**GEP Course**

**Second semester 2020**

***Identity and South African Popular Culture***

**Course code:** 14243 - 244

**Lecturer:** Dr. Schalk van der Merwe ([deltablu@sun.ac.za](mailto:deltablu@sun.ac.za))

**Lectures:** In order to accommodate differing time zones, lectures will be pre-recorded and posted on sunlearn at the beginning of each week along with the course material.

**Credits:** 3 US credits; 6 ECTS credits, 12 SA credits

*\*Please note that this is a compulsory module for all semester students*

**Module description:**

The link between popular culture and identity is strong, yet until recently, it has been neglected in wider studies on African culture in favour of a ‘traditional’, or ‘pure’, African vs ‘elite’/ ‘modern classical’ Western dichotomy. This has ‘… obscured … the cultural activities, procedures, and products of the majority of people in present-day Africa’ (Barber, 1997:1-2). These obscured activities have histories that are in part linked to the continent’s colonial past, which not only introduced Western cultural practices (in education, music, etc.), but also initialised rural-urban migration, industrialisation, and introduced mass media, all of which influenced everyday popular culture. In South Africa, during the politically tumultuous twentieth century, ordinary people managed to establish agency, construct identities and partake in popular cultural practices that defied the apartheid regime. They composed and performed marabi jazz in Sophiatown in the 1940s and 1950s as a celebration of their African identities, they expressed their fashion and music tastes in Drum magazine, or became *tsotsis* (gangsters). On the other side of the racial spectrum, privileged white youths flirted with counterculture, became punks or complied with the restrictions imposed by the regime. Sometimes their respective worlds overlapped during music concerts with multi-racial line-ups and audiences (which were illegal under apartheid laws). In post-apartheid South Africa, popular culture also plays a vital role in the way people act socially and differentiate themselves from others in a post-colonial context. This module provides a inter-disciplinary look at South African popular culture(s) since the beginning of the 20th century (including popular music, sub-cultures, magazines, films, literature, online streaming, youth culture, etc.) with the aim of understanding the ways in which people from different backgrounds construct(ed) their identities - both individually and collectively - amidst phases of societal change. The module will make use of weekly pre-recorded lectures (with audio and visuals), as well as prescribed reading, music playlists, films and art over the course of 13 weeks.

**Module outcomes:**

This module is designed to give the student a better understanding - both theoretical and specific - of the ways in which South Africans have constructed and celebrated their identities throughout historical phases of social change and disruption, from the early part of the twentieth centruy to the present. Understanding such cultural activities is vital for understanding the nuances of contemporary South African society.

**Course content: a thematic outline**

Week 1: Introduction

Theoretical perspectives on popular culture and identity

Historical context of African popular culture

Week 2: South Africa: a short history of social contexts

Colonialism, industrialisation, migration, war, politics, mass media

Week 3: Early South African music, films and radio

Music at the Cape, early recorded Afrikaans music, the SABC, film

Week 4: Political backgound and lived experience of apartheid, 1948 - 1960

Peaceful protests, mass actions, the Freedom Charter, the Sharpeville massacre

*Week 5: Sophiatown as cultural hub of 1950s Johannesburg*

Marabi Jazz, *King Kong*, Drum magazine, *tsotsis,* influence today

Week 6: Counterculture in South Africa, 1960s - 1980s

Surfing, Ducktails, Hippies, Free Peoples concerts

Week 7: Artists’ protest against apartheid

Artists in exile, Shifty Records, Border literature, The End Conscription Campaign, Voëlvry, the Free Nelson Mandela concert at Wembley Stadium

Week 8: South Afican hiphop and identity

The Cape Flats, P.O.C., Black Noise, BVK, Die Antwoord, Jack Parow, Youngsta Cpt. Churchil Naudé

Week 9: Whiteness in the postcolony

Performing whiteness in Afrikaans music and film, politics, nostalgia, racial exclusivity

Week 10: Visual representations of fallism, decolonising culture

Marikana, #feesmustfall, decolonialism in popular culture

**Assessments:**

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| Two short tutorials | 5% |
| Research paper | 45% |
| Online test assessment | 45% |

**Prescribed readings:**

Ballantine, C., 2012. *Marabi Nights: Jazz, ‘race’ and society in early apartheid South Africa*, (Scotsville: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, 3rd edition).

Barber, K., (ed), 1997. *Readings in African popular Culture*, (Oxford: James Currey), 99.

- 2018. *A History of African Popular Culture: New Approaches to African History.* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018).

Coplan D., 1985. *In Township Tonight!*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press).

Falola, T., and Salm, S.J., (eds)., 2005. *Urbanization and African Cultures*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press).

Glaser, C., 2000. *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*, (Cape Town: David Phillip Publishers).

Haupt, A., 2012. *Static: Race and Representation in Post-apartheid music, media and film.* (Cape Town: HSRC Press).

Martin, D., 2012. *Sounding the Cape: Music, Identity and Politicsin South Africa*, (Somerset West: African Minds).

Mooney, K., 1998. ‘“Ducktails, flick-knives and pugnacity”: Subcultural and hegemonic masculinities in South Africa, 1948–1960’, *Journal of South African Studies*, 24:4, pp. 753–74.

Nuttal, S., and Michael, C., (eds). 2000. *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies, (*Cape Town: Oxford University Press).

Olwage, G., (ed)., 2008. *Composing Apartheid: Music for and Against Apartheid*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press).

Sole, K., 2005. *“The Deep Thoughts the One in Need Falls Into”: Quotidian Experience and the perspectives of poetry in Postliberation South Africa*, IN Loomba, A, Kaul, S, et al (eds), *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, (Durham: Duke University Press), pp. 182- 205.

Tomselli, K., 1989, *The Cinema of Apartheid.* (London: Routledge, 1989).

Van der Merwe, S.D., 2017. *On Record: Popular Afrikaans Music and Society, 1900–2017,* (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media).

Van Eeden, J., and Du Preez, A., (eds), 2005. *South African Visual Culture*, (Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers).