

History 2134A

“Talkin’ ‘Bout My Generation”: Youth, Rebellion & Rock’n’Roll

Fall Term 2025

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Office Hours: **TBA**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.



Photos: (1) Beatlemania (aarp.org/Redux); (2) Jimi Hendrix (Fred Straub, cincinnati.com); (3) The Who in concert, 1970s (thewho.com); (4) Janis Joplin (<http://www.rockhall.com>)

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Course Description

In the mid-1950s, a new and ground-breaking (and to many people, shocking!) style of music burst onto the scene. It was unlike anything that had come before. Its form defied conventions; its beat urged listeners to dance; its lyrics hinted at rebellion. It was rock'n'roll, it broke all the rules, and it was the first genre of music geared specifically to teenagers. Beginning with the Baby Boom generation, who, as teenagers in the 1950s, helped usher in this musical revolution, rock music has continued to play a role as a symbol of identity for successive generations of young people.

In this course, we will be studying the history and development of rock'n'roll, by examining its cultural artifacts: song lyrics, music videos, album covers, concert reviews, musician biographies and interviews, photographs, and media coverage. We will explore how rock'n'roll is uniquely and specifically tied to youth culture in its creation, performance, lyrics, messaging, evolution, and impact.

Antirequisite(s):

History 2706E

Course Syllabus

Learning outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have:

- Developed a general knowledge of key personalities and events in the evolution of rock'n'roll, from its creation in the 1950s to the rock styles of today;
- Explored the historical and social contexts in which rock'n'roll began and developed;
- Learned to understand the role of the Baby Boom generation in the birth of rock'n'roll, and how rock music has continued to evolve to be the music and voice of successive generations of young people;
- Familiarized themselves with a number of key primary documents of the period and evaluated their historical value and significance, alone and in relation to other sources;
- Examined some of the cultural artifacts of the period and learned to understand their significance (*egs.*, song lyrics, album covers, reviews, films, photographs, and media coverage);
- Considered the importance and influence of rock music in their own lives and its relation to their own generation.

Expectations:

- Attendance at all lectures. (If you are sick, please stay home!—but be sure to ask a classmate for a copy of their lecture notes for that day.)
- Completion of each week's assigned readings, before the start of that week's lecture.
- Courtesy and respect towards other members of the class.

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- Be present! Put away cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Laptops are allowed if used to take notes and/or to refer to online course materials; they are NOT to be used for any other purpose during class
- Completion and prompt submission of all written assignments.
- Academic integrity.

Methods of Evaluation

Assignments and marks distribution:

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| • Short paper (4-5 typed, double-spaced pages) (due November 19 th) | 20% |
| • 4 response papers (1-2 pages each) (written in class) | 20% |
| • Midterm exam (in class, October 15 th) | 30% |
| • Final exam (during December exam period) | 30% |

Midterm exam:

There will be a 2-hour midterm exam that will be written in class on October 15th. It will consist of short answer and essay questions. No electronic devices, books, notes, *etc.*, will be permitted during the exam.

Final exam:

There will be a 2-hour final exam that will take place during the December exam period. It will focus on material covered since the midterm exam, and will consist of short answer and essay questions. No electronic devices, books, notes, *etc.*, will be permitted during the exam.

Written assignments:

Written assignments must be submitted at the specified time on the due date. Some assignments will be assigned during class, with time allotted for completion during class time. Other assignments are to be completed at home, and submitted electronically, in Word format, via the submission link on the OWL course website. (By using the submission link on the course website, your paper will automatically be submitted to Turnitin.com.)

Further instructions regarding the above assignments will be provided in class.

Absences and late assignments:

In the event you must miss a lecture, due to illness or other reason, it is your responsibility to obtain a copy of the day's lecture notes from a fellow student, and to review these notes before the next lecture. If you miss a Response Paper due to an absence, please use the Student Absence Portal to request academic consideration to make up the missed assignment.

Late assignments: A late penalty of 2% for each day (including Saturdays and Sundays) will be incurred for all written work submitted after the due date and time. Papers submitted on the due date but after the due time will be considered late and will be penalized 2%. Late papers will **not** be accepted more than 10 days after the due date of the assignment.

Absences and missed exams:

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Materials**Required texts:**

- David Brackett, *The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader: Histories and Debates* (4th edition) (Oxford University Press, 2020). This book will be available for purchase in the campus bookstore. It may also be purchased directly from the publisher:

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-pop-rock-and-soul-reader-9780190843588?q=dauid%20brackett&lang=en&cc=ca>

The price is \$105.99 (Cdn), but you may be able to find less expensive copies through online book sellers. We have used this book in HIST 2134 for several years, so keep an eye out for used copies.

- One book (of the student's choice) about a rock musician or band. The book can be biographical, autobiographical, or an exploration of the artist's/band's music. You will be asked to write a short paper based on this book. (Further instructions will be provided in class.)

You may purchase a biography from the seller of your choice; however, Western Libraries have a large selection of rock artist biographies that you can choose from and borrow at no cost.

- Additional weekly articles and other materials will be assigned and made available online on the OWL course website.

Additional Statements**Communications policies:**

The best way to contact me is by e-mail. (Please write "HIS 2134" or "Rock'n'Roll" as the subject line of your e-mail.) It is unlikely that I will be able to answer your e-mail immediately, but I will do my best to respond within 48 hours. You are also welcome to speak with me in person after class, or to drop by my office to see me during my office hours. You can also e-mail me to request a meeting over Zoom.

I am available to answer your questions about the course, review your assignments with you, etc.—but I am also happy to chat with you about your favourite rock bands, concert experiences, *etc.*! So don't be shy about dropping by! I appreciate the opportunity to get to know each of you better.

Use of electronic devices:

Students may use laptops during class to access course readings and to take notes, but not for any other purposes. The use of other electronic devices (cell phones, audio or video recording devices, *etc.*) is not permitted during class. No electronic devices are permitted during the midterm exam or the final exam.

Use of generative AI tools:

The goals of this course include learning to think critically, to find and evaluate sources, to use your analysis of these sources to create and support an argument, and to communicate your argument clearly. The use of AI bypasses these important learning activities.

Therefore, you may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course. Any use of such tools for assignments in this course may be considered a form of academic misconduct and handled accordingly.

If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments, outlines, and other material used in preparing your assignment. Students must keep all notes, outlines, and first drafts until after the release of final grades for the course.

And finally....

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.