What is this course about?

This new class examines the intersection between hip hop and religion. Special attention will be given to how hip hop culture and religious beliefs and practices cross paths. For instance, hip hop and religion are both very much concerned with the same ethical issues: the kind of world people live in and want to live in. In the end, the course demonstrates that a synergy arises between and among hip hop and religion when they are studied together not independently attainable. Lecture-discussion, coupled with multimedia resources, is the primary mode of instruction.

What are the learning objectives of the course?

✓ Explain how hip hop and religion are related
✓ Recognize how identity in hip hop and religion is navigated
✓ Appreciate how social issues in hip hop and religion are addressed

What are some of the basic topics the class will cover?

- Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation
- Hip Hop, Reggae, and Rastafarianism
- Hip Hop, Islam, and a “Jihad of Words”
- Hip Hop and Atheism/Humanism
- Hip Hop and Christian Rap
- Hip Hop, Religion, and Feminism
- Hip Hop, Conjuring Spirit, and Spiritual Practice
- Hip Hop, Religion, and the Emergence of Religious Discourse
- Hip Hop, Markets, and Morals
- Hip Hop, Religion, and Death

What books should I buy? What else will I be reading or viewing?

Besides online readings, ‘learning resources’ for this course—the materials that you are required to read, view, etc.—include two textbooks:

What are the general education outcomes of the course?

This course is a General Education Foundations Course in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts. Foundations courses cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, computation, information literacy, and use of technology. They furthermore introduce you to basic concepts, theories and approaches in a variety of disciplines in order to provide the intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge gathered in your major area of study into a broader world picture.

The Humanities encompass works of the imagination, such as religion, art, literature, film, drama, dance, and music, and related scholarship. Students better understand human problems, responsibilities, and possibilities in changing historical contexts and diverse cultures, and in relation to the natural environment. Students acquire new languages and familiarize themselves with related cultures. They gain the ability to recognize and assess various aesthetic principles, belief systems, and constructions of identity. Students acquire capacities for reflection, critique, communication, cultural understanding, creativity, and problem solving in an increasingly globalized world.

Upon completing of this area of Foundations, you will be able to: 1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments; 2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures; 3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance; and 4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.

What is the mission statement of the department?

The Department of Religious Studies at San Diego State University…

...introduces the methodologies of religious studies as an academic discipline.

...advances the profession of religious studies through a commitment to scholarly research, publication, interpretation, and discussion.

...cultivates an understanding of religious pluralism, including non-religious perspectives, in order to create global citizens in a religiously diverse world, and

...promotes informed public dialogue about religion and its influence on society and culture.
# Assignments, due dates, points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS</th>
<th>DUE</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Essay #1</td>
<td>September 17, 18, 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Essay #2</td>
<td>October 8, 9, 10</td>
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<td>Response Essay #3</td>
<td>December 3, 4, 5</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
<td>October 17</td>
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<td>Final</td>
<td>December 17</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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# Final grade point tally

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Welcome to the Class!

Anthony Pinn’s “Introduction”
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<td>Robin Sylvan’s “Rap Music”</td>
<td>Afrika Bambaataa and the Zulu Nation (Online Article)</td>
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Michael Eric Dyson’s “The Culture of Hip-Hop” (p. 61) | Nelson George’s “Hip-Hop’s Founding Fathers Speak the Truth” (p. 45) | 
| 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  |
| Noel Leo Erskine’s “Rap, Reggae, and Religion: Sounds of Cultural Dissonance” | Bob Marley and Rastafarianism (Online Article) | 
| 15  | 16  | 17  | 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  |
| Mark Taylor’s “Bringing Noise, Conjuring Spirit: Rap as Spiritual Practice” | Gwendolyn Pough’s “Seeds and Legacies: Tapping the Potential in Hip-Hop” (p. 283) | 
Response Essay #1 | Response Essay #1 | Response Essay #1 | 

