SOUNDCAPES OF WELLBEING IN POPULAR MUSIC

Instructor: Gavin J. Andrews  
Email: andrews@mcmaster.ca  
Class meets: Monday, Term 2, 2:30-5:20, TSH 122  
Office: KTH 240  
Office hours: Wednesday’s 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

Focus, Objectives and Purpose

This course critically examines the many ways in which popular music, through various facets of its production, circulation and consumption, can help create health and wellbeing on both individual and collective levels.

Specifically, attention is paid to popular music’s many health and wellbeing applications and contexts; ranging from formal music therapy to everyday listening practices, public health interventions, and political mobilization through activism. Moreover, theoretically attention is paid to the roles of meaning and identity, structure, onflow and affect in how music creates health and wellbeing.

A number of disciplinary perspectives and research fields are drawn upon including sociology, geography, social psychology, musicology, cultural studies, holistic health care research and, on occasion, various health sciences. Moreover a wide-range of musical styles, genres, artists, songs and venues are drawn upon as case studies to illuminate the ideas presented during the course.

Teaching Format

Each week the instructor first will present an informal seminar on the topic of the day during which students are welcome to interrupt to ask relevant questions or engage the class in related conversation. The instructor will not use a projector, but summary slides will be posted on Avenue or emailed just prior to each seminar. Students should make sure they have access to either electronic versions or hard copies of these summary slides in class. After a short break, the remaining class time will be used for students’ ‘quadri-weekly’ presentations (i.e. 1 presentation per student every 4 weeks; making a total of 3 presentations per student).
**Course Requirements**

**Participation (5% of final grade)**
Marks will be based on the student’s attendance, engagement in class discussions, and contribution to the learning of all class members throughout the term.

**Written Assignment One: Applications and Contexts (35% of final grade)**
To be submitted to the instructor in class on or before **February 27th**

Students will select a particular application or context where music impacts on health and wellbeing, as covered in one of the first 6 seminars, and write an essay reviewing the facets and processes involved. Students are free to develop their own essay titles but these must be checked by the instructor via email or in person prior to the commencement of writing (students are also encouraged to submit a rough paper outline at the same time, so that the instructor can advise on the general direction, structure and content of the piece). The paper should be no more than 10 pages long (excluding references), typed and double spaced.

‘Quadri-Weekly’ Presentations and Class Discussion (25% of final grade)

Once every four weeks students will read an article or chapter focused on that week’s topic. They will then present a brief summary of the article or chapter to the class (for approximately 7-10 minutes). Because this occurs over 12 weeks, each student will present on 3 occasions (sign-up sheets will be provided to ensure that equal numbers of students present each week – typically 5 or 6). In exceptional circumstances where presentations are missed, following the agreement of the instructor, students may submit a two page summary of the article or chapter at a later date. Students are very welcome to select an article or chapter that is not one of those shown for each week (below). BUT, if they chose to select one that is, they must check with their fellow presenters for that day so that not more than one student covers each. Try not to present papers or chapters published by the instructor (Andrews) as these will likely be covered by him.

**Written Assignment Two: Genres and Theories (35% of final grade)**
To be submitted to the instructor in class on or before **April 3rd**

Students should select a particular musical style/genre or artist or performance or album/song and describe critically its connections to health and wellbeing (these do not necessarily have to be the particular genres covered in seminars 10-12 and earlier). In particular they will use theoretical concepts or ideas covered in seminars 7-9 (or others of their choice) to interpret the processes involved. As with assignment one, students are free to develop their own essay titles but these must be checked by the instructor via email or in person prior to the commencement of writing (as with assignment one, students are also encouraged to submit a rough paper outline at the same time, so that the instructor can advise on the general direction, structure and content). The paper should be no more than 10 pages long (excluding references), typed and double spaced.
Note: A penalty of 2% per day will be deducted for assignments not submitted on or before the due date.

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

90-100 A+
85-90 A
80-84 A-
77-79 B+
73-76 B
70-72 B-
67-69 C+
63-66 C
60-62 C-
57-59 D+
53-56 D
50-52 D-
0-49 F

Written feedback will be available – via email on request – approximately ten days after each assignment submission date. Alternatively, students may request a meeting to discuss their assignments verbally.

Required Text

There is no required text or coursepack but the following two books explore almost all of issues covered in the course and, if purchased, loaned or accessed, would undoubtedly be of great assistance.


Note - MacDonald et al is available as an ebook from the university library. Andrews et al is available as a hard copy from the university library and will shortly be available as an ebook.

General Reading

Students should read at least two of the suggested readings associated with that week’s class. The choice is theirs to make.
**Weekly Schedule**

**APPLICATIONS AND CONTEXTS: SEMINARS 1-6**

**Seminar 1, January 9th - Introduction to the course.** What do we mean by popular music, health and wellbeing and their interrelationships, and what disciplines and fields of research are involved in understanding and articulating these interrelationships?

MacDonald, R. A. R. (2013). Music, health, and well-being: A review. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 8, 10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20635. [http://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20635](http://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v8i0.20635)

See also chapters in section one in MacDonald et al (2012) and chapter one in Andrews et al (2014)

(note - although students will have not had time to read any of these particular articles ahead of the first seminar, it is highly recommended that they do read one shortly after)

**Seminar 2, January 16th – Music as therapy.** How is popular music utilized in both conventional and non-conventional health care practice? What are the main uses, principles and procedures involved, what debates surround its effectiveness, regulation, funding and access? (presentations: group one, first of three)


See also chapters in sections two, three and four in MacDonald et al (2012) and chapter ten in Andrews et al (2014)
Seminar 3, January 23rd – Music in everyday life. How is music purposefully deployed and consciously experienced in everyday contexts to assist health and wellbeing (for example in us remembering, letting go, seeking inspiration and hope)? Otherwise how can it act on a less-than-fully consciously level as a backdrop to our lives, yet still subtly assist our health and wellbeing? (presentations: group two, first of three)


See also chapters in section five in MacDonald et al (2012) and chapters, two, seven and eleven in Andrews et al (2014)

Seminar 4, January 30th – Good and bad public health. As a social and cultural ‘determinant’, how can music be bad and good for health and wellbeing? In terms of the former, debates here range from the negative health impacts of musical cultures ranging from musical ‘miserableism’ to issues around drug use and violence. In terms of the latter, debates include using particular musical genres (such as Hip Hop) to deliver health messages and programs. (presentations: group three, first of three)


See also chapters in section two in MacDonald et al (2012) and chapters five and thirteen in Andrews et al (2014)

**Seminar 5, February 6th – Politics and activism.** How is music worked politically for population health and wellbeing? Approaches reviewed here range from macro-scale ‘celebrity diplomacy’ and associated mega-events focused at the developing world, to more modest local initiatives and causes. What are the arguments for and against musicians and their audiences acting on health issues? Examples here are drawn from LiveAid/Live8 and the group U2 in particular. (presentations: group four, first of three)


See also chapters sixteen and eighteen in Andrews et al (2014)

**Seminar 6, February 13th – Places.** How does place figure in the relationship between music and health/wellbeing and in the creation of musical soundscapes? What are the processes involved at various scales including in regions, neighborhoods, festivals, stadiums, arenas, concert halls, pubs, bedrooms, imagined visualized places and cyberspaces? (presentations: group one, second of three)


See also chapters, one, eight and fourteen in Andrews et al (2014)

**Monday February 20th – No Seminar (mid-term recess/reading week)**

**THEORIES AND CONCEPTS: SEMINARS 7-9**

**Seminar 7, February 27th – Meaning and identity.** How do the meanings and identities attached to music and articulated by music – and related processes (such as social construction) and experiences (such as emotion) - play a role in the way music works for health and wellbeing on individual and collective levels? Examples here are drawn from Hip Hop and Rock in particular. (presentations: group two, second of three)

*(note - assignment one is due on or before this day)*


See also chapters, nine, fifteen and seventeen in Andrews et al (2014)
Seminar 8, March 6th – Structure and onflow. How does the structure and onflow of popular music, and the specific techniques involved in its production, lead to physical and emotional responses in listeners? For example, music being uplifting, saddening or calming? Examples here are drawn from electronic music, including the work of Brian Eno, Daft Punk and Shardcore in particular. (presentations: group three, second of three)


See also chapter’s two and twelve in Andrews et al (2014)

Seminar 9, March 13th – Affect. How does music help create a collective interpersonal energy between people experiencing it; a ‘vibe’ that is less-than-fully consciously experienced yet is atmospheric, infectious, uplifting and potentially transformational? Ideas here are drawn from ‘non-representational theory’ to explain the processes involved – and the roles of human and non-human actors. Meanwhile, examples here are drawn from stadium rock – including Oasis - and street music/busking. (presentations: group four, second of three)


See also chapter’s four, eleven and twelve in Andrews et al (2014)

GENRES: SEMINARS 10-12

Seminar 10, March 20th – 1960s and 70s Folk and Rock & Roll. What are the health and wellbeing connections to, and mechanisms of, these particular genres? Examples are drawn from The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Woodstock, and others. (presentations: group one, third of three)


Seminar 11, March 27th – Contemporary alternative guitar music/‘indie’. What are the health and wellbeing connections to, and mechanisms of, this particular genre? Examples are drawn from the The Sex Pistols, Jane’s Addiction, The Smiths, Rage Against the Machine, Billy Brag, Blur, Big Audio Dynamite and others. (presentations: group two, third of three)


See also chapters four, five and fourteen in Andrews et al (2014).

**Seminar 12, April 3rd Reggae.** What are the health and wellbeing connections to, and mechanisms of, this particular genre? Examples are drawn from Mad Professor, Bob Marley, The Specials/Ska and others. (presentations: group three and group four, third of three)


*(note - assignment two is due on or before this day)*
**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities: http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society (ext. 27227 | e-mail: hasdept@mcmaster.ca).

**Faculty of Social Science, e-mail communication policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.
Email Forwarding in MUGSI:
http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html
*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link
(Approved at the Faculty of Social Sciences meeting on Tues. May 25, 2010)

Note:
The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.