I. **Course Description:** This course will focus on the question of aesthetics in popular music. When scholars tackle popular music as an object of analysis or critique, it is usually thought of in terms of its use as a space of productive if often muted political agency, as active participant in its own commodification or as the able expression of subaltern or aggrieved communities. In this course, however, while touching on those themes, we will think through the aesthetics – both as a theory of beauty as well as a philosophy of art - of popular music. The majority of the readings deal with Anglophone popular music; however, there will be an effort to include English-language texts that deal with popular music from across the globe.

II. **Course Goals and Outcomes:**

   a. **Course Goals:** To provide a grounding in aesthetic concepts as a means to critically investigate and analyze a particular artist, work, or genre of popular music. As an adjunct to other considerations of value, aesthetics can provide an accounting of style (artistic choices in production and performance) or beauty (even if contemplating “ugly beauty” as Thelonious Monk put it) that has been relatively ignored in popular music scholarship.

   b. **Learning Outcomes:** At the completion of this course, I expect students to be able to articulate an aesthetics of popular music both in terms of its argument or expression of “the beautiful,” however conceived, as well its function as an analytical concept.

III. **Format and Procedures:** This course will follow a typical seminar format: a short introduction of the reading(s) followed by a discussion by all participants. Discussions will be conducted in a respectful, collegial manner, particularly when there are disagreements.

IV. **Course Requirements:**

   a. Class attendance and participation policy: attendance and participation are mandatory.
   b. Course readings: see schedule below.
c. Required course assignments and projects:
   i. response papers for each reading (2-3 pages)
   ii. presentation on reading and leading of seminar discussion
   iii. final research paper (20 pages, excluding notes and works cited)

V. Grading Procedures: Grades will depend primarily on two factors: in-seminar participation, which includes presentations and participation in seminar discussions; and a final paper. Grades are based on a percentage of total points possible:
   90-100% A; 80-89% B; 60-79% C; 50-59% D; 0-49% F

VI. Academic Integrity: Each student in this course is expected to abide by Columbia University’s Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

VII. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Columbia University is committed to ensuring equal academic opportunities and inclusion for students with disabilities based on the principles of independent living, accessible universal design and diversity. I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances. Students are encouraged to register with Disability Services Center to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Please refer to this webpage for more information: http://www.essential-policies.columbia.edu/essential-resources

VIII. Tentative Weekly Schedule:


Week 12: *In the Break,* Fred Moten; Greg Tate, “Michael Jackson: The Man in Our Mirror.” *Village Voice* (07-01-2009)


Week 14: *TBD*