Assignment schedule

September 2013
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<tr>
<td>Leola Johnson’s “The Spirit is Willing and So Is the Flesh: The Queen in Hip-Hop Culture”</td>
<td>Cheryl Keyes’ “Empowering…” (p. 265)</td>
<td>Joan Morgan’s “Hip-Hop Feminist” (p. 277)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“N-Word” Debate in Hip Hop Culture</td>
<td>2 Live Crew</td>
<td>Kitwana’s “The Challenge of Rap Music…” (p. 341)</td>
<td>Clarence Lusane’s “Rap, Race, and Politics” (p. 351)</td>
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<td>Review</td>
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<td>Midterm (2:00-3:15 p.m.)</td>
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<td>Jay-Z, Religion, and Philosophy (Online Readings)</td>
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<td>James Perkinson’s “Rap as Wrap and Rapture: North American Popular Culture and the Denial of Death”</td>
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<td>Blair’s “Commercial…” (p. 497)</td>
<td>S. Watkin’s “Black Youth and the Ironies of Capitalism” (p. 557)</td>
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<td>Hip Hop (and Religion) Movie Marathon and Analysis</td>
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<td>Anthony Pinn’s “Handlin’ My Business’…” and “African American Humanism”</td>
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<td>No Class: Thanksgiving Break</td>
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### Assignment schedule

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<td>Review (Last day of classes)</td>
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<td>Final Exam (1:00 – 3:00 p.m.)</td>
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<td>Grades Due</td>
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December 2013

Grades Due December 2013
Assignments

1. **Response Essays**

You will write three 250-400 word essays over the span of the course. Essays will require you to demonstrate their understanding of the material (e.g., by debating a conceptual issue, relating or applying core concepts, analyzing theories in relation to one’s own life, etc.). In terms of content and development of the essay, it should be focused, have a substantive thesis, provide details/examples, sustain insight, in-depth analysis of complex ideas, etc. In terms of organization/format, it should have an introduction with logical flow of body and conclusion, complete, well-structured sentences, transitions, good grammar/punctuation/spelling, word choice and tone, etc.

In addition, you are also required to engage with others in this class. This will be part of your participation grade in the class. For each response essay, you are required to post one response to a classmate’s response (i.e., 50-150 word response post). You do not have to respond to other people’s comments of your original response essay. (You can but do not have to). Your comment on a classmate’s post may include one or more of the following:

- Ask a probing question
- Share an insight from having read your classmate’s post
- Offer and provide evidence to support an opinion
- Validate a classmate’s idea with reference to your own experiences
- Make a suggestion
- Expand on your classmate’s post

Response essays and comments on fellow student posts must be submitted during the allotted time. Late submissions will not be graded.

2. **Test**

You will complete two tests. Test will be ‘open’ for only the allotted final exam time: from 2:00 – 3:15 p.m. on October 17 for the Midterm and 1:00-3:00 p.m. on December 17 for the final exam. Although you may begin testing any time within the testing window, you will receive a set number of minutes to complete the test once you have opened it, and tests must be completed in one sitting. Blackboard provides a test timer, which starts when you begin a test. The timer does not stop when your time runs out; it just keeps on going. Blackboard will not stop your test nor will an alarm sound. It is your responsibility to submit your test prior to the time mark. Also please note that Blackboard does not grade tests submitted after ‘time allowed’ runs out.

Any test-taker who takes more than his or her share of time may receive an ‘F’ for the effort. To protect yourself, press SUBMIT prior to the time mark.

Tests may consist of T/F, multiple choice questions, fill-in, matching, and the like. Although you can certainly access your notes and our learning resources while taking each test, the tests are not...
intended to be open book exams. Approach our tests just like you would approach an exam you might take sitting in a classroom. In other words, ‘know your stuff.’ You will not have time to look up all the answers and you will crash your test if you have other windows open. Any student who cheats will receive an F for the course.

You can go to the Student Computing Center in Love Library to use their computers.

3. Class Participation

The classroom should be considered a laboratory in which a student can develop and test their ability to convince their peers of the correctness of their approach. The quality of such participation is as important as the quantity. For example, it’s fine to say “I agree” to a position, however that does not constitute participation since it does not add anything of substance to the discussion at hand. Substantive participation is adding new ideas, perspectives, pointed follow-up questions, etc. to the learning environment. Substantive participation is very much encouraged, yet not at the price of drowning-out other voices in the classroom. That is, respect for other views will be sought at all cost. Respect is the foundation for successful teaching and learning. Substantive participation is a required part of the students’ grade and is not the same as attendance.

Class participation also includes unannounced quizzes given throughout the semester.

Generally speaking, participation translates into five district types of categories:

**Outstanding Contributor** (100-90 points): Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide one or more major insights, as well as, direction for the class. Arguments, when offered, are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished significantly.

