Instructor: Dr. Susan Key (with special guest faculty Joseph Horowitz)
Spring 2016
Honors 419

**Prerequisite: acceptance into the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.**
3 credits

**Catalog Description**

This course will explore how American writers and composers have mined the vernacular in pursuit of an artistic voice distinct from European practice. From Ralph Waldo Emerson’s call to abandon the “courtly muses” of Europe, we trace the development of an aesthetic dialogue through Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Antonín Dvořák, and Charles Ives into the 20th century urban voices of the Harlem Renaissance and George Gershwin. Students will attend special performances and lectures in conjunction with the Pacific Symphony’s Ives and Gershwin festival.

**General Education Learning Outcomes**

- GE7SI: Students explore processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives.
- GE7WI: Provides students an intensive course in academic writing at the first-year or intermediate level according to demonstrated competence, with attention to media-based composing and delivery.

**Honors Program Learning Outcomes**

Upon completing a course in the University Honors Program students will have:

- Obtained a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Sharpened their ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- Understood how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- Developed effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students will have:

- Understood the influence of Emerson and the transcendentalists on the development of a distinctly American voice in literature and music
- Explored the way vernacular sources have shaped the styles of disparate artists
- Explored the Harlem Renaissance and its impact on American style in literature and music
- Understood how social dialogue is carried out through music
- Engaged in research, writing, and design of a web-based tool for analyzing and articulating the relationships and cultural products explored in the course

**Instructional strategies**

This course will consist primarily of seminar-style discussions based on material drawn from books, essays, music, maps, radio archives, and online material. Each student will be asked to prepare discussion questions and lead one class discussion using appropriate technology. Emphasis will also be placed on the development of
listening strategies through various listening exercises, both group and individual. Certain topics will be introduced by mini-lectures; guest lecturers and performers will give special presentations.

Course Requirements

1. **Class attendance** is required. If you miss a class, you will need to make up the in-class writing and / or listening assignments within 3 days unless you are given an extension by the instructor.

2. **Class participation** is essential to the nature of the discussions and listening assignments in this interdisciplinary class. In addition to discussion of the reading assignments, most classes will include a written listening exercise that will form the basis of discussion about the music.

3. **Weekly essays**: You will submit short (500 – 750 word) essays each week in response to the reading and listening. These are due by the beginning of class each Tuesday.

4. **Midterm project**: during the two weeks before spring break, the class will develop an online cultural map of New York City, 1850 – 1930. Each student will be assigned a literary or musical figure to research outside of class on his / her own. Then in three groups you will create multi-media online “walking tours” of New York City during three eras (1850-1890; 1890-1910; 1910-1930) featuring your research and animated by period music and archival images. We will allow class time to discuss the design of this map; however, most of the work will be completed outside of class.

5. **Final exam**: A final essay exam will ask you to synthesize your knowledge.

Methods of Evaluation

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<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Attendance (Missing 3 classes or more will result in a 5% deduction from your final grade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Class participation and response to in-class listening exercises</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>Weekly response writings</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Map project: research and design</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
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Grades will be assigned as follows:  
A = 100-90; B=89-80; C=79-70; D=69-60; F = 59 and below.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

Students with Disabilities Policy

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Chapman University Diversity Policy

Chapman University is committed to fostering learning and working environments that encourage and embrace diversity, multiple perspectives, and the free exchange of ideas as important measures to advance educational and social benefits. Our commitment and affirmation are rooted in our traditions of peace and social justice and our mission of producing ethical and responsible global citizens. The term diversity implies a respect for all and an understanding of individual differences in age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
Course Description and Schedule

This course will explore how American writers and composers have mined the vernacular in pursuit of an artistic voice distinct from European practice. We begin by surveying the soundscape of mid-nineteenth century America, with a particular focus on the stylistically eclectic music of our first professional songwriter, Stephen Foster. We then heed Ralph Waldo Emerson’s call to abandon the “courtly muses” of Europe in favor of a more democratic aesthetic, and we trace the progression of this aesthetic dialogue through Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and Mark Twain and through composers Antonin Dvořák and Charles Ives. The first half of the course will culminate with a cross-disciplinary study of Mark Twain (Huckleberry Finn, which Ernest Hemingway famously claimed was the starting point of American literature) and Charles Ives (whose Second Symphony parallels Huckleberry Finn by “distorting” a hallowed European genre with American slang). Both Twain and Ives also deal fundamentally with race, an issue that takes on new urgency as we consider the ways that artistic dialogue was shaped by the demographic and social dislocations of the emerging modern world. We will explore writers Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Carl van Vechten and composer George Gershwin – like Twain and Ives, a self-invented iconoclast who thumbs his nose at European decorum. Many African-Americans, however, have disparaged his Porgy and Bess as the work of an interloper; his relationship to the Harlem Renaissance is a vexed but rewarding topic. We will conclude our course at a point – the mid-30s – when Emerson’s vision of a century earlier had generated not one but a plethora of distinctively American voices.

