

**WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**  
**Country Music**  
**MUS 321 701 ONLINE**  
**3 credit hours**

**Class Meeting Times and location:**

Online, Blackboard

**Instructor contact information:**

John Martin IWFA 339, (270) 745-6890, [john.martin@wku.edu](mailto:john.martin@wku.edu)

**Required material:**

**Texts**

"Country Music, a Cultural and Stylistic History", second edition,  
Jocelyn R. Neal. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-049974-7

**Course description:**

This course will study country music as a music genre created in America, primarily from the 1920's to the present. The course will emphasize the performers, contrasting country and bluegrass styles, instrumentation, and lyric content. The course will examine geographic regions of the United States where these styles developed, and examine the cultural, social, economic, and political impacts on the development of the music and the professional careers of the performers. The course will also examine how country music has made its way into pop culture, how the ability to record sound shaped music of the early 20th century, and the struggle of artistic integrity vs. monetary pursuit.

**Course content**

- I: The Early Years (1920s and 1930s)
  - A. Birth of Country Music
  - B. National Stars on the Horizon
  - C. New Traditions, Cowboys, and Jazz
- II. WWII and after (1940s and 1950s)
  - A. Honky-Tonk and Rockabilly Revolution
  - B. The birth of Bluegrass
  - C. The Nashville sound
- III. Coast to coast (1960s and 1970s)
  - A. California Country and Country Rock
  - B. Classic Country
  - C. Outlaw Country and Southern Rock Rebellion
  - D. Bluegrass in Japan
- IV. Expansion (1980s and 1990s)
  - A. Urban Cowboys
  - B. Neo-traditionalists
  - C. The commercial Country explosion
  - D. Country music gains popularity in China
- V. Country music navigates genre (1990s and 2000s)
  - A. Alternative country

- B. Redefining Country
- C. Breaking borders
- D. European country and western

#### Colonnade Connections Course: Systems Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course will:

1. Analyze how systems evolve.
2. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.

Students will evaluate the process of how folk music developed into one of the most popular and profitable styles of popular music in today's market. The course will compare many styles of country and bluegrass music, some being much more popular and financially successful than others. Students will address factors that regulate what characteristics may or may not be involved in a particular style's success.

#### **Grading:**

midterm exam = 25%  
Final Exam = 25%  
Quizzes = 35%  
Written assignment = 15%

A = 90 -- 100%  
B = 80 -- 89%  
C = 70 -- 79%  
D = 60 -- 69%  
F = anything below 60%

#### **DISABILITY STATEMENT**

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, DUC A-200. The OFSDS telephone number is 270.745.5004 V/TDD. Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office of Disability Services.

#### **PLAGIARISM STATEMENT**

Student work may be checked using plagiarism detection software. For regulations see the WKU Undergraduate Catalog. See "Academic Information," Academic Offenses, p. 1. [www.wku.edu/undergraduatecatalog](http://www.wku.edu/undergraduatecatalog)