

Course Syllabus WS 2015/2016

Studying Popular Music: Club Culture and Electronic Music Festivals in Berlin

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Schedule:

Seminar sessions will take place weekly on Wednesday 12-14pm, Hausvogteiplatz 5-7, room 323; starting October 14th. In December/January 2-3 in class sessions will be cancelled – as we will be in the field at the CTM festival - at a different day and time, dates will be negotiated. Detailed reading assignments and the key texts will be available in Moodle by middle of September.

This interdisciplinary course explores club cultures, electronic music scenes and their festivals. The seminar investigates Berlin as a traditional stronghold of the international electronic music scene. It will supply the participants with scientific tools (concepts, discourses, theories, methods) for researching popular music. Through different theories and case studies the students will investigate the complexity of electronic music as a highly organized and institutionalized cultural practice within a postmodern society. The seminar will involve approaches from fields like anthropology, musicology, organizational studies and cultural studies. The students will learn how to apply ethnographic empirical research methods (participant observation, fieldnotes, memos, interviews). Those methods will be applied and practiced in class, teams and groups.

Towards the end of the semester we will examine music festivals as cultural practice. This will include a focus on the festival Club Transmediale (CTM) in Berlin, which is one of the oldest European festivals for electronic and experimental music; takes place annually at the end of January. The class will visit the CTM exhibition and discourse program or club night. Students will be able to present their research outcomes at the CTM Education Networking Day.

The exhibition is free of admission. The discourse program might charge an admission fee of max. 5€ for the day. There are also some free concerts. Those students who would like to research at a CTM clubnight or other concert have to consider a budget of 15€.

The students will conduct a short field study on one of the many institutions in Berlin dealing with the electronic music scene (club, label, media, agency, festival or other institution). And will do a seminar input on a special scene/ genre of electronic music (can be combined). The aim is to do a series of group presentations at the CTM Education Networking Day.

Access to texts and literature:

Texts will be provided via moodle. Reference books and key literature will be available at the Grimm Zentrum library, Geschwister-Scholl-Straße 3, 10117 Berlin (near S/U-Bahn station Friedrichstraße). Since the Grimm-Zentrum does not provide all of the literature needed, another crucial place to research literature is the musicology library just around the corner: Am Kupfergraben 5, 10117 Berlin.

Note: Texts will be available in English and German – there is a choice between reading an English or German text. In 2 sessions – e.g. on Berlin case studies there will be only German texts available.

Course requirements, 5 ECTS:

- Active participation in class discussions and group works. Including Text reading in advance of seminar-sessions, preparing a discussion questions or comment. Total: 1 ECTS.
- Fieldtrip/ fieldwork: Participation in a group/ team research - presentation on a field site of choice (berlin based music institution) or music genre relevant to the seminar (1 ECTS). And participation in the field trip to CTM festival: attending events, taking fieldnotes or conduction interviews. Group/ team presentation on research outcome (1 ECTS). Total: 2 ECTS
- Assignments: 1 abstract/ summary on method or case study, 1 essay on key text, 1 report on berlin based institution, 1 glossary/ dictionary. (the glossary on terms, theories and concepts is written during the semester. An extra sheet will consist of a dictionary - consisting of key terms for our research field in English and German. This will be worked on during class in groups or in team work). Total: 2 ECTS
- Assessment by portfolio. Assignments for portfolio: Glossary on terms, theories and concepts (2-3 pages)/ vocabulary (1-2 pages). 1 essay on theory key text or electronic music genre (3-4 pages). 1 abstract/ summary (1 page) on case study or ethnographic method. CTM research summary (2-4 pages); report on Berlin based institution (2-4 pages); the summary or report on field research should include 1 excerpt of fieldnotes or interview transcripts (max. 3 pages).
Note: Portfolio assignments can be written in English or German (suitable assignments for students with more German knowledge).

Attendance Policy:

You may not miss more than 3 sessions. If you do know you miss a class let me know as soon as possible via mail. Appropriate catch-up assignments might need to be done.

Plagiarism Policy:

Using the words of another person's thoughts, ideas or data as though they were your own – whether intentionally or unintentionally, is understood as plagiarism. This will result in failure of the course.

Session 1: Introduction, discussion of seminar schedule and seminar tools such as key literature, Moodle, contact hours. Inquiry on personal and academic background and the German/ English language skills of the participants through conversation and a short questionnaire. Discussion of assignments for the semester.

As an introduction to the topic we will watch excerpts of documentaries on Berlin and electronic music.

Session 2: What are popular music studies? Introduction on the history of pop as a concept and popular music as a field of academic study. General discussion of assignment texts in group.

Session 3: Discourses and theories on popular music. Discussion of assignment texts in class. Brainstorming on possible sites of field research. Teaming up with study buddies for research on Berlin based institution/ label/ venue/ agency/ festival or else.

Session 4: On the specific of electronic music, part 1: What are club cultures? Scenes, genres and styles in electronic music. Discussion of assignment texts in class via summaries and abstracts. Exploring the specifics via music videos.

Session 5: On the specific of electronic music, part 2. DJ Culture: Power, Technology and social change in electronic dance music. Discussion of assignment texts in class and exercises and work on glossary in small groups.

Session 6: How can we study electronic music? Electronic music as scenes and post-subcultures. Examples of approaches, methods and theories on the study of electronic music. Discussion of assigned texts in groups. Discussion on genres and styles in class: Each team of study-buddies introduces an artist/ label/ genre of electronic music they discovered to the class.

Session 7: Berlin as a stronghold for electronic music. Elektronische Musik in Berlin. Geschichte und Gegenwart der elektronischen Musik in Berlin: Orte, Stile, Personen, Institutionen (in German). Text work in small groups on the assigned German case studies.

Session 8: What is ethnographic research? Part 1: Ethnographic participation, experienced/ observed realities and ethnographic practice. Discussion of assignment texts in class. Testing out ethnographic methods in teams and small groups.

Session 9: What is ethnographic research? Part 2: The specifics of ethnographic work in organizations and qualitative empirical research in a globalized world. Discussion of assignment texts in class. Group and teamwork on new terms and vocabulary >> glossary.

Session 10: Music festivals, part 1: Music Festivals as Cultural Practices – festival case studies. Discussion of assignment texts in class, and team interviews on festival experiences of students. Group work on new German vocabulary and glossary.

Session 11: Music festivals, part 2: Researching electronic music festivals through empirical field research. Discussion of texts in class. Watching festival documentaries and videos – applying participant observation. What should we be aware of?

Session 12: CTM Festival, part 1: Investigating practices, discourses, art and media of electronic music at CTM Berlin. Planning of excursion/ field trip with class/ in teams. Discussion of CTM catalogue/ magazine texts in class and small groups

Session 13: CTM Festival, part 2: Organizing excursion to Club Transmediale. Preparation of group-presentations for Education Networking Day at CTM. Choosing teams and themes for participant observation at CTM. Group and teamwork on glossary and vocabulary.

>> **Session 14 & 15** will be at CTM Festival, days & times will be negotiated.

Session 16: Final discussion & presentations. What did each research team observe at the CTM festival? Resume CTM Festival - team presentations of CTM research. Feedback on the seminar. Possibilities for the study of popular music at German universities. Introduction

to academic networks, magazines and associations for the study of popular music (in Germany and international).

Literature 4 Studying Popular Music: Club Culture and Electronic Music Festivals

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