll history from its humble beginnings in the '50s to Lollapalooza in the '90s. 578 minutes.

1. Rock ‘n’ Roll Explodes. http://youtu.be/Lg7aPhMVKG0


- **Buena Vista Social Club** (1999). Ageing Cuban musicians reunite and play the music they made popular in the 1940s before the revolution. 105 minutes.
- **South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut** (1999). Famed Broadway composer Marvin Hamlisch called this film one of the finest musicals ever written. 81 minutes.
- **O Brother, Where Art Thou?** (2000). Explores the connection between old-time music and politics in the 1930s south. 106 minutes.
- **Scott Walker 30 Century Man** (2006). How does a 60s heartthrob fall off the charts and into musical obscurity? 95 minutes.
- **The Future is Unwritten** (2006). Profile of Clash frontman Joe Strummer. 120 minutes.
- **Last Days** (2006). Film portraying the last week of Nirvana frontman Kirk Cobain’s life. 97 minutes.
- **Searching for Sugar Man** (2012). Academy Award winning documentary about a legendary/mythical singer-songwriter from the 1960s.
- **CBGB** (2013). The rise of punk in New York City. 101 min.
- **Inside Llewyn Davis** (2013). Was Bob Dylan good or simply lucky? 105 minutes.

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**Required Lectures**

You are required to read the PowerPoint lectures posted on Blackboard over the course of the semester. The topics will vary but will be related to aspects of the course. These lectures are required material and there will be midterm and final exam questions based on them.

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**Course Requirements**

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**Participation:**

You are required to go on-line each week through Blackboard, and read the messages posted to the discussion board. You are also required to post in 7 different weeks of the course. Hence, making a post every other week will suffice. In these weeks you should post at least one (and not more than two) messages of your own, either responding to someone (including the instructor) or starting your own thread, about that week’s course material and/or current events that relate to the course. Do this by Sunday night at the end of each week. The participation grade will be calculated by averaging the % of quality posts you make (out of 7 weeks) with the % of posts that you read. Note, you can see the “unread posts” that you have yet to read on the main discussion board page. After you click on and read each post it will show that post as no longer “unread.” The final participation grade will be posted at the end of the course.

**Mid-Term Exam**

The mid-term will be an on-line, objective test consisting of both true-false and multiple choice questions. The material covered will be the requirements listed on the syllabus up to the mid-term exam date. The test will be available on Blackboard for a 24-hour period. You may take the test at any time during that window. Once you begin the exam, you will have 30 minutes to answer 25 questions. Each question is worth 4 points each for a total of 100 points.

**Research Paper**

You are required to do a research paper on some aspect of politics and popular music such as an artist, song, album, concert, political candidate or campaign, or any topic that fits with the course. If you are unsure of whether your topic meets the requirement, please check with the instructor. Note some topics are too broad and must be narrowed down. For example, “The Beatles” is far too broad a topic. “The Beatles and the Vietnam War” is narrower and therefore more appropriate.

Your paper must adhere to the following requirements:

a. The paper must be 5-6 pages long and contain at least four different scholarly/academic sources such as books or articles that relate to your topic. These sources can be on-line and can be sources linked from the syllabus and/or sources you locate on your own. They must be discussed and cited in your paper and also listed in your bibliography at the end. While you may use any book, article, or other source, in order to earn an “A” on the paper at least four sources must be scholarly books from university presses or lengthy articles (roughly a dozen pages or more) in academic journals that contain original data and/or arguments. Toward this end I strongly recommend using JSTOR or another scholarly database to find articles in music studies, communications, political science, sociology, and other related areas. Note: JSTOR is NOT a source – it is a database that helps you locate potential sources. University librarians are experts in helping you locate
sources and I recommend consulting with them. I also recommend that you work with the campus writing center – long before your paper is due. Papers that rely only on popular sources such as newspaper articles, music reviews, Wikipedia, or the Allmusicguide and contain no scholarly sources can only earn a “D” at best and will likely earn you an “F.” Of course any of these kinds of sources may be used in addition to the required scholarly sources. Also, required course material such as lectures and readings do NOT count as a source toward this requirement. Note: scholarly sources combine discussion of individual songs, artists, genres and the like with in-depth considerations of the medium and the conditions of its production and reception. Scholarly books and articles contrast with music reviewing in newspapers, magazines, and on-line which principally serve as a consumer guide to music. If you are unsure of whether a source counts as a scholarly source, please consult the instructor.

b. As with all papers, the paper for this class must be type-written or word-processed, double-spaced, with normal Times New Roman, 12 pt. font and one inch margins all around. Make sure that you properly attribute and cite whenever you use information from a source such as a book, article, webpage, or film. Your paper must contain citations. You may use any accepted citation format such as a within-text-cites, footnotes, or endnotes. Your paper must include a works cited/references/bibliography at the end of your essay. You must use an accepted bibliographic style. Consult a resource such as the Chicago Style manual or similar work if you are unsure of proper citation/bibliographic formats. This is particularly crucial for internet sources. Simply providing the web address (URL) is not sufficient.

c. Before you start writing this or any essay, ask yourself: What is my overall argument/thesis? Am I supporting my position with reasons and/or evidence? Am I structuring my discussion so that it is as clear and comprehensive as it can be? Have I provided examples and explanations for each argument that I advance? What are the possible counter-arguments that my critics might bring up and how would I respond to those criticisms?

d. In grading your essays I will consider whether you have (a) developed a clear and thoughtful thesis, (b) supported your thesis with a well-reasoned and well-organized discussion, (c) taken into account opposing points of view, (d) demonstrated your familiarity with course materials, and (e) followed the paper requirements including length, sources, and the rules of proper grammar, spelling, and citation/bibliographic format. Note: JSTOR is not a source and should not be cited in your bibliography. It is a highly recommended search engine which allows you to locate specific sources.

Papers are due on the date listed on the syllabus. You must submit your papers through SafeAssign on Blackboard by the end of the night (midnight) on that date. Papers turned in late will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a grade for each day overdue.

Final Exam

The final exam is the same format as the midterm but will only include the course
material covered AFTER the midterm exam.

### Grading System

Final grades will be determined by the following scale:

- 93.5-100 = A
- 89.5-93.4 = A-
- 86.5-89.4 = B+
- 83.5-86.4 = B
- 79.5-83.4 = B-
- 74.5-79.4 = C+
- 69.5-74.4 = C
- 59.5-69.4 = D
- 0-59.4 = F

### Grade Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total=</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Course Policies

1. Extracurricular Activities - It is your responsibility to notify me in advance of any activities that will disrupt your attendance. If your activities make it impossible for you to attend classes each week, you should consider withdrawing from the course. Material is covered in class that cannot be found in the course readings.

2. Late Work - Anything turned in late will be marked down one-third grade for every day it is overdue. Exceptions are made only in the most extraordinary circumstances and I will require some sort of documentation to make any accommodation.
3. Cheating and Plagiarism - PLAGIARISM, SIMPLY DEFINED, IS TAKING SOMEONE ELSE'S WORDS OR IDEAS AND REPRESENTING THEM AS BEING YOUR OWN. It is specifically prohibited by University regulations, which state:

Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university. (Undergraduate Catalog)

4. Accessibility Statement - Northern Illinois University is committed to providing an accessible educational environment in collaboration with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Any student requiring an academic accommodation due to a disability should let his or her faculty member know as soon as possible. Students who need academic accommodations based on the impact of a disability will be encouraged to contact the DRC if they have not done so already. The DRC is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 (V) or drc@niu.edu. To assist NIU in providing an accessible and inclusive environment, the following suggested accessibility statements are provided for departmental and programmatic use. Please contact a DRC staff member with questions or concerns about regarding access for and inclusion of students with disabilities at NIU.

5. Undergraduate Writing Awards - The Department of Political Science will recognize, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Winners are expected to attend the Department's spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and $50.00. Papers, which can be submitted by students or faculty, must be supplied in triplicate to a department secretary by the end of February. All copies should have two cover pages - one with the student's name and one without the student's name. Only papers written in the previous calendar can be considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year's competition even if the student has graduated.

6. Department of Political Science Web Site - Undergraduates are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science web site on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach the site, go to http://polisci.niu.edu

Course Calendar

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**Week 1 - Introduction**
Lecture – Politics & Popular Music – Introduction
Required Reading:
- *Rockin’ Out – Introduction*

**Week 2 – Popular Music**
Lecture – The Origins of Popular Music: From Blackface Minstrelsy to Tin Pan Alley
Required Reading – *Rockin’ Out*, Ch.1.

