Course Description: This course focuses on a central question: how do we define “African American music”? In attempting to answer this question, we will be thinking through a number of keywords such as authenticity, representation, recognition, cultural ownership, appropriation, and origin(s). These concepts have structured the ways in which critics, musicians and audiences have addressed the various social, political and aesthetic contexts in which African American music has been composed (produced), performed (re-produced) and heard (consumed). In exploring the diversity of African American musical expression, we will question our assumptions about race, about music, and the links between the two. By taking a thematic approach, we will see how African American music has both shaped and been shaped by the social contexts in which it is created and performed. Our readings and discussions will encompass African American music from spirituals and work songs to bebop and hip hop, from Duke Ellington to N.W.A., from Bessie Smith to Stevie Wonder, from James Reese Europe to Bob Marley, all of which will help us explore the rich set of meanings black music has held in the Americas for over four hundred years.

I. Course Goals: You will gain or deepen familiarity and knowledge of African American music culture through readings, in-class discussions, and writing assignments.

II. Course Outcomes: By the end of this course, you should ably demonstrate your acquisition of the following knowledge:

- Musical terms and concepts
- Historical perspectives on African American music cultures
- Enhanced music listening skills

III. Format and Procedures: Class sessions will be a combination of lectures and discussions. In fact, I encourage questions and comments about the readings or music.

I will assume you are familiar with ALL course materials (recordings, readings, lectures) - even if not explicitly addressed in a classroom lecture - in grading your work. If there is a topic in the readings that does not make it into a class lecture but is a topic you feel the class should discuss, please feel free to bring it up in class.
I do not provide my lecture notes or my Keynote slides, so you will have to take notes. Your final grade will be based on writing assignments directly related to classroom lectures, readings and listening examples.

IV. Course Requirements:

- In-class decorum is based on mutual respect. Discussions will be conducted in a manner that is courteous and civil but open to honest and free debate.
- REQUIRED Course readings (also on library reserve):
- See X. Weekly Schedule below for important dates.

V. Coursework Requirements
There are no exams but there are substantial reading and writing requirements.

1. Readings
There will be required readings for each class session. The readings will form the basis for the lectures and class discussions.

2. Written Work
   a. You are required to write four substantial response papers (5 double-spaced pages) to each keyword unit as a demonstration of your analytical skills. Your analysis will be based on the readings. While you are required to cite directly from the readings, you do not need to summarize the entire text. However, an introductory paragraph about a particular idea from the reading that you are going to explore in the essay is required. I am primarily interested in your analysis as I have read the essay and do not need a re-telling of its main points.
   b. You are required to write a research paper of a minimum of 10 double-spaced pages (20 pages maximum). This can be a biographical essay of an artist or band, a survey of a genre of black music, or an in-depth exploration of a topic covered in class (e.g., gender, race, representation, genre) and its relationship to black music. Whatever you choose to write about, you are required to meet with me during weeks 10 and 11 to discuss your paper.
DUE DATES: Papers are due by 5PM on dates I will announce in class. Please e-mail your essay as a Word document directly to me. Late papers will not be accepted for any reason.

3. Live Performance Reviews
You are required to attend two shows throughout the semester that feature African American music and/or musicians. There is a Live Concert Review form available as a PDF for download from CourseWorks.

VI. Academic Integrity:
Each student in this course is expected to abide by Columbia University’s Code of Academic Integrity (below). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit is assumed to be the student’s own work.

Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity
The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars’ work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others’ ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

VII. Grading Procedures: Grades are based on a percentage of total points possible (91-100% = A; 80-90% = B; 60-79% = C; 50-59% = D; 0-49% = F)

1. Writing assignments (4 x 10 pts) = 40 pts
2. Research paper = 40
3. Live concert reviews (2 x 5) = 10
3. Attendance = 10

100 pts
VIII. **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. More information is available at: [http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/support](http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/support)

IX. **Basic Course Guidelines**

**A. Attendance and Tardiness:** Attendance at lectures is mandatory. Please make every effort to arrive on time for lectures. If you are late for lecture (not more than five minutes), please try to be as quiet as you can. Please do not walk in front of me if you arrive late or have to leave the room.

**B. Cell Phones and Laptops:** Please turn your cell phones **off** – not to vibrate, but **off** – before class begins. After much contemplation and experience in the classroom, this course will be under a “no laptop” policy.

**C. Classroom Conduct:** Please do not eat, sleep, read, do work for other classes, or chat with your neighbor during class.

**D. Problems, Concerns, and Difficulties:** I would like to talk to you about any concerns you may have about a grade, your performance in the course, problems with the material, and especially how to improve. I would ask, however, that you wait at least 24 hours before talking to me about any paper that has just been handed back.

When you do write me an email, please put something in the subject line, begin messages with “Dear” or “Hi” and end with a “Sincerely” or “Thanks,” followed by your name. I’ll extend the same courtesy to you, but I won’t respond to emails lacking subjects, greetings and names.

X. **Weekly Schedule:** While I hope to keep to the schedule below, there may be changes.

**KEYWORDS 1: History, Culture and the Formation of Black Music**

**Weeks 1-4**

1. Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*
   - Introduction and Chapters 1-4 (136 pages)
2. Chapters 5-9 (143 pages)
3. Chapters 10-12 (87 pages)
4. Chapters 13-16 (114 pages)
Writing assignment 1: Christopher Small argues throughout *Music of the Common Tongue* that African American music is a synthesis of African and European elements. If he is correct about that, why do we continue to hear certain genres, musical aesthetics, or extramusical concerns as African American and not simply “American”? Cite specific passages from the text for your assertions (as either support or as ideas you wish to argue against).

KEYWORDS 2: Representation and the Discourse about Black Music
Weeks 5-7
  5. FILM and discussion: *Ethnic Notions* (Marlon Riggs, director; 1987)
  7. Neal, *What the Music Said*: Chapters 4-6 (71 pages)

Writing assignment 2: Does Neal’s assertion that because “the quality of life within the black public sphere has eroded in the past three decades, both the quality and nature of black musical narrative were altered” (xi) hold true? What was altered? Were these alterations positive or negative overall? Cite Neal’s text in your essay.

KEYWORDS 3: Gender and the Possibilities in Black Music
  8. Miles White, *Race, Rap, and the Performance of Masculinity*: Please read the entire book, including Introduction and Epilogue (133 pages)
  10. Hayes and Williams, *Black Women and Music*: Chapters 5-10 (110 pages)

Writing assignment 3: As these two books argue in very different ways, gender has played an important role in shaping black musical culture. Pick an artist and examine the ways in which gender shapes their persona (representation), their music, and their reception by critics and audiences. Cite the critics (this can be magazine or online articles) and use the class texts to support your position regarding your chosen artist.

KEYWORDS 4: Genre and Extending the Limits of Black Music
  11. Maureen Mahon, *Right To Rock*: Chapters 1-5 (141 pages)
  12. Mahon, *Right To Rock*: Chapters 6-10 (124 pages)

Writing assignment 4: What does it mean when black musicians choose to work in genres that are not readily seen as “black”? What is this “black” in “black popular culture”? Cite specific musical examples.