**Good Contributor** (89-80 points): Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes direction for the class discussion. Arguments are generally well substantiated and are often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussion would be diminished considerably.

**Adequate Contributor** (79-70 points): Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights, but seldom offer a major new direction for the discussion. Arguments are sometimes presented and are fairly well substantiated and sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished somewhat.

**Non-participant** (69-60 points): This person has said little or nothing in class. Hence, there is no adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would not be changed.

**Unsatisfactory Contributor** (59-0 points): Contribution in class reflects inadequate or non-existent preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive; provide few, if any, insights; and rarely provide a constructive direction for the class discussion. Integrative comments and effective arguments are completely absent. Class contributions are, at best, “time fillers” efforts to make isolated, obvious, or confusing points. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable class time would be saved.
What is the late policy?

Assignments need to be completed on the day and time allotted to receive credit.

What is the cheating and plagiarism policy?

Cheating is a violation of the norms of academic work. When you cheat you step outside of the boundaries of what is acceptable if we are to have integrity and honesty in intellectual pursuits. You are in effect signaling a lack of desire to participate in the activities that mark your pursuit as an academic one. So what you do simply does not count as academic work when you cheat and so will be treated accordingly. An automatic “F” will be given if cheating is discovered and further policies as stated in the student handbook will be pursued.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is the unattributed use of someone else’s work. One of the most common forms of plagiarism occurs when you cut and paste pieces of information that you find on the web. This is unacceptable if you do not attribute the source and even if you attribute the source it is unacceptable if this is the primary way in which you have written your work. A student’s work may be submitted for a plagiarism check using available means. Plagiarized work will not only receive zero points – i.e., an “F” – but the instructor has the option of further academic sanctions including but not limited to failure of the course. If you are not sure whether or not you may be plagiarizing check with the instructor. The following websites are also useful in clarifying what plagiarism is and how you can avoid it:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

What is the absence policy?

Attending each class is expected and is vital for doing well in this course. Poor attendance will negatively affect grades and an inability to complete assignments as well as could have been. If students fail to participate in class activities, then this will be considered a sufficient indicator that they are not able to satisfactorily complete the course. Even if absent assignments are still due on the date and time due and to be submitted in hardcopy form to the instructor.

What is the student disabilities policy?

Contact the appropriate office and notify the instructor if students have a documented disability requiring accommodation for this class.
What is the classroom learning environment policy?

Classroom learning environment must be free from disturbances, such as side-conversations, tardiness, cell phones ringing, reading newspapers, eating food in class, bringing others to class, making derogatory racial/ethnic remarks, falling asleep, interrupting others, being hostile or antagonistic, recording lectures during class, sending mass emails to the class, etc.

What is the use of cell phones/communication devices policy?

Here is the warning: there is absolutely no use of cell phones/communication devices in class. No text messaging and checking messages are allowed during class time. This is considered talking on the phone. If students do this they will be asked to leave class the first time. If this is done again, then other negative measures will be applied (e.g., student not allowed to come to class, grade lowered in the class at the discretion of the instructor). In other words, don’t do it.

What is the laptop policy?

If students would like to use a computer in class for note taking, then they need to sit up front in the class to do so. No web surfing, facebooking, twittering, playing computer games, shopping, and other multimedia activities are allowed. Such activities will cause one the inability to use the computer in class at all.

How can I communicate with the professor outside of class?

I have office hours. You are more than welcome to attend. Of course, you can email me with questions or comments anytime. It is your responsibility to ensure that you can receive email from Blackboard. Make sure that your email address within the system is correct. Some email systems block Blackboard mailings as if they are spam. Either fix this, or get an SDSU email account (go to: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/newstudacct.shtml.) When sending email, you must include your full name and the course in the subject line. Email is often answered upon receipt. However, you must allow for a 24-hour turnaround (not including holidays and weekends). Email does sometimes go awry: If you do not hear back from me in due time, please try again with a different heading (in case the original was recognized as spam).
This syllabus is intended to guide us through the course. However, circumstances can change and so I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed to ensure that we fulfill the objectives of the course. You will receive full and fair notification regarding any such changes. (This syllabus was partially modeled after Dr. Elisa Sobo’s “Anthropology: Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology” and Dr. Mark A. Laumakis’ “Psychology 101: Introduction to Psychology” syllabi).