**Week 3 – Pop Music Fragments**
Lecture – Blues, Jazz, and Country: The Segregation of Popular Music
Required Reading – *Rockin’ Out*, Ch. 2.

**Week 4 - Shake, Rattle, and Roll**
Lecture – The Birth (and Death) of Rock ‘n’ Roll
Required Reading – *Rockin’ Out* Ch. 3-5.
Recommended Film:

**Week 5 – The Act You’ve Known For All These Years I**

“The Beatles are a plot by the British ruling classes to distract British youngsters from politics and bitter pondering over disgraced and shattered hope.”  
“Us, Communists? Why we can’t be Communists. We’re the world’s number one Capitalists. Imagine us Communists!” – Paul McCartney

Lecture – The Beatles – The Group Years 1: Liverpool Leads the British Invasion

Required Reading:


Lecture – The Beatles – The Group Years 2: Fame and Drugs

Recommended Films (should be viewed in order):
- Backbeat (1994) 100 minutes.
- The Beatles: The First U.S. Visit (1964) 83 minutes.

Week 6 – The Act You’ve Known For All These Years II

Lecture – The Beatles – The Group Years 3: Backlash, the End of Touring, and the Psychedelic Soundtrack to the Summer of Love

Required Reading:

Lecture – The Beatles – The Group Years 4: Breaking-Up from India to Abbey Road

Recommended Reading:


Recommended Films (should be viewed in order):
- *Yellow Submarine* (1968) 86 min. [http://dai.ly/xv95g8](http://dai.ly/xv95g8) or [http://www.veoh.com/watch/v17375916Xz3gamK](http://www.veoh.com/watch/v17375916Xz3gamK)

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**Week 7 – Revolution**

Lecture – The Beatles – The Solo Years 1: Power to the People

Required Reading:

Recommended Films (should be viewed in order):

Lecture – The Beatles – The Solo Years 2: Living in the Material World

Recommended Films:

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**Week 8 – Carry That Weight**

Lecture – The Beatles – The Solo Years 3: The Dream Is Over

Required Reading:

**Recommended Films:**

**Lecture – The Beatles – The Solo Years 4: All Things Must Pass**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Recommended Film:**
- *Concert for George* (2003) 146 min. [http://youtu.be/j9Dr1anRP9w](http://youtu.be/j9Dr1anRP9w)

**The Midterm Exam** will be available on-line for a 24-hour period on Wednesday March 4.

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**Week 9 – Spring Break**

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**Week 10**

Lecture – Folk Music: Rise, Backlash, Revival, and Decline

Reading – *Rockin’ Out*, Ch. 6.

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**Week 11**

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Lecture – Folk Rock and Singer-Songwriters

Reading – Rockin’ Out, Ch. 6.

Week 12

Lecture – The 60s: Popular Music & Political Culture

Reading – Rockin’ Out, Ch. 6.


Week 13

Lecture – The 70s: Musical Fragmentation

Reading – Rockin’ Out, Ch. 7.

Required Film – No Nukes (1980) 103 min. Why did the anti-nuclear movement fail? Watch in 5 parts (below) and then read The New York Times review here http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D05E1DE1538F93BA25754C0A966948260 Film:
 Pt. 1 http://www.veoh.com/watch/v6410683NNqz4Qkm
 Pt. 2 http://www.veoh.com/watch/v6410691X6XZDs2W
 Pt. 3 http://www.veoh.com/watch/v6410707SWcNQqHj
 Pt. 4 http://www.veoh.com/watch/v6410730FtdXwxd2
 Pt. 5 http://www.veoh.com/watch/v6410742jeswT7D4

Week 14

Lecture – Musical Fragmentation: Metal and Punk

Reading – Rockin’ Out, Ch. 8 & 10 on each topic.

Week 15
Lecture – Musical Fragmentation: Disco and Rap

Reading – *Rockin’ Out*, Ch. 8 & 10 on each topic.

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**Week 16**


Required Reading:

- Saraiya, Sonia, “Iggy Azalea’s Strange Year,” *Salon* (2014)

**Research Paper Due on Wednesday April 29 by the end of the night (midnight). Upload to safeassign.**

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**Week 17**

The **Final Exam** will be available on-line for a 24-hour period on Wednesday May 6.