University of Gdańsk

Subject card

Subject name and code	The History of American Pop Music, PG_00178566		
Field of study	Cultural Communication		
Date of commencement of studies	October 2025	Academic year of realisation of subject	2025/2026
Education level	Bachelor's studies	Subject group	Obligatory subject group in the field of study Optional subject group
Mode of study	full-time studies	Mode of delivery	at the university
Year of study	1	Language of instruction	English English
Semester of study	2	ECTS credits	2.0
Learning profile	academic	Assessment form	credit
Conducting unit			
Name and surname of lecturer (lecturers)	Subject supervisor	dr Zbigniew Czaja	
	Teachers		

Lesson types	Lesson type	Lecture	Tutorial	Laboratory	Project	Seminar	SUM
	Number of study hours	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	30
	E-learning hours included: 0.0						

Learning activity and number of study hours	Learning activity	Participation in didactic classes included in study plan	Participation in consultation hours	Self-study	SUM
	Number of study hours	30	2.0	18.0	50

Subject objectives	The course aims to outline the main stages in the development of American pop music from its origins to the current situation. While discussing the dominant genres, trends and fashions in particular decades, references to the corresponding British and Polish music scenes will be made to show the relevant influences. Students will also have the opportunity to become familiar with the evolution of band line-ups, instrumentation, arrangements of songs, stage music acts as well as music presentation modes from the gramophone to You Tube and Spotify.

Learning outcomes

Course outcome	Subject outcome	Method of verification
[CCL3_U01] The graduate can search, analyze, evaluate, select, integrate and document information from a variety of sources, interpret and draw conclusions, including in relation to issues of contemporary culture, literature and linguistics.	-independently searches , analyses and selects information on the individual stages of development of American music including their dominant trends	[SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report [SU4] test/exam - oral or written
[CCL3_W16] The graduate has knowledge of international cultural and literary life.	-has a general knowledge of the influence of American music on British and Polish music	[SW1] oral statement/ conversation/discussion [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[CCL3_K02] The graduate is ready to recognize the importance of knowledge and skills, including cultural studies, literary studies and linguistics, in solving cognitive and practical problems, and is ready to consult a research supervisor or workplace mentor in case of difficulties in solving these problems independently	- is ready to function in a global and culturally diverse society showing tolerance and willingness to work collaboratively with others to solve problems	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion
[CCL3_W01] The graduate knows and understands to an advanced degree selected issues that constitute basic general knowledge in the field of cultural and religious sciences, especially concerning contemporary culture and intercultural dialogue.	-has a broad knowledge of the dominant musical genres and artists as well as the evolution of the ways in which music is presented (soloists, bands, instrumentation)	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[CCL3_W10] Has advanced detailed knowledge of selected issues in the field of culture and intercultural dialogue.	-has a broad knowledge of the chronology of the development of the various stages of American music	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[CCL3_W07] The graduate has advanced knowledge of the basic English-language conceptual and terminological apparatus of cultural and religious studies.	-has an extended knowledge of the history of American popular music and its key representatives	[SW4] test/exam - oral or written [SW2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[CCL3_U02] The graduate can appropriately use the acquired subject knowledge to identify and explain facts, phenomena and processes concerning culture, literature and language, as well as their cultural and social conditions, using concepts and methods from the fields of cultural and religious sciences, literary studies and linguistics.	-- uses appropriately acquired knowledge and skills to prepare speeches and participate in discussions on topics related to musical trends and popular artists	[SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[CCL3_K01] The graduate is ready to critically assess the extent of his/her knowledge and skills, including cultural studies, literary studies and linguistics in relation to intercultural dialogue.	- knows and critically evaluates the extent of his/her knowledge and skills; understands the need to use them in solving cognitive and intercultural problems	[SK1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SK2] presentation/project/paper/ report
[CCL3_U03] The graduate can analyze and interpret cultural texts, phenomena and processes, including in relation to intercultural dialogue, using methodological and theoretical approaches appropriate to the sciences of culture and religion.	- independently interprets and explains the genesis and process of change of American popular music during the particular periods	[SU1] oral statement/conversation/ discussion [SU2] presentation/project/paper/ report

Subject contents

The course focuses on the evolution of trends and types of American music in the various decades of the 20th and 21st centuries, but also covers its earlier phases of development (1620-1900):

From slave/work songs and spirituals of early America through the blues (Howling Wolf, Bessie Smith), Appalachian country music (The Carter Family, Hank Williams) and New Orleans jazz (Louis Amstrong, Sidney Bechet) to Swing (Glen Miller, Benny Goodman) and Bebop (Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker) of the of 1920s-1940s followed by Rhythm and Blues (Fats Domino, Ray Charles) and Rock and Roll of the 1950s (Elvis Presley, Little Richard)

From the pop rock British invasion of the 1960s (the Beatles, the Rolling Stones) and Hard and country Rock (Aerosmith, the Eagles) and disco of the 1970 (Donna Summer, Earth Wind and Fire) followed by the pop (Michael Jackson, Madonna) and rap (Beastie Boys, Fat Boys) and New Wave music of the 1980s (John Carpenter, Blondie) and 1990s inclusive of techno (Moby) and grunge (Nirvana).

Finally, from Hip-hop (Eminem, 50 cent) and Teen pop of the 2000s (Britney Spears, Christina Aquilera) from the electro-pop (Lady Gaga, Beyonce) and pop rap of 2010s (Kanye West) to the current 2020s dominance of retro pop (Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande) and pop punk (Machine Gun Kelly).

Prerequisites and co-requisites

Student's choice of subject

Knowledge of English at least at B2 level

Assessment methods and criteria

Subject passing criteria	Passing threshold	Percentage of the final grade
preparing and delivering a presentation	51.0%	40.0%
final test	51.0%	40.0%
attendance and active participation in classes	80.0%	20.0%

Recommended reading

Basic literature

Nicholls,D. (2004) The Cambridge History of American Music, Cambridge, CUP

Hoffmann, F. (2015) *History of Popular Music, from Edison to the 21st century*, West Moorland, Paw Paw

Press.

Gaszynski, M.(2012) My History of Rock and Roll in Poland, Ozarow Mazowiecki, Olesiejuk Publishing House.

Kindersley, D. (2006) *The Beatles-10 years that shook the world*, London, Mojo.

Supplementary literature

The Wikipedia

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2014)

The Beatles Anthology by the Beatles (2000), London, Cassel and CO.

Selected YouTube videos and Google articles

eResources addresses

Basic

https://youtu.be/bVAy0LWgMHo - American music: Jazz and blues and the beginnings of rock n' roll

https://youtu.be/99SZ1YccRkY - Evolution Of American Music

Example issues/ example questions/ tasks being completed

Origins of blues

Varieties of jazz

Country-western and R `n` B music

The birth of rock `n` roll

Rock music in Britain and Poland

Popular music of the 1960s (The Beatles and the British Invasion)

Hip-hop culture and rap music

Work placement	Not applicable

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