Throughout the course we will consider the importance of New York City, significant to all of our cultural figures as home, businessplace, ideal, or anathema. A collaborative map project will give you a chance to understand more deeply the importance of cultural intersections, to engage in primary research, and to articulate and synthesize your knowledge into a web-based format.

You will attend special performances and lectures in conjunction with the Pacific Symphony’s Ives and Gershwin festival, and you will have opportunities to interact with guest scholars and performers in our intimate seminar setting.

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<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>The 19th-century American Soundscape</td>
<td>Root, Performing Foster Selections from 19th century folk, popular, and religious music Song of America radio series: Stephen Foster</td>
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<td>2/9</td>
<td>A Call for Self-Reliance</td>
<td>Emerson essays: The Poet, American Scholar, Self-Reliance (excerpts) Thoreau, Walden</td>
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<td>2/16</td>
<td>I Hear America Singing: Whitman and Dickinson</td>
<td>Selected Whitman and Dickinson poems Whitman essay, Art Singing and Heart Singing Song of America radio series: Song of Walt Whitman Reynolds. “I hear America Singing”: Whitman and the Music of His Time</td>
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<td>2/23</td>
<td>You don’t know about me: Huckleberry Finn</td>
<td>Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Peter Salwen, Mark Twain and Walt Whitman Twain, Letter to Walt Whitman Selections from 19th century parlor and minstrel music</td>
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<td>3/1</td>
<td>A European’s perspective: Antonin Dvořák</td>
<td>Horowitz, Dvořák’s America Dvorak, New World Symphony Burleigh, selected spirituals</td>
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<td>3/8</td>
<td>Emerging modernism: The new urban landscape</td>
<td>Research and “Paths Crossing” class map project Song of America radio series: Ives the Chronicler van Vechten, essay The Great American Composer Selections from ragtime and Tin Pan Alley</td>
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<td>3/15</td>
<td>The new urban landscape, cont. Research and “Paths Crossing” class map project van Vechten, selections from <em>The Splendid Drunken Twenties</em></td>
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<td>3/22</td>
<td>Spring break</td>
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<td>3/29</td>
<td><strong>The American fin de siècle</strong> Ives, <em>Essays Before a Sonata</em> <em>Ives and Gershwin recital at Chapman – April 3</em></td>
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<td>4/5</td>
<td><strong>Ives and Twain</strong> Selected chapters from Horowitz, <em>Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America’s Fin de siècle</em> <em>Pacific Symphony concert at Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall – April 7, 8, 9</em></td>
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<td>4/12</td>
<td>** I Too Sing America: Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance** Selected Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston writings Selections from 1920s jazz and popular music Song of America radio series: <em>Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance</em></td>
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<td>4/19</td>
<td>** Harlem Renaissance, cont.** Selected writings Online New York Public Library essay and exhibition: <em>The New Negro Renaissance</em></td>
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<td>4/26</td>
<td>Appropriating a voice?: Gershwin and the Harlem Renaissance Heyward, <em>Porgy</em> Gershwin, <em>Porgy and Bess</em></td>
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<td>5/10</td>
<td>American Voices: Mid-Century and Beyond Selections from Depression-era vernacular and classical music Synthesis and reflection</td>
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<td>5/10</td>
<td>Final exam</td>
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** Guest faculty Joe Horowitz

** Required Texts


** Required readings on reserve


Van Vechten, Carl. Selected passages from *The Splendid Drunken Twenties: Selections from the Daybooks 1922-30* (edited by Bruce Kellner)

White, Edward. *The Tastemaker: Carl van Vechten and the Birth of Modern America*

**Online resources**

Hampson, Thomas. [Song of America radio series](#)

Horowitz, Joseph. [Dvořák's America](#)

Reynolds, David S. “I hear America Singing”: Whitman and the Music of His Time

**The Classroom Electric: Dickinson, Whitman, and American Culture**

All listening selections will be on reserve. Many are